

PROPERTY, TENURE AND RENTS: SOME ASPECTS OF
THE TOPOGRAPHY AND ECONOMY OF MEDIEVAL YORK

VOLUME ONE

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOLUME ONE

	Page
List of Figures, Maps and Tables.....	iv
Abbreviations.....	vii
Introduction.....	ix
1. Primary Sources.....	1
2. The Urban Landscape.....	42
3. The Growth of the Minster's Estates in York c. 1050-1300.....	81
4. The Origins and Growth of Monastic Estates in York, c. 1080-1300.....	134
5. The Growth and Management of Institutional Estates in York, in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries.....	181
6. Rents and the Prosperity of Later-Medieval York.....	236
7. Citizens, Tenants and Landlords.....	271
Conclusion.....	300
Bibliography.....	305

VOLUME TWO

Introduction.....	iii
Gazetteer.....	1

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LIST OF FIGURES

	Following Page
5.1 Six-monthly income of the vicars' chamberlain from rents in York.....	207
5.2 Expenditure on obits and repairs by the chamberlain of the vicars choral in York.....	221
6.1 Decayed and defective rents on the vicars' estate in York.....	253

LIST OF MAPS

1. John Speed's Plan of York.....	viii
2. Medieval York and the Roman fortress.....	44
3. Later Medieval York.....	180

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
4.1 Monastic Estates in York at the Dissolution.....	179
5.1. Expenditure on repairs on the estate of the vicars choral.....	234
6.1. Rents recorded for a group of three stone 'halls' opposite the Bedern owned by the vicars choral.....	239
6.2 Rents recorded for the 'Dingges' in Goodramgate.....	240

6.3	Examples of individual rent levels on the vicars choral's York estate.....	247
6.4	Farm of Spitelcroft wind-mills in Layerthorpe.....	253
6.5	Decayed and defective rents on the Ousebridgemasters' estate in 1440-41, expressed as a percentage of nominal rent income.....	259
6.6	Decayed and defective rents on the vicars choral estate in 1449.....	261

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of property holding in York between the Norman Conquest and the beginning of the Tudor period. It draws largely upon the archives of the larger landowning corporations in the city and their interests tend to dominate throughout. Beginning with a survey of the documentary sources, it continues with an account of the evolution of York's street plan before the middle of the fourteenth century, which draws upon archaeological as well as documentary evidence. The next three chapters are concerned with the growth and management of the York estates of the Minster, of monastic landlords and of the city corporation and other institutional landowners. It is argued that internal institutional pressures were at least as important as external economic forces in determining both the manner in which these estates expanded and declined, and the different forms of tenure by which urban tenements and houses were made available to tenants. Changing methods of management are considered in the context of changing fashions of religious endowment, and of pressures to restrict the amount of land being alienated in mortmain. It is argued that the expansion of ecclesiastical estates in the twelfth century acted as a catalyst to the growth of autonomous civic government and eventually led to the development of new forms of burgess franchise. The activities of landlords also contributed to significant changes in the topography of the city and to the development of new styles of architecture. Chapter Six returns to an examination of varying economic fortunes of different sectors of the city as revealed by a study of individual rent levels in the period after 1300, and Chapter Seven focusses on the fortunes of private individuals as both landlords and tenants. A Gazetteer of medieval tenements in Petergate is included in Volume Two.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AY	P.V. Addyman (ed.), <i>The Archaeology of York.</i>
BI	Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, University of York.
BL	British Library.
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford.
<i>Cal. Close Rolls</i>	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls.</i>
<i>Cal. Fine Rolls</i>	<i>Calendar of Fine Rolls.</i>
<i>Cal. Pat. Rolls</i>	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls.</i>
<i>Domesday</i>	<i>Domesday Book, Yorkshire</i> (parts 1 and 11), M.L. Faull and M. Stinson (eds.) <i>Domesday Book. A Survey of the Counties of England</i> , 30, Chichester (1986).
Drake, <i>Eboracum</i>	Francis Drake, <i>Eboracum: or the History and Antiquities of the City of York</i> (York and London, 1736).
EYC	W. Farrer (ed.), <i>Early Yorkshire Charters</i> , vols 1-3 (Edinburgh, 1914-16).
'Husgabel Roll'	D.M. Palliser, 'York's Earliest Administrative Record: the Husgabel Roll of c. 1284', <i>YAJ</i> , 50 (1978), pp.81-91.
HCY	<i>Historians of the Church of York</i> , 3 vols. J. Raine (ed.) (<i>Rolls Series</i> , lxxi, 1879-94).
J.Ryl.	John Rylands Library, Manchester.
NYCRO	North Yorkshire County Record Office, North Allerton.
PNERY	A.H. Smith, <i>Place-Names of the East Riding of Yorkshire and York</i> (English Place-Name Society, xiv, Cambridge, 1937).
PRO	Public Record Office.
Raine, <i>Medieval York</i>	Raine, Angelo, <i>Medieval York: a Topographical Survey Based on Original Sources</i> (1955).

RCHMY Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of York*, 5 vols. (1962-81).

SS Surtees Society.

VCHY *The Victoria History etc., County of Yorkshire*, 4 vols. (1907-25).

VCHY City of York *The Victoria History etc., City of York*, P.M. Tillott (ed.) (1961).

'Vicars Choral Cartulary' N. Tringham, 'An Edition of the Cartulary of the Vicars Choral of York Minster' (History Ph.D. Thesis, Aberdeen, 1978).

YAJ *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* (Leeds, 1869/70-; the first eleven volumes are entitled *Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Journal*).

YASRS *Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series*.

YCA York City Archives.

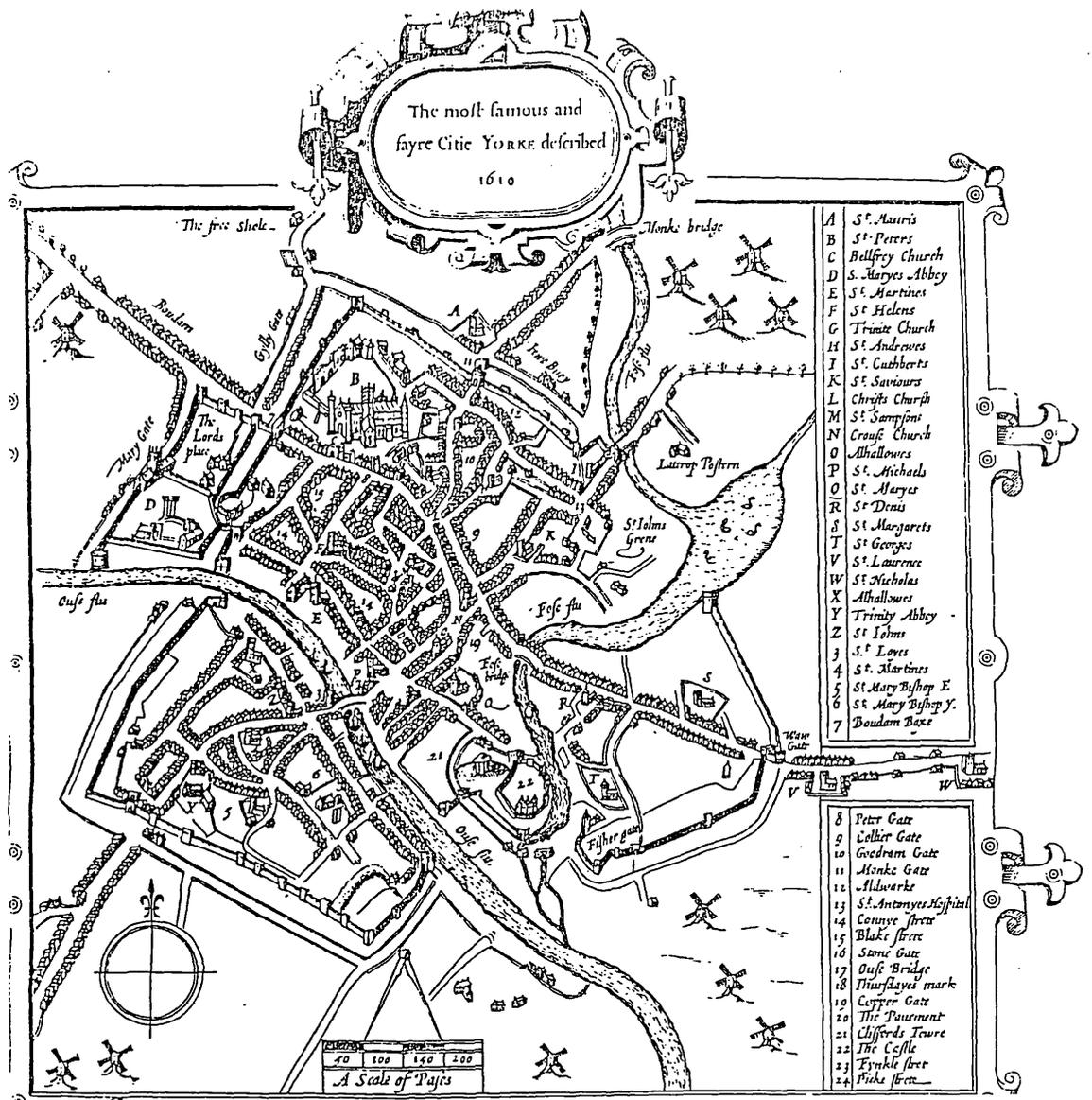
YCR *York Civic Records*, A. Raine (ed.) [vols i, ii, iii; *YASRS*, xcvi, ciii, cvi (1939, 1941, 1942)].

YMB *York Memorandum Book*, ed. M. Sellars, 2 vols. [*SS*, CXX (1912) and CXXV (1915)]; ed. J.W. Percy [*SS*, CLXXXVI (1973)].

YMF *York Minster Fasti*, C.T. Clay (ed.) [vols i, ii; *YASRS*, cxxiii, cxxiv (1958, 1959)].

YML York Minster Library.

York Minster History G.E. Aylmer and R.E. Cant (eds.), *A History of York Minster* (Oxford, 1977).



JOHN SPEED'S PLAN OF YORK

INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of the city of York in the history of medieval England. By the time of the Norman Conquest the city was already a thousand years old and for most of that period it had been recognised as the principal city in the north. From the early third century the *colonia*, on the south-west bank of the Ouse, was the Roman provincial capital of Britannia Inferior,¹ and in the seventh century, following Paulinus' mission to England and the triumph of the 'Roman' over the 'Celtic' tradition, York became the metropolitan capital of the north.² Later still, after 866 the city became the centre of the Viking kingdom of York,³ and in c. 1000, nearly fifty years after the defeat of the last independent Viking ruler of York, it was still regarded as the 'capital of the Northumbrian people'.⁴ Indeed, although after 956 York became part of a newly united kingdom of England, it was a unity which was only precariously maintained, and both 'Northumbria' and the city of York remained an important

¹ *RCHMY*, 1, p. xxxvi.

² R.M.T. Hill and C.N.L. Brooke, 'From 627 until the Early Thirteenth Century', in *York Minster History*, pp. 4-5.

³ A.G. Dickens, 'York before the Norman Conquest', in *VCHY City of York*, p. 10.

⁴ *HCY*, 1, p. 454. Extract translated in David and Mary Palliser, *York as they saw it* (York, 1979), p. 2.

potential focus of hostility to the southern régime. Naturally the exact nature and strength of such 'rebellions' underwent many profound changes, but during the many political crises which threatened the security of ruling dynasties between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries, from the deposition of Earl Tostig by a meeting of northern thegns held in York in October 1065,¹ to the role of York in the 'Pilgrimage of Grace' in the autumn of 1536,² the control of the city of York was recognised as crucial not only to the stability of the north but also to the security of the nation.³ The threat of civil rebellion was often compounded by that of foreign invasion, at first from Scandinavia, and later, especially, from Scotland, and thus York evolved not only as a centre of county administration, but as a strategic bulwark of northern defence. York could, indeed, fairly claim to be the second city of the kingdom. It may even have been considered as a

¹ F.M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2nd ed., 1947), pp.570-71).

² D.M. Palliser, *The Reformation in York 1534-1553*, Borthwick Paper No 40 (York, 1971), pp.7-11.

³ The political fortunes and sympathies of medieval York have been most thoroughly discussed by E. Miller, 'Medieval York', in *VCHY City of York*, pp.25-116. On other specific episodes, see D.C. Douglas, *William the Conqueror* (1964), pp.218-220; J.H. Harvey, 'Richard II and York', in F.R.H. Du Boulay and C. Barron (eds.), *The Reign of Richard II* (1971), pp.202-217; R.A. Griffiths, *The Reign of Henry VI* (1981), pp.736-738. For the continued importance of York in the post-medieval period, see D.M. Palliser, *Tudor York* (Oxford, 1979), esp. pp.6-7, 40-59.

potential alternative to Westminster by Richard II,¹ and the establishment of a Council in the North based, after 1538, in the King's Manor in Bootham in York was the crowning recognition of the particular demands of government in the north.² It is one of the striking coincidences of York's history that the offices of this council occupied almost exactly the same site as the 'Earlsborough', which in the eleventh century may have been the principal residence of the earls of Northumbria, in essence the king's vice-regent in the north.³ The buildings of the Council of the North still survive, and the 'Earlsborough' is marked by the church of St. Olave, founded by Earl Siward who was buried there in 1055.⁴

York's political prominence was probably always more consistently marked than its economic importance, although throughout the medieval period York was a market of regional significance, and many of its merchants were engaged in trade on an international scale.⁵ Yet if the city's political importance was

¹ Harvey, 'Richard II and York', p.203.

² Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp.6-7.

³ *RCHMY*, 2, p.9; Drake, *Eboracum*, pp.256-258.

⁴ P.M. Tillott, 'The Parish Churches', in *VCHY City of York*, p.397.

⁵ Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.41-47, 100-106; J.N. Bartlett, 'The Expansion and Decline of York in the Later Middle Ages', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series (1960), *passim*.

due to its role in securing control of those parts of the country most vulnerable to northern invasion, its commercial prominence, even in the eleventh century, depended in large measure upon access to the markets of southern and eastern England and to the continent, especially the Low Countries. Excavations of Viking age York reveal a great variety of commodities originating from a range of exotic locations from the Indian Ocean to the Baltic and Ireland, but to date it seems that the special link with the Low Countries, evident in the presence of the merchants from Frisia first mentioned by Alcuin, was not supplanted.¹ By the mid-twelfth century the bulk of York's overseas trade was probably with the Low countries, especially Flanders,² and in the century following the Norman Conquest a series of charters to the merchant community of York fostered these relationships.³ Thus by Stephen's reign the city was a bastion of local support for the king,⁴ and by the early thirteenth century the more prominent citizens of York can be found prospering from service in the royal house-

¹ A. MacGregor, 'Industry and Commerce in Anglo-Scandinavian York', in *Viking Age York and the North* (1978), p.37.

² Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, p.42; J.L. Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy 1150-1500* (1980), p.174.

³ *BYC*, 1, pp.171-172; Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.31-32.

⁴ F. Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England* (1954), pp.222, 225, 268; Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, p. 26.

hold and the holding of royal office.' In this manner the fostering of York's commercial role bolstered the political interests of the crown and forged links of real importance and common interest between the citizens and the king.

The site of the city, at the confluence of the rivers Foss and Ouse, near the point where a deposit of glacial clays and sand forms a natural bridge across the damp low-lying vale of York, meant that the city became a natural focus of route-ways connecting the Yorkshire dales and moors with the traffic of the flatter lands of the eastern English plain, the Yorkshire coast and the North Sea. The construction of the Roman road network had further enhanced York's location as a market, providing ready access not only to the south-east and the north of England and Scotland, but also to the north midlands, north Wales and the west country.² This network of communications brought to the city the varied agricultural produce of both uplands and lowlands, and the custom of purchasers in search of imported goods from further afield, while the city became the natural market and meeting place for the country gentry and clergy alike.

¹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1232-47*, p.452; *1216-25*, pp.451-452; Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, p.30.

² H.G. Ramm, *The Parisi* (1978), pp.49-50.

Once in York visitors to the city were encouraged to participate in a variety of other activities. After 1284 the shrine of St. William of York became a popular pilgrimage centre,¹ and in the later middle ages the city offered a variety of attractions to the visitor. The annual cycle of mystery plays was only one of a number of festivals celebrated each year in the city with staged 'entertainments', and the welcome organised for King Henry VII's entry into the city in 1486 confirms that there was a rich tradition of staging musical and dramatic performances, while the citizens supported a regular band of musicians, the city waites.² In addition the annual fairs and livestock markets provided regular amusements and it is possible that York, like London, maintained a seasonal programme of sports designed to enhance the martial skills of the local youths.³

Although it was York's role as an administrative and market centre which provided the bedrock of its continued prosperity throughout the medieval period, in addition the city also had an important manufacturing sector. Like any substantial provincial city, it had

¹ R.B. Dobson, in *York Minster History*, p.86.

² *York (Records of Early english Drama, 1982)*, pp.xvi, 146-152.

³ A.G. Dickens, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.158-159.

well-established leather, metal and woodworking industries as well as an important community of building craftsmen.¹ For the most part again these industries thrived from serving a mainly local, or regional market. At times however special circumstances fostered the growth of industries of more than local significance. For example, the military presence during the Scottish wars fostered the growth of the metal working and armament industries, and in the latter part of the fourteenth century York's proximity to the centres of fine wool production enabled the city's craftsmen and merchants to capitalise on the singular set of circumstances which fostered the growth of the English fine cloth industry.²

While it is the cloth industry of York which has attracted the most attention from historians, other industries were possibly of greater long-term benefit to the city. York's medieval glass industry is rightly famous; and the city housed an important community of craftsmen producing other high-quality products for the church and the local aristocracy. Glass painters and bellfounders were to be found, especially in and near

¹ H. Swanson, 'Crafts and Craftsmen of Later Medieval York' (History D.Phil. Thesis, York, 1980), *passim*.

² Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.87-91; J.L. Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy 1150-1500*, pp.153 ff; Swanson, 'Crafts and Craftsmen of Later Medieval York'.

Stonegate, and York masons were also widely employed in the county.¹ The continued prosperity of the city's barbourers, scribes, drapers, tailors, glovers and cappers, in particular their continued ability to pay the high rents on Ousebridge in the middle of the fifteenth century, also suggests that the underlying prosperity of the city at the end of the medieval period depended mainly on its role as a county town, providing professional services and luxury goods for the local gentry.²

Of equally long-lasting importance to the city's economy were those industries which were developed to service local agricultural producers and to process their produce. Professor Barrie Dobson has suggested that the banking activities of York's Jews were principally engaged in servicing rural landowners, and York clearly remained an important local centre of banking into the modern period.³ But the close relationship between the

¹ D. O'Connor, in *York Minster History*, p.385; Swanson, 'Crafts and Craftsmen of Later Medieval York', p.460; H. Swanson, *Building Craftsmen in Late Medieval York* (Borthwick Paper, No 63, 1983), pp.5-10.

² See below, p.266.

³ R.B. Dobson, 'The Decline and Expulsion of the Medieval Jews of York', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, 26 (1979), p.39; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp.280-281.

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¹ D. O'Connor, in *York Minster History*, p.385; Swanson, 'Crafts and Craftsmen of Later Medieval York', p.460; H. Swanson, *Building Craftsmen in Late Medieval York* (Borthwick Paper, No 63, 1983), pp.5-10.

² See below, p.266.

³ R.B. Dobson, 'The Decline and Expulsion of the Medieval Jews of York', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, 26 (1979), p.39; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp.280-281.

countryside is apparent particularly in the provision of food supplies for the city, although no study of this trade comparable to that recently made of late medieval Colchester has yet been carried out.¹ The demarkation between town and countryside was by no means clearcut however. Throughout the city and its suburbs there was a large amount of arable and garden land, used to produce fruit, vegetables and grain crops, for the rearing of pigeons and the grazing of cattle and sheep, as well as for the production of 'industrial' crops like madder for the city's cloth industry.² In addition the city and its suburbs housed a number of tileries which exploited the local deposits of clay in the production of bricks as well as roof-tiles.³ The importance of such activities should not be underestimated. In 1561 an alderman complained that the weavers had left York for Halifax because there they could keep cows more easily and buy fuel more cheaply than they could in York, and in the eighteenth century when York's industrial base began to expand again, its renewal was based largely on the agriculturally-based industries of milling, brewing, butter manufacturing, sugar

¹ R.H. Britnell, *Growth and Decline in Colchester, 1300-1525* (Cambridge, 1986); *YMB*, 1, pp.25, 45, 57, 198.

² NYCRO, Clervaux Cartulary, fos 92-99, 105-109; BL, Cotton MS Nero D iii, fos 159-160; *YMB*, 2, pp.24, 75, 130, 222, 241; YCA, G 70.31, 33, B 1, fo 30; K.J. Allison in *VCHY City of York*, pp.498-500.

³ *YMB*, 1, pp.47, 59, 148; *YMB*, 2, p.42; and see YML, VC Tilehouse Accounts.

refining and of course chocolate making.¹

It cannot be claimed that the study of medieval York is a neglected area of research. Roger Burton, Common Clerk of York, 1415-1436, can fairly be claimed as the first to take an antiquarian interest in York,² although the works of Sir Thomas Widdrington and Francis Drake were the first true histories of the city.³ Drake's work is the more popularly acclaimed and it contains the first full description of the city's topography,⁴ but Widdrington's is particularly useful for its discussion of the legal customs of the city which Drake copied *verbatim* into his own work and fulsomely acknowledged in his preface.⁵ In the nineteenth century the establishment of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society, and the British Association for the Advancement of Science gave a fresh stimulus to local historical research through the influence of 'new'

¹ Dickens, in *VCHY City of York*, p.125; K.J. Allison and P.M. Tillott, *ibid.*, pp.220-112. this observation is also based on a study of eighteenth-century title deeds for Skeldergate.

²YMB, 3, p.123.

³ Sir T. Widdrington; *Analecta Eboracensia* (1660), C.Caine (ed.) (1897); Drake, *Eboracum*.

⁴ Drake, *Eboracum*, Chapter VII.

⁵ Widdrington, *Analecta Eboracensia*, Chapters V, VI.

disciplines such as geology and statistics.¹ This is especially evident in the work of Robert Davies,² another Common Clerk of York, while any modern scholar still owes a debt to the editorial efforts of the Raine family and many other scholars in their extensive transcription of original sources for local history largely published by the Surtees Society and the Yorkshire Archaeological Society.

Dominating the field of more recent scholarship is Professor Edward Miller's chapter on 'Medieval York' in the Victoria County History which drew on an impressive range of previously unexplored manuscript sources, in a wide-ranging study of the politics and economy of the city. All later historians stand in his debt for raising issues, which they have sought to explore more fully, while, surprisingly rarely, offering a serious challenge to his conclusions. The trade and economic fortunes of York in the later medieval period have been explored in a famous article by Dr. J.N. Bartlett, although the validity of some of the sources he used as reliable indicators of economic prosperity has now been

¹ D. Orange, 'Science in early nineteenth century York: the Yorkshire Philosophical Society and the British Association', in C.H. Feinstein (ed.), *York 1831-1981: 150 Years of Scientific Endeavour and Social Change* (York, 1981), pp.1-29.

² R. Davies, 'On the Statistics of York in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries', in *Proceedings of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society: A Selection from Papers 1847-1854* (1855).

challenged.¹ The organisation and prosperity of the city's crafts have also been studied by Dr. Heather Swanson.² New issues about medieval York have been raised by Professor Barrie Dobson who has promoted the study of the city's ecclesiastical institutions, while he has also examined the financial structure of civic government in York and analysed the nature of various internal conflicts within the city, from the massacre of the Jews in 1190 to the local background to the Peasants' Revolt.³ The social structure of the city has received further attention from Jenny Kermode in her examination of the city's merchants and from Mr. Jeremy Goldberg in his study of the role of women in Yorkshire towns.⁴ The arbitrary distinction between 'medieval' and 'modern' has not been better illustrated than by Professor David Palliser's work on Tudor York, but like his predecessor, Professor Geoffrey Dickens, he has also

¹ J.W. Bartlett, 'The Expansion and Decline of York in the Later Middle Ages', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, xii (1959-60), pp.17-33; R.B. Dobson, 'Admissions to the Freedom of the City of York in the Later Middle Ages', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, xxvi (1973), p.1-22.

² Swanson, *Building Craftsmen in Late Medieval York*; Swanson, 'Crafts and Craftsmen in Later Medieval York'.

³ R.B. Dobson, 'The Risings in York, Beverley and Scarborough 1380-81', in R.H. Hilton and T.H. Aston (eds.), *The English Rising in 1381* (Cambridge, 1984), pp.112-142; and see list of works cited in the bibliography.

⁴ J.I. Kermode, 'Urban Decline? The Flight from Office in Late Medieval York', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., xxxv (1982), pp.179-198; and see works cited in the bibliography below.

turned his attention to the study of pre-Conquest York.¹

Through the combined work of the York Archaeological Trust and of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, York has also been exceptionally fortunate among English towns in the resources spent on the study of its architectural heritage and of its history below the ground. This work in itself has encouraged further historical research into the documentary sources for York's medieval topography, among the most important being that of Dr. John Harvey, Professor Palliser, Mr. Ramm and Mr. Wenham.² The most extensive work on the medieval topography of York was published by Angelo Raine in 1952.³ Drawing largely on materials in the city archives, this work can be frustratingly vague about its sources, but nevertheless is packed with incidental detail about the city's landscape in the medieval period and pays particular attention to its parish churches and public monuments

¹ D.M. Palliser, 'York's West Bank: Medieval Suburb or Urban Nucleus?' in P.V. Addyman and V. Black (eds.), *Archaeological Papers from York* (York, 1984), pp.101-108; A.G. Dickens, 'The 'Shire' and the Privileges of the Archbishop in Eleventh Century York', *YAJ*, 38, pp.131-147.

² See works cited in the bibliography. Dr. Harvey and Mr. Ramm were also major contributors to the work of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments.

³ Raine, *Medieval York*.

The field of antiquarian and historical writing about York is too large to summarise here. Suffice to say that any intending student of York must choose their ground with care, although there does remain a vast quantity of largely unused source material. Little attention has yet been paid to property-holding in York,¹ and in a city where the physical remains of housing have recently received so much attention, it was an obvious choice to attempt to bridge this gap. The reconstruction of the pattern of property holdings in medieval towns has recently enjoyed a revival, and the impressive survey of medieval Winchester by Dr. Derek Keene has set a standard to which everyone must aspire.² The published work of Dr. Keene has only been used in this study of York in the final stages of preparation. Some striking similarities emerge, from the pattern of the rise and fall of rents after the Black Death, to the measurements of town houses and the level of individual rents.³ Many of the differences are largely minor, in particular there seems to have been regional differences in the terminology used to describe property and rents,⁴ but more important are differences in the ecclesiastical

¹ For a survey of Jewish landholdings, in York, see Dobson, 'The Decline and Expulsion of the Medieval Jews of York', pp.43-48.

² D.J. Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, parts i and ii (*Winchester Studies*, 2, Oxford, 1985); see below, p.37.

³ See below, pp.243, 250, 256-257; Gazetteer, p.xi.

⁴ See below, pp.60,237; Gazetteer, p.viii.

topography of the town. In York the ownership of parish churches seems to have been much more closely associated with the ownership of adjacent tenements than in Winchester, while the bishop of Winchester also appears to have maintained a much more exclusive franchise in his soke than the dean and chapter were able to maintain in York.¹

In many respects however this study of tenements in York has led to a slightly different emphasis from Dr. Keene's study of Winchester. Particular attention throughout has been given to the landowners and the institutional pressures which encouraged them to adopt various legal and financial solutions to the running of their estates. It is felt that only after such pressures are understood can the sources for property-holding be used to study the topography and economy of the town. Thus not all of the comparisons drawn here are with other towns and urban landlords for, despite the special conditions of burgage tenure, it is apparent that there was much common ground in the experience of both town and country.

¹ See below, pp.144-145, 155, 160-161, 294-299; Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, pp.70-74, 125.

Despite this emphasis on the administrative background to urban land-use, the following study is based upon a number of detailed topographical studies of various districts in the city, one example of which is included in the Gazetteer. Much of the more detailed results of studying the topography of York have been omitted here, although some aspects are discussed in Chapters Two, Six and in the Introduction to the Gazetteer. The scope of study is thus narrowly defined. There are many aspects of York's medieval past on which it does not seek to comment. It is primarily a study of estate management in York and of the role of the landlord as a dynamic force in the institutional and topographical development of the city.

CHAPTER ONE: PRIMARY SOURCES

The sources for the study of property-holding in medieval York are both diverse in nature and rich in content. Although certain categories of material have not survived as completely as might be wished, there still remains an abundance of documents which can be used to reconstruct the tenemental pattern of occupation and ownership in the city.

The two most useful categories of medieval document used for this study are property deeds and the financial accounts of estate management. Property deeds are the basic material from which the tenemental survey has been reconstructed. They are also the most abundant source and the most widely dispersed. Since relatively few legal proceedings from local courts have survived, the court proceedings most used in this thesis are those preserved in the Public Record Office. These provide comparatively few specific descriptions of property, but in the absence of local records, can prove crucial in understanding the development of local tenurial customs and legal institutions. Financial accounts of local institutions have generally been well preserved, especially for the fifteenth century, providing a wealth of detailed information, both about individual tenements and the economy of urban land management in the later middle ages. This economic data often complements the more strictly legal evidence provided by the property

deeds. In addition certain post-medieval documents in all these categories, and modern maps, plans, drawings and photographs, as well as the discoveries of recent and continuing archaeological excavation, have proved indispensable in locating and describing medieval tenements in the modern street system of York.

Records of the City Corporation

Unfortunately the medieval court records of the City Corporation have not survived. The jurisdiction of the city courts was based ultimately on their competence to recognise and uphold transactions of land within that part of the city which they farmed from the crown. It is fitting therefore that the earliest reference to the keeping of city archives is that of a payment made for the registration of deeds in the Tollbooth in 1246.¹ In 1270-1 it was claimed that a deed concerning a free tenement in York which was enrolled in the Common Hall was as valid as a final concord made before the justices of the king.² A similar competence to act as a court of record was exercised by other city courts, such as the court of Husting in London and the courts of Bristol, Norwich and Winchester, while many other boroughs kept

¹ Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, p.34 n. 16; PRO, J.I. 1/1045.

² Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, p.35; PRO, J.I. 1/1052 m15.

enrolled records of deeds witnessed in their courts.¹ Such claims on the part of York, however, did not prevent a number of applicants from seeking to confirm their transactions relating to tenements in York by final concord in the king's court.² Wills devising city property were also registered in the city courts; and in 1371 a city ordinance decreed that any such will or deed which was not registered would be null and void.³ By the fourteenth century the register of land transfers began annually with the start of each new mayoral term, and copies of deeds were entered either in the city register or in the plea rolls of the Guildhall and of the Tollbooth.⁴ None of the city's plea rolls have survived and only one of the deed registers from the medieval period. This register has been edited by J. Percy and published by the Surtees Society, but little attention has previously been paid to the method of its

¹ G.A. Williams, *Medieval London* (2nd ed. 1970), p.82; E. Veale 'Burgage tenure in medieval Bristol' *The Great Red Book of Bristol*, I. *BRS* (1931) pp.37-38. Bristol only became a court of record after it achieved county status in 1373. W. Hudson & J.C. Tingey, *The records of the city of Norwich*, I. (1906), p.xxxiii; Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, p.73; G.H. Martin, 'The Registration of Deeds of Title in the Medieval Borough', in *The Study of Medieval Records; Essays in Honour of Kathleen Major* (1971), pp.151-174..

² Chatsworth House, Hardwick MS 20, fos 111v, 113v.

³ *YMB*, 1, p.13.

⁴ 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 276-9 and MS note; Chatsworth House, Hardwick MS 20, fo 114.

compilation.¹

The register (YCA, E20A) was started in 1371, possibly as a result of the new ordinance concerning the enrollment of wills and deeds. The first 90 folios are complete, forming new fos 1-38 and 52-104 of the present manuscript. The original Roman numeration of these folios is erratic; xlij is repeated, l-lix is omitted, and lxxx-lxxxix is repeated as ~~lxxx~~liij-~~lxxx~~liij ix. Folio 104 was not originally numbered. These 90 folios contain deeds, wills, leases, letters of attorney, bonds and some chantry agreements enrolled in the city register between c. 1368 and 31 July 1449. The early date of the first entries and the consistency of the handwriting suggest that the earlier of these entries may have been a fair copy of an older register. A number of subsequent folios originally continued the Roman pagination, although their original sequence seems to have been interrupted. New folios 119-121 were numbered Cviij-Cx, fos 125-131 cxj-cxvij (excepting fos 127 and 129 which were not numbered), fos 139-149 were cxxv-cxxxv (except that fo 141 was not numbered), and fo 161 was cxlvij. The interruptions in the old foliation cannot be explained by the addition or subtraction of quires, and neither do they dislocate the sense of the entries in the manuscript. Thus the changes in the

¹ YNB, 3.

original composition of the manuscript were probably made after c. 1445 x 1449, further entries being made subsequently. The new composition of the folios was repaginated in a more logical sequence of Arabic numeration. Between 1445 at the earliest and 1596 folios 105-249 continued to be used for the enrollment of deeds, although many other memoranda of city customs and guild ordinances were also included. All the deeds in the register were enrolled either in the mayor's chamber, or the council chamber on Ouse Bridge before the mayor and bailiffs or chamberlains of the city. It was quite common for ancient deeds, several generations old, to be brought for enrollment, even though these had already been witnessed by the contemporary mayor and bailiffs. New deeds were usually brought for recognition and enrollment within a few days or weeks of the original transaction; the witnessing and enrollment of deeds by the mayor and bailiffs often being separate events. Especially after 1396 a number of deeds concerning properties outside the city were also brought for enrollment.

No other deed registers as such have survived for the medieval period, although there are indications that other registers, no longer extant, were used for the registration of deeds among other memoranda.¹ From

¹ YMB, 2 includes many deeds acknowledged in mayors court.

c. 1480 the city House Books contain a few enrollments of private deeds, and from the early modern period two deed registers survive: YCA, E22 with deeds from 1561-1663, and E26 and E27 covering the period 1583-1622. From 1718-1866 a complete series of city deed registers (YCA, E93-98) survive.

Although many of the plea rolls and regular records of the city courts are no longer extant, a few copies of court customs and other precedents have survived. Common pleas concerning land tenure were heard on Mondays in the mayor's court, and pleas of debt, including those concerning the payment of rent, were heard on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays before the bailiffs (or sheriffs after 1396).¹ The manuscript volume YCA, E20, the York Memorandum Book, begun by John de Rufford, common clerk of the city, and aptly described as a book of diverse memoranda relating to the city of York, covers the period from 1376-1493.² Together with the second part of YCA, E20A, it includes several notes on the procedure of the city courts. Among these memoranda are a custumal for the mayor's court before 1396, and for the sheriff's court after 1396, as well as part of a custumal for the sheriffs of

¹ Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.75-6.

² *YMB*, 1, p.1.

London's court.¹ There are also a number of inquisitions conducted by searchers of craft guilds into disputed property boundaries, records of assizes of fresh force, and inquisitions *post mortem* conducted after the mayor became the king's escheator for the city of York in 1396.² A few records of pleas in the mayor's court during the reign of Edward III were copied as precedents for court procedure in the first Freeman's Register. These include a lengthy process following the suit of a writ of right.³ Fortunately a larger number of court records were still available to Thomas Widdrington in the 1630s and 1640s, and his work is still one of the best authorities for the court customs of York.⁴ Widdrington noted a register of writs kept for the mayor's court, and a register of the sheriff's 'Court of Record' begun in 1421 in the time of John

¹ The custumal of the mayor's court is inserted in a separate quire, (fos 343-350) in the second part of the York Memorandum Book A/Y (YMB, 2, pp.251-266). This volume is ostensibly a precedent book, but the latter half in particular contains much material gathered from the records of the mayor's courts. Sheriffs: YMB, 1, pp.137-139. London: YMB, 2, pp.143-155.

² J. Raine (ed.), *A Volume of English Miscellanies Illustrating the History and Language of the Northern Counties of England*, SS, lxxxv (1890) contains some searchers' accounts.

³ YCA, D/1, fos 314-317v.

⁴ Widdrington, *Analecta Eboracensia*, Chapter 6; Francis Drake, author of *Eboracum*, copied much of this chapter into his own work, and acknowledged his debt to Widdrington for 'the Law part' of his history in the preface.

Austinmore and Thomas Aton, sheriffs of York.¹ Three manuscripts contain records of the sheriffs' courts after c. 1478-c. 1540.² In addition there are fragments of wardmote court books from 1490-1495, which are mainly concerned with pleas of nuisance.³

Apart from the records resulting from the city's jurisdiction, from at least the middle of the thirteenth century the city corporately was responsible for some properties of its own, and the records of these holdings are far more extensive and informative than the court records.⁴ Category G in the City Archives contains over 100 deeds of properties, including some acquired by the city as the trustees of chantries, as well as deeds of the Austin and Carmelite Friars and the Guild of Corpus Christi. In many cases deeds have also survived for these same properties from the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, along with the deeds of post-reformation charitable foundations (YCA, G). In addition to the deeds there are a number of leases of city property. One quire of leases made between 1415 and 1429, while Roger Burton was the town clerk, was inserted in the city deed register between the original

¹ Widdrington, *Analecta Eboracensia*, p. 101.

² YCA, E24, E25, E25A, F/1.

³ YCA, CC1a, fos 135 A & D; CC9, fos 84-86; E31.

⁴ For the origins of the city's estate, see below Chapter Five.

folios xxxvii^j and xxxix of YCA, E20A (i.e. new folios 39-51).¹ Categories H and I in the City Archives contain original leases of city tenements, a minority of which date from the late fourteenth to the early fifteenth century.² Some of these and many more leaves have been rendered virtually illegible by damp.³ The House Books also contain copies of a number of city leases, which unfortunately were not included in the selective editions of the House Books by Angelo Raine as such documents were then considered to be of 'no historic value'.⁴ For the first five volumes covering the period 1475-1489 there is a typescript calendar of the omitted documents available in the City Archives. The more modern House Books can be especially useful in locating city tenements since from the eighteenth century they often contain plans of the property to be leased.⁵ In the same way YCA, E101 is a useful register of city leases for the periods 1704-73/1779-1813.

Complementing the city leases is the extensive series of fifteenth-century rent rolls of the Ouse and Foss bridgemasters. Altogether there are 113 rolls

¹ YNB, 3, pp.53-69.

² YCA, H/1, I/80A, 81, 90A-94, 104, 105, 120, 130, 137A, 159-165, 204.

³ YCA, J.

⁴ YCR, 2, p.1v.

⁵ YCA, E40-50.

dating from 1406 to 1692,¹ 53 of which cover the period 1406-1540.² In addition there is one earlier rental of city property for c. 1377 copied into the first four folios of the York Memorandum Book.³ These rent rolls are among the most detailed for medieval York. They usually describe the nature and location of the property, and occasionally they provide additional information about tenure. The complete rolls, such as C82.10 for c. 1440, include sections of expenditure on repairs to property.

Records of Parish Churches, Guilds and Fraternities

One of the main sources for the lands of the chantries endowed in city parishes are the deeds deposited with the city corporation as trustees. The foundation of such chantries became common from the last two decades of the thirteenth century and probably reached a peak in the middle decades of the fourteenth century. During the fifteenth century the number of new foundations declined considerably, and it became more

¹ YCA, C66-98.

² YCA, C80-88.

³ YCA, E20; *YMB*, 1, pp.1-12.

common to re-endow existing chantries.¹ The other most profitable sources for the study of the chantry properties are the records of the parish feoffees now kept in the Borthwick Institute.² These very often contain not only the deeds of foundation but also large numbers of deeds relating to the history of the property before the chantry's foundation, and a series of conveyances, leases and plans tracing the history of the parish's estate into the nineteenth century. While most of the parishes' estates tended to lie within the parish, a number of the wealthier chantries were endowed with properties throughout the city. Not all the feoffees' records preserve medieval sources; but some churches, such as All Saints, Pavement, St. Martin, Coney Street, St. Crux, and St. Michael, Spurriergate, have preserved a large collection of thirteenth and fourteenth-century deeds. The chantry surveys made after 1546, of which at least three survive for institutions in the city of York, are of comparatively little value in trying to identify individual tenements, although they have a limited use in providing some details of rent income.³

¹ R.B. Dobson, 'The foundation of perpetual chantries by the citizens of York', in G.J. Cuming (ed.), *Studies in Church History*, vol IV (Leiden, 1967).

² B.I., Y/PR.

³ *The Certificates of the Commissioners Appointed to Survey the Chantries, Guilds, Hospitals, etc. in the County of York* (parts 1 and 2), W. Page (ed.), (SS 91, 92, 1892-3) hereafter cited as *Yorkshire Chantry Surveys*; YML, M2/4a (78 fos, paper, post 1547)

The fraternities of York, including craft fellowships and religious guilds, began acquiring tenements and rents from the mid-fourteenth century and sometimes earlier. Unfortunately no records survive for the smaller fraternities, such as the carpenters who were granted a rent of 6s. in c. 1250-70 to maintain a candle for St. William the Confessor.¹ The archives of the Merchant Adventurers are the most complete of the larger fraternities, containing an extensive series of accounts, medieval deeds and a cartulary.² Originally incorporated in 1357 as the Guild of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary, this group of wealthy citizens first built a hospital in Fossgate and later an adjoining chantry chapel, and it was around Fossgate and Pavement that their estate was centred. For the estate of the Corpus Christi Guild, which was founded in 1408, only seventeen account rolls dating from 1415-1540 survive.³ For the Guild of St. Christopher, and for St. Thomas' Hospital in Blossomgate which was amalgamated with the Corpus Christi Guild in 1478, only a very few deeds survive.⁴

¹ *YMB*, 3, pp.84-85.

² The cartulary is currently being edited for publication by Professor David Palliser and Dr. David Smith.

³ *YCA*, C99-102.

⁴ *YCA*, G67.

**Records of the Dean and Chapter of the
Metropolitan Church of St. Peter, York**

The secular records of the dean and chapter are comparable to those of the city in that they contain some records resulting from their jurisdiction over their liberty as well as the documents of their estate administration. Few court records of St. Peter's Liberty from the medieval period survive. The steward's court of common pleas was held in the court room over the gaol in Petergate, next to the west gate of the close.¹ Among the dean and chapter's registers there is the odd record of a plea of land held in this court, but none of the court's records proper have survived.² St. Peter's liberty in York consisted entirely of the dean and chapter's common and prebendal estates which by the fourteenth century were held mostly by leases and tenancies-at-will. There were relatively few free tenancies, and it is perhaps significant that the one case detected was an assize of fresh force involving two canons in dispute over a small yard between their residences in the Close.³ Nevertheless in 1315, the dean and chapter demonstrated their privilege to have

¹ Gazetteer, *Tenement* 58

² YML, L2/2a, fo 47.

³ YML, M2/4g, fcs 23-4.

the king's justices remove their court to that of the liberty when hearing a plea concerning one of their free tenements in Petergate.¹ It is therefore probable that the business of the liberty's court of common pleas was combined with that of the Peter Court, which was held by the steward on every third Wednesday. One roll of this court has survived for the year 1445-46.² It was concerned primarily with pleas of debt, nuisance and assault.

The growth of the dean and chapter's estate is described in chapter three below. There are two surviving general cartularies of the dean and chapter of York - BL, Cotton MS Claudius B iii and YML, L2/1 (the *Liber Albus*). MS Claudius B iii, folios 3-134, has been dated to c. 1280 and the *Liber Albus*, which is divided into four separately foliated sections, has been dated to *tempore* Edward III.³ However both volumes contain numerous later additions and much repetition of material. Dr. Sandra Brown established the basic relationship between these two manuscripts, as well as the existence of two further cartularies which are now lost, in the introduction to her thesis on the Peculiar

¹ YML, L2/2a, fos 30-31; Gazetteer, *Tenements 15-17*.

² YML, F/1/3/1.

³ G.R.C. Davis, *Medieval Cartularies of Great Britain* (1958), p. 126.

Jurisdiction of York Minster.¹ The following remarks are intended simply to convey the importance of the cartularies for the study of the urban estate of the Minster in the middle ages. This is particularly necessary as only a small minority of the relevant documents have ever been published.²

Most of MS Claudius B iii folios 3-134 is copied, with four omissions, in the *Liber Albus*, part ii, fo 1 - part iii, fo 58v. The majority of the York documents in this text are concerned with twelfth and thirteenth-century endowments of the dean and chapter. In particular the documents refer to parish churches appropriated to the common fund, as well as to the ordination of chantries in the Minster, which show the dean and chapter acquiring York tenements especially in the vicinity of the Minster Close. A few interesting deeds concern the 'rump' of the archbishop's shire in Goodramgate and Micklegate, and there are further deeds referring to the increased endowment of prebends with land in the city. The copies of charters in the *Liber Albus* unfortunately tend to omit or abbreviate witness lists. The following section of the *Liber Albus*, part iii, folios 58v-87v, is copied again in part iv, folios

¹ S. Brown, 'The Peculiar Jurisdiction of York Minster in the Middle Ages', (History D.Phil. Thesis, York, 1980), pp. 1-5.

² *YMF*, 2, pp.158-164, contains a list of the charters in Claudius B iii of which the general historical content is in print.

5-36v, and again contains copies of thirteenth century documents. In this text however the York charters are concerned with the management of property already acquired, in that they contain copies of the grants and quitclaims of the tenants, both religious and lay, of the property of the dean and chapter, mainly in and around the Minster Close. The remaining folios of parts iii and iv of the *Liber Albus* also contain further documents of this kind. *Liber Albus* part iii, fos 95-97 contains deeds referring to the property in the Close of William of York, who was elected bishop of Salisbury in 1246. *Liber Albus* part iv, fos 37-45 contains a record of the inquisition and survey into the extent of St. Peter's liberty in York held in March 1276. This survey was copied again into YML, L2/2a, fos 21-24. The *Liber Albus* is therefore the most important single source for the study of York Minster's endowment in the thirteenth century. During the fourteenth century the endowment of chantries became the most fruitful source of new acquisitions for the dean and chapter, who also pursued an active policy in purchasing rents and tenements for the maintenance of the fabric and existing altars of the Minster. Such chantry endowments were recorded in a number of new registers as well as being added to existing cartularies. The major sources are YML, L2/2a (the *Liber Domesday*), which is a fourteenth-century compilation, additions being made up to 1475; YML, M2/4g (the *Miscellaneous Register*) which is also a late fourteenth-century compilation with additions; the *Liber*

Albus part iv, fos 45v-118; and MS Claudius B iii, fos 135-165 and 198-213v. In these texts chantry ordinations, concerning properties throughout both the county and the city, are copied amidst a profusion of other capitular charters, letters and ordinances. In many cases documents were copied into more than one register. The marginal note '*Ex Libr' Domesday*' in MS Claudius B iii, fo 207 suggests that some attempt was made to collate such duplications. The duplications seem to be random and unco-ordinated copies of individual documents.

The most impressive example of the collation of information on the Minster chantries is an invaluable survey, made in 1364, of all the chantries with details of their foundation, rights of collation and presentation, their incumbents, location in the Minster, ornaments and landed endowments usually set out in the form of a rental.¹ The extent of this survey suggests that its compiler had access to far more extensive archives, dating back to the twelfth century, than have survived to the present day. The greatest loss is undoubtedly that of all the dean and chapter's original deeds. A calendar of some of these deeds was compiled in two versions by Thomas Water, who was registrar to the dean and chapter between c. 1509 and 1540. This

¹ YML, M2/4g, fos 13v-43v.

shows that a large collection of deeds was kept in a series of numbered chests, with all the deeds concerning an individual property rolled in a separate lettered bundle, probably with the most recent documents rolled on the outside. Possibly the deeds were also arranged according to the streets in which the tenements lay, and they certainly covered a long period beginning before the property was acquired by the Minster. Many of these endowments also post-dated the survey of 1364. In his first version of the calendar,¹ Water seems to have calendared the documents as they came to hand in reverse chronological order, making a careful note of the bundle and chest in which they were contained. In his second manuscript,² Water completely reversed the order of his calendar, thus correcting the chronological order, and added a few documents previously omitted. The calendared entries are extremely brief; usually no more than the street of the property and the names of the donor and recipient are given, although very occasionally a date, or more precise location of a tenement are mentioned. Even such occasional additions of information can help locate a whole sequence of deeds referring to the same property. Fourteenth-century surveys of the Minster's endowment are limited to a late fourteenth-century survey of the dean and chapter's

¹ YML, M2/2a.

² YML, M2/2b.

jurisdiction which was revised in 1409.¹ The later version is the more detailed giving in many cases the names of tenants and their predecessors. Since the survey was probably confined to the peculiar spiritual jurisdiction of the dean and chapter, it sheds less light on the secular extent of St. Peter's liberty than the survey of 1276.

In addition to these general cartularies and registers there is evidence that some of the wealthier officials of the chapter may have kept their own cartularies. BL, Cotton MS Vitellius A ii, fos 124v-144v contains material relating to the dean and deanery from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries which cannot be found elsewhere. YML, M2/3a contains part of a fifteenth-century cartulary of the treasurer, and part of a cartulary of the archdeacon of Richmond.² The former contains no material on York properties; but the deeds in the latter which concern the archdeacon's house in Stonegate are also copied in the two general cartularies.³ Leases of prebendal endowments were generally approved by the dean and chapter, as were leases of chantry and fabric rents. No original leases

¹ B.I., D/C A.B.1, fos 241-243v; YML, M2/1f fos 24-25v; (copied in YML M2/2c, fos 31-34): 1409; YML L2/3a, fos 10v-11.

² *Cartulary of the Treasurer of York Minster*, J. Burton, B.I. Texts and Calendars (1978).

³ YML, L2/1 pt iii, fo 3; BL, Cotton MS Claudius B iii, fo 88.

have survived, but a few copies, largely of late fourteenth and fifteenth-century date, are preserved in the *Miscellaneous Register*, YML, M2/4f (the *Registrum Antiquum*), and in YML, M2/5 (the *Register of Appropriations*). This last volume is a fifteenth-century compilation, and contains the largest collection of capitular leases, among other capitular ordinances. The first lease register proper of the dean and chapter (YML, Wa), covers the period c. 1508-1543.

The rents of York properties were accounted for, in the main, by three officials of the medieval chapter. The bailiff of St. Peter's fee was responsible mainly for the maintenance and welfare of the prison and its inmates and accounted for the profits of Peter Court. In addition the bailiff managed the rents of both free tenants and tenants-at-will of some of the prebendal tenements, and of tenements built within the cemeteries of churches in York which were appropriated to the common fund. There are a series of six accounts of the bailiffs of St. Peter's fee from 1487 to 1540.¹ Each year any balance on the bailiff's account was handed to the chamberlain of the chapter, who drew up final accounts at Pentecost and Martinmas each year. Only 2.2% of the chamberlain's income in 1370-71 came from rents in York. His tenements in York lay in Petergate,

¹ YML, F3/1-19.

Stonegate, Hundgate and Monkgate, and rents from these streets are presented as composite totals. Only in the case of the decayed rents of tenants-at-will were the individual tenants named in an itemised account endorsed on each roll. The chamberlains' accounts are not therefore very useful in studying either individual tenements or trends in property values, as the sample of tenements is so small. About half of the chamberlains' income was derived from two or three '*magne firme*'. There are 72 chamberlains' accounts from the period 1370-1500.¹

Subsidiary to the chamberlains' accounts, but far more useful for the study of York property, are the annual accounts of the keeper of the Fabric. The keeper had responsibility for all the tenements and shops leased within the Minster Close which were not part of an official residence, for all endowments given towards the upkeep of the Minster's fabric, and for most of the chantry endowments of the Minster which were not granted to the chantry incumbent or appropriated to the vicars choral. In 1441-42 about 27% of the Fabric's nominal income came from the rents of 104 separate tenements in York; in the Close, Petergate, Loplane, Jubbergate, Pavement, the Shambles and Colliergate.² There are

¹ YML, E1/1-72.

² YML, E3/15.

thirty-two Fabric rolls covering the period from c. 1360-1500.¹ However the first six of these rolls lack most of the income section of the account, so that it is only from the accounting year of 22 December 1415-21 December 1416 that information on the Fabric's income from rents has survived.² In the earlier rolls the rents are presented as composite totals by streets, but from c. 1431 the complete rent roll *per capita* is included. By 1433 these rent rolls were always endorsed on the account. Although the rents from that date are largely fossilized, the endorsed *per capita* accounts of decayed and reduced rents and constant changes of tenants' names, allow the real value of the Fabric's estate to be calculated. These accounts also contain details of the cost of repairs made to tenements of both the Fabric and the chamberlain. Although many of these Fabric rolls have been edited, their selective edition, with one exception, always omits the rent accounts and most of the details of tenement repairs.³

In the fourteenth century the majority of the chantries in the Minster were served by members of the vicars choral, who were formally incorporated in 1252 to serve in the Minster in the place of non-resident

¹ YML, E3/1-32.

² YML. E3/12.

³ *Fabric Rolls of York Minster*, J. Raine (ed.) SS, xxv (1858).

canons.¹ The celebration of obits and chantries however soon became an important part of their profession, and their chantry properties were by far the most lucrative source of their income. Although a number of the vicars choral endowments were copied into the general registers of the dean and chapter, the vicars were totally independent in the financial management of their estate. The consequent collection of archives is the most extensive and complete for the study of property in medieval York. By 1389-90 the vicars had 222 free tenants and tenants-at-will throughout the city, although the densest concentration of their tenements lay near their college in the Bedern in the Goodramgate/Petergate area of York.²

The Vicars Choral Cartulary, a fourteenth-century compilation, has been edited by Dr. N. Tringham.³ The endowments recorded in this manuscript fall into two major groups in the opening and closing folios, recording the thirteenth-century endowments with additions to c. 1360. In addition there is an extensive collection of original deeds (over 500 for the city of York), dating from the mid-twelfth to sixteenth

¹ R.B. Dobson, 'The Later Middle Ages', in *York Minster History*, p.90.

² For the vicars' estates see below pp.117-126 and Chapter Five.

³ N. Tringham, 'An Edition of the Cartulary of the Vicars Choral of York Minster' (History Ph.D. Thesis, Aberdeen, 1978).

centuries although the majority date from the mid-thirteenth century to c. 1420.¹

The chamberlains of the college bore the primary responsibility for the administration of the vicars' estates. The earliest surviving chamberlain's account dates from 1304,² but a chamberlain of the vicars is mentioned as early as 1261.³ Generally there was only one chamberlain, except in 1352, when two men were appointed to the office, but the chamberlain was aided by a subsidiary official, the *custos domorum*, in the collection and payment of rents, and the administration of repairs. Both officials accounted twice a year at Pentecost and Martinmas. The chamberlain's income was almost entirely composed of rents from the vicars' estates. However occasionally he received a few shillings from the sale of stores, especially timber, and much more rarely he accounted for gifts of money to be distributed among the vicars. For example in 1312-1313 the chamberlain accounted for £11. 6. 8d. received from the executors of Roger de Cawood and shared among the vicars.⁴ From 1389-90 the chamberlain also accounted among his receipts a sum for obits which were

¹ YML, VC 6/3/Vi and Vo.

² YML, VC 6/2/1.

³ 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', p.xlvii.

⁴ YML, VC 6/2/8.

no longer observed.¹ From that date until c. 1415-16 this sum was passed on to the succentor for distribution among the vicars, but after 1415-16 it appears simply to have been absorbed into the chamberlain's general receipts,² and by the mid-fifteenth century provided a quite significant addition to the chamberlain's balance of receipts. From 1399 the chamberlain's receipts were also augmented by income from the properties of Cottingham's chantry,³ and between 1406 and 1409 the accounts of St. Edward's Chantry, which had previously been kept separately, were amalgamated with those of the chamberlain.⁴ However neither of these additions substantially altered the nature of the chamberlain's receipts.

The earliest chamberlain's accounts do not provide an itemised account of rents received or paid, but simply preserved the totals of rents due as shown in the particulars of the rent rolls, which were kept separately until c. 1389-1399. Altogether twenty complete, and four fragmentary, rent rolls survive from the period c. 1303-1374.⁵ By Martinmas 1378 the

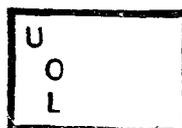
¹ YML, VC 6/2/33 et seq.

² YML, VC 6/2/45.

³ YML, VC 6/2/38 et seq.

⁴ YML, VC 6/2/44 et seq.; VC 4/2/3/1-7.

⁵ YML, VC4/1-17; VC 6/2/3, 5, 6, 9, 12, 16; VC 6/1/6.



chamberlain had begun to include totals of rents due summarised by street in his final account,¹ and in 1389 the complete rent roll was endorsed on the account, although this did not become standard practice until 1399, since the accounts of 1395 and 1398-99 do not have rent rolls endorsed.²

Against his income from rents the chamberlain had to set the cost of repairs to the property and the purchase of materials for that purpose, the cost of unpaid (defective) rents, and rents which had been reduced in value (decayed rents). Thus the income recorded in the receipts represented rents due, rather than rents collected. The chamberlain was also responsible for the cost of minor repairs, and regular maintenance within the Bedern itself,³ for routine legal and administrative costs concerned with the running of the estate, for the costs of the celebration of the feasts of St. William and St. John the Baptist, for sundry supplies for the chapel, for the cost of providing a watch on a stretch of the city walls in times of emergency, and for rents owed by the college to other landlords. All these were recorded in the

¹ YML, VC 6/2/28.

² YML, VC 6/2/36-38.

³ His responsibility did not however extend beyond the maintenance of the buildings and gardens shared in common. Each vicar was responsible for the maintenance of his own dwelling.

expenses section of the accounts. Occasionally special items of expenditure were allowed. From 1369-c. 1406 the chamberlain reserved 36s. each term for the improvement of John de Cottingham's chantry,¹ and one special building account for the expenditure of £14 of this money in the rebuilding of Cottingham rent survives for 1395.² From c. 1383 however, an increasing share of this work was taken over by an official Repairer who kept independent accounts,³ and from c. 1362 there was also a series of separate Building Accounts kept by the chamberlain for unusually large projects.⁴

The archives of York Minster rival those of the City Corporation as the most extensive sources for the study of the topography of medieval York. Although these archives contain material for the study of property holdings throughout the city, the concentration of the Minster's holdings in the streets surrounding the Minster Close influenced the decision taken to attempt a detailed tenemental reconstruction of the street of Petergate in this dissertation. Such an attempt also offers an example of what might be achieved in other areas of the city. There is no doubt that

¹ YML, VC 6/2/26-43.

² YML, VC 6/2/36.

³ YML, VC 6/6.

⁴ YML, VC 6/10.

equally detailed reconstructions could be made of certain other districts, such as the Fossgate/Pavement area which is well documented in the archives of the Merchant Adventurers, and the feoffees of St. Crux and All Saints, Pavement churches. It is not suggested that Petergate is more representative of the whole city than another area might be; and where possible the detailed results of this reconstruction are contrasted with necessarily briefer references to other areas of the city.

Records of Monasteries and other Religious Houses

The archives of York Minster must once have been rivalled in their extent by the archives of St. Mary's Abbey, York, which was the wealthiest religious house in northern England. Unfortunately most of the archives of this community, together with those of most of the religious houses of Yorkshire, were lost in 1644 when the tower in which they had been deposited since the Dissolution was destroyed. However, it has been shown that more material was saved than was once thought. In large part this was due to the efforts of members of the Fairfax family, and to the work of Roger Dodsworth and his colleagues in transcribing thousands of charters

saved from the ruins and kept in private hands.¹ In addition a number of cartularies were preserved in private ownership, some of which have since been acquired by the British or the Bodleian libraries.

A total of forty-six religious houses, nearly all in Yorkshire, are known to have held property in York. Cartularies, fragments of cartularies, or transcriptions of charters belonging to thirty-five of these houses are known to have survived, and in the case of at least twenty houses these include charters relating to property in York.² In no single instance is the coverage as extensive as in the case of some of the Oxfordshire monasteries, such as the records of Osney Abbey, used by H.E. Salter in his *Survey of Oxford*.³

It is well known that the monastic houses of Yorkshire enjoyed their most prosperous period of endowment during the period following their foundation after the Norman Conquest until the middle of the thirteenth century.⁴ See below, Chapter Four, for monastic estates in York. The monastic cartularies are

¹ B.A. English & C.B.L. Barr, 'The records formerly in St. Mary's Tower, York', *YAJ*, 42 (1967-70), p.198.

² See below pp.39-41 for list of manuscripts consulted.

³ H.E. Salter, *Survey of Oxford*, 1 (1960) p.xxiii.

⁴ See below, Chapter Four, for monastic estates in York.

therefore the most valuable source for the study of twelfth and thirteenth-century property endowments, and a number of the twelfth-century charters relating to York tenements have been edited in Volume I of *Early Yorkshire Charters* by W. Farrer. Not surprisingly, the two houses with the most properties in York were the York foundations of St. Mary's Abbey and St. Leonard's Hospital. The alien Benedictines of the priory of Holy Trinity York also had extensive holdings in York, although unfortunately none of their archives has survived.

The cartulary of St. Leonard's Hospital, BL, Cotton MS Nero D iii, is a late fourteenth-century compilation with some later additions.¹ It contains 135 folios of copies of charters relating to York tenements, dating from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries and grouped together, first by tenement² and then by streets arranged in alphabetical order. This orderly arrangement is a constant aid to the reconstruction of the history of individual tenements, although not approaching the historical sophistication of cartularies such as those of Holy Trinity Aldgate, London, or God's

¹ G.R.C. Davis, *Medieval Cartularies*, p.128.

² Such a grouping becomes apparent when the source is used to reconstruct tenements' histories, it is not however infallible; older deeds in particular are often misplaced (*Gazetteer, Tenements* 2-5).

House, Southampton, where the compilers have attempted to locate and provide a continuous history of every tenement in their possession.¹ St. Leonard's had a large estate of about 200 tenements in York. The largest number were in the area around the hospital from Lendal to Petergate, with a smaller concentration across the river in Micklegate and Skeldergate.

Two fourteenth-century cartularies of St. Mary's Abbey also contain much material relating to York.² Both cartularies contain detailed contemporary calendars of their contents in the opening folios, and both contain later fourteenth to fifteenth-century additions. The John Rylands' manuscript is arranged topographically, covering the West and East Ridings of Yorkshire, although the original order is now much disturbed. The Minster manuscript is arranged according to the obedientaries of the Abbey, and there is inevitably some repetition of material. St. Mary's Abbey possessed about 130 tenements in 36 streets in York, with a significant concentration in the immediate vicinity of the abbey.

¹ *The Cartulary of Holy Trinity Aldgate*, G. Hodgett (ed.) (London Record Society, 1971); *The Cartulary of God's House Southampton*, Vol 1, J.M. Kaye (ed.), *Southampton Record Series*, xix, (Southampton, 1976).

² John Rylands MSS 220-1, and YML, MS 16/2a.

Records of Lay Landowners

Archives of secular medieval estates are notoriously rare, so that York is fortunate in the survival of no less than three cartularies, and three collections of deeds, of the estates of substantial lay landowners within the city. The oldest collection is the twelfth-century charters of the honour of Mowbray, collected by D.E. Greenway.¹ These contain a few early twelfth-century York deeds which can be fitted into the context of a much larger estate of a leading noble. The oldest cartulary is that of the Percy family, barons of Alnwick and, after 1377 earls of Northumberland.² In particular this cartulary contains a collection of deeds recording the tenements purchased before the construction of the Percy's Inn in Walmgate. The material is therefore similar to that of the original deeds of the Scrope family, who purchased a number of neighbouring tenements in Micklegate in the 1320s, before constructing their York residence.³

¹ *Charters of the Honour of Mowbray 1107-1191*, D.E. Greenway (ed.) [*Records of Social and Economic History*, British Academy, New Series 13 (1972)]1.

² *The Percy Cartulary*, H.T. Martin (ed.) [SS, cxvii, (1911)].

³ *Yorks. Deeds*, 7, pp.188-190.

Two fifteenth-century cartularies, those of John Thwaites and of the Clervaux family, which were both compiled between c. 1450 and 1460, also demonstrate how Yorkshire gentlemen were able to acquire large sites in the city for the construction of town houses; moreover both families also had other properties in the city. John Thwaites was an exact and cautious lawyer, and his cartulary¹ is an almost perfect example of methodical compilation. Each grant, quitclaim and final concord is complete and in both topographical and chronological order. There are 28 folios of York material, relating to Goodramgate and King's Court, Bishophill and Skeldergate, and Northstreet. However the Thwaites' inheritance of the sergeanty of Davy Hall in York is not included.² There are also some additions from the time of William Fairfax who inherited the Thwaites' estate through marriage in 1514. The cartulary of the Clervaux family of Croft contains 36 folios of copies of deeds for properties in eighteen streets in the city.³ Dating mainly from the mid-thirteenth to late fourteenth century, they complement the collection, in a previously unnoted seventeenth-century compilation of Fairfax deeds from the reign of John to the reign of

¹ Hardwick MS 20, now in the keeping of the Trustees of the Chatsworth Estate.

² R. Pugh, 'Prisons and Gallows' in *VCHY City of York*, p.496.

³ NYCRO, Clervaux Cartulary, fos 76-112v.

Edward III, contained in BL, Egerton MS 2147. This is composed of 82 paper folios, which contain the deeds of the York estate of William Fairfax, reeve of York, and his descendants. The estate consisted of a very substantial holding of tenements in the general area from Ousegate/Coppergate to Micklegate/Skeldergate, including a stone house on Ousebridge. Some of these deeds were certainly seen by Thomas Widdrington in the 1630s or 1640s, and used in his *Analecta Eboracensia*.¹ These manuscripts therefore form a unique record of a wealthy burgess family's estate in thirteenth-century York.

Equally important for the study of private family holdings in the city is the extensive series of wills and inventories preserved in the Borthwick Institute and the York Minster Library.² In York, as in other boroughs, burgage properties could be freely devised by will.³ However, although in 1371 a civic ordinance insisted that all wills bequeathing property in the city should be registered in the city courts,⁴ the ecclesiastical courts remained the principal court of

¹ Widdrington, *Analecta Eboracensia*, p.81. Widdrington was a son-in-law of General Sir Thomas Fairfax, and like other Yorkshire antiquarians, such as Roger Dodsworth and later Francis Drake, had access to the Fairfax family's collection of manuscripts.

² The registers most consulted have been BI, Prob. Reg. 1-5; YML, L2/4f.

³ Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, p.76.

⁴ *YNB*, 1, p.13.

record for all local wills. Unlike London's Husting Rolls, for example, the registers of the city contain comparatively few wills.¹

Public Records

The Public Records contain some of the richest resources for the urban historian. Professor Edward Miller's chapter on 'Medieval York' in the *Victoria County History* amply demonstrates how far crown archives can be used in reconstructing local histories, even where local archives have not always been well preserved, while the recent survey of sources for London property holdings indicates the immense potential of the Public Records for this type of research although the sheer volume of the material defies thorough analysis.²

In the present study the sources most used include the various categories of legal inquisitions³ which

¹ YCA, E20A (YMB, 3) contains copies of fifteen wills. D. Keene and V. Harding, *A Survey of Documentary Sources for Property Holding in London before the Great Fire* (London Record Society, 22, 1985), pp.2-3.

² Keene and Harding, *A Survey of Documentary sources for Property Holding in London*, pp.168 ff.

³ PRO, C.132 (*post mortem*); C.143 (*ad quod dampnum*); C.145 (*miscellaneous*).

often complement the information for property holding contained in the Patent and Fine Rolls. A search of the various categories of Ancient Deeds yielded disappointingly little York material,¹ and an extensive search of archives deposited from the Augmentation Office was also relatively unfruitful.² Fortunately the Ministers' Accounts for the estates of dissolved monastic houses are largely intact and yielded valuable information about the value and nature of monastic property holdings in York.³

Although no other category in the Public Record Office has been exhaustively searched for York material, further reference has been made to the Pipe Rolls and rolls of assize and justices in eyre, of which Professor Miller made such impressive use.⁴ In addition the accounts of the king's escheator north of the Trent have provided additional evidence, complementing that of the city's own administration, about encroachments onto public space in the later middle ages.⁵ Unfortunately

¹ Categories searched included PRO, E.40, 210, 211, 326, C.146. More work could be done in searching the various categories of enrolled deeds (see PRO, Leaflet 25).

² Categories searched included PRO, E.301, 303, 310, 315, 318, 319. Possibly many of the archives of Yorkshire houses had been stored in St. Mary's Tower in York, and not taken to London.

³ PRO, SC.6.

⁴ Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, *passim*: PRO, Just 1.

⁵ PRO, E.136.

it has not proved possible to make more use of the taxation returns which have proved so valuable to other urban historians. Work on these sources has generally been restricted to those which have already been published.

Although York lacks the extensive series of enrolled deeds which have been fundamental to the study of property holding in some other towns,¹ the surviving archives of the great property-owning institutions are sufficiently rich to allow the history of land ownership and management to be reconstructed in some detail. The reconstruction of medieval property holdings in the university towns of Oxford and Cambridge had already suggested how such sources might be used by the urban historian, and this has recently been further illustrated by Dr. Margaret Camsell's work on Durham.²

This study of property holding in York has by no means exploited all the materials available for the

¹ Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, p.11; U. Priestley (ed.), *Men of Property. An analysis of the Norwich enrolled deeds 1285-1311*; Keene and Harding, *A Survey of Documentary Sources of Property Holding in London*, pp.xii, 2-3.

² Salter, *Survey of Oxford*; R. Willis and J.W. Clark, *The Architectural History of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1886); M.M. Camsell, 'The Development of a Northern town in the Later Middle Ages: The City of Durham c. 1250-1540' (hereafter cited as 'The City of Durham') (History D.Phil. Thesis, York, 1986).

subject. In particular the extensive series of York wills has not been consistently searched for all references to York property, with the exception of those registers which cover the area of the dean and chapter's jurisdiction within which Petergate largely lay. The archives of the Company of Merchant Adventurers, which are currently the subject of another research project, were kindly made available but have only been referred to briefly. Most research has concentrated on the archives of the city itself, of the Minster and of the monastic houses of Yorkshire, and naturally the property-owning interests of these corporations tend to dominate throughout. However, these records are in themselves an important subject for study since the attitude of these corporations to the management of their urban estates has had a striking influence on both the physical and the institutional development of the city.

CHAPTER ONE; APPENDIX

Monastic cartularies and other manuscripts
containing references to York property

(printed sources are given in abbreviated form)

BYLAND	BL, MS Egerton 2823
DRAX	Bodl., Top. Yorks. C.72
EASBY	BL, MS Egerton 2827
FOUNTAINS	BL. Add. MSS 18276 (40009, 40010) Oxford University College MS 167
GODSTOW	(<i>EETS</i> , orig. series 130)
GUISBOROUGH	BL, Cotton MS Cleopatra D ii (SS, lxxxvi, xcix)
HEALAUGH PARK	<i>YASRS</i> , xcii (1956)
HEXHAM	(SS, xliv, 1863)
KIRKHAM	Bodl., Fairfax 7
KIRKSTALL	(Thoresby Society, 8, 1904)
MALTON	BL, Cotton MS Claudius D xi
NEWBURGH	Bodl., Dodsworth 91 (fo 18v, copy of one will only)
NOSTELL	BL, Cotton MS Vespasian E xix (<i>YASRS</i> , lxi, 1920) (Rentals, description of)
PONTEFRACT	(<i>YASRS</i> , xxv, xxx, 1899 & 1902)
ST. LEONARD'S HOSPITAL, YORK	BL, Cotton MS Nero D iii
ST. MARY'S, YORK	YML, MS 16a.2 J. Ryl., MSS 220-1 Bodl. Dods. 76, fos 122-123
SAWLEY	(<i>YASRS</i> , lxxxvii, xc, 87, 90, 1933-34)
SELBY	(<i>YASRS</i> , x, xiii, 1891, 1893)
RIEVAULX	(SS, lxxxiii, 1889)
SKOKIRK & TOCKWITH	(<i>YASRS</i> , lxxx, 1931)
WHITBY	(SS, lvii, 1871)

Monastic cartularies etc. (of Yorkshire) not
containing references to York property

BOLTON, Bodl., Dods. 144, fos 1-162; BYLAND, Bodl.,
Dods. 76, fo 146; DRAK, *ibid*, fos 124-126; N. FERRIBY,
Bodl., Add. C.51; FOUNTAINS, Bodl, Rawlinson B.449,
Oxford University College MS 170, BL, Egerton MS 3053,
BL Cotton MS Tiberius. C xii, BL, Add. MSS 37770,
40011(A), Leeds, Yorkshire Archaeological Society, MS
284; MONK BRETTON, BL, Lansdowne MS 405, BL, Add. MS
50755, (YASRS, lxvi, 1924); NOSTELL, BL, Royal App. 85,
fos 31-34; NUNKEELING, Bodl., Dods. 118, fo 83;
PONTEFRACT (College/Almshouses), Bodl., Barlow
49; PONTEFRACT, (St. Nicholas' Hospital), Bodl., Dods.
116, 118, Bodl., Top. Yorks. c.41; RICHMOND, Bodl.,
Dods. 159, fos 220-227; RIPON, (SS lxiv); SELBY, Bodl.,
Top. Yorks. d.2, BL, Cotton MS Cleopatra D iii, fos 184-
202, BL, Cotton MS Vitellius E xvi, fos 97-162; ST.
LEONARD'S HOSPITAL, YORK, Bodl. Rawlinson B.455; ST.
MARY'S, YORK, BL, Add. MS 38816, fos 21-39, BL, Harley
MS 236, Bodl., Dods 76, fos 56-64, 121; YORK MINSTER (D
& C), BL, Cotton MS Galba E x.

Monastic cartularies etc., not yet checked

BYLAND Bodl., Top. Yorks. d.11, fos 255v-278v
and Dodsworth 63, fos 9-78

BEVERLEY Beverley Minster Provost's Book, Oxford
University College MS 82, Washington
Library of Congress MS Ac.1093, SS 5,
98, 108, H.L. B-Lawrence (private)

BRIDLINGTON BL, Add. 40008

COCKERSAND BL, Add. MS 37769, and Sizergh Castle
(Lancs.) (private)

DONCASTER BL, Cotton MS Tiberius Cv, fos 152-287

DURHAM

FOUNTAINS Studley Royal MSS (x3), J. Ryl., MS 224

FURNESS PRO, Duchy of Lancaster (Misc. Books 3)
(Lancs.)

GUISBOROUGH (Untraced, noted in *Archaeology Journal*,
25, 1868, p.249)

KIRKSTALL PRO, Duchy of Lancaster (Misc. Books 7)

MEAUX BL, Cotton MS Vitellius C vi
BL, Lansdowne MS 424

NUNKEELING BL, Cotton MS Otho C viii

NUNMONKTON Belvoir Castle

PONTEFRACT BL, Add. MS 50754 (material not edited
(Cluniac priory) in *YASRS*, 25, 30)

SELBY PRO, Duchy of Lancaster (Misc. Books 8)

WARTER Bodl., Fairfax 9

WHITBY Newby Hall, Ripon

(All references from Davis,
Medieval Cartularies of Great Britain)

CHAPTER TWO: THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

The basic framework of York's medieval street plan was established well before the Norman Conquest, and in the shaping of the city can be detected the influence of over a thousand years of settlement before 1086. The legacy of the Roman foundation was critical, for subsequent inhabitants built within and around the surviving remains of the *Eboracum* of the third and fourth centuries.¹ The most important Roman contribution was the creation of a bi-focal settlement divided between the two areas of higher ground on either side of the river Ouse. To the south-west was the civilian *colonia* with its well-built villas and public buildings largely occupying the plateau at the top of an artificially enhanced river terrace, with commercial premises occupying the street along the waterfront below.² To the north-east of the Ouse was the fortress, occupying a typical rectilinear walled enclosure of some 50 acres, with the *principia* at its centre.³ Around the fortress straggled the rather less well-planned *canabae*, with their wharves, warehouses, temples, houses and

¹ The major secondary authority on Roman York is still *RCHMY*, 1, *Eboracum* (1961), although this can now be updated by reference to G. Andrews, 'Archaeology in York: An Assessment', in *Archaeological Papers from York*, pp.173-207, and to other papers in the same volume cited below.

² P. Ottaway, '*Colonia Eboracensis: a Review of Recent Work*', in *Archaeological Papers from York*, pp.28-33.

³ *RCHMY*, 1, pp.xxx, 5.

workshops, which were especially concentrated in the area to the south-east of the fortress between the two rivers.¹ The two settlements were probably linked by a bridge on a crossing near the present Guild Hall, although no certain archaeological remains of this have yet been identified.²

The influence of the Roman settlement can still be seen in York's streets and defences but it was the survival of its buildings, rather than the street plan, which most strongly influenced the medieval city.³ Within the *colonia* the original alignment of Roman streets has been almost completely erased. However the partial survival of an apsidal building in Bishophill until the ninth century may have influenced the alignment of the street of Bishophill Senior,⁴ and it is also possible that the circuit of medieval defences substantially follows that of the Roman defences of the *colonia*, although there is still frustratingly little

¹ D.A. Brinklow, 'Roman Settlement around the Legionary Fortress at York', in *Archaeological Papers from York*, pp.22-27.

² Andrews, in *Archaeological Papers from York*, p.177; but see also *RCHNY*, 1, 3b.

³ The case for the continuing influence of surviving Roman defences and gateways in the development of medieval town plans, and especially that of Winchester, has been made by M. Biddle, 'Towns', in *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, D.M. Wilson (ed.), (Cambridge, 1976), pp.106-109.

⁴ Andrews, in *Archaeological Papers from York*, p.200.

concrete evidence about the evolution of the fortifications in this area.¹

Within the area of the fortress the streets of Petergate and Stonegate appear to have been influenced by the survival of the *portae principalis dextra* and *sinistra*, and the *porta praetoria*, although they deviated from the line of the *via praetoria* and *via principalis*. (Map 2) In common with the majority of streets in York, neither is recorded in any written sources before the twelfth century,² although excavations at 65, Low Petergate revealed buildings aligned on the present street frontage by the eleventh century.³ Petergate also seems to have formed the south-western limit, beyond which the archbishop's shire and houses of the canons of St. Peter mentioned in the description of York in Domesday did not extend.⁴ Similarly the courses of Coneystreet, Jubbergate and St. Andrewgate, outside the fortress area, may have been influenced by the Roman defences on the south-west and south-east sides of the fortress, the ruins of which may

¹ Ottaway, in *Archaeological Papers from York*, p.28.

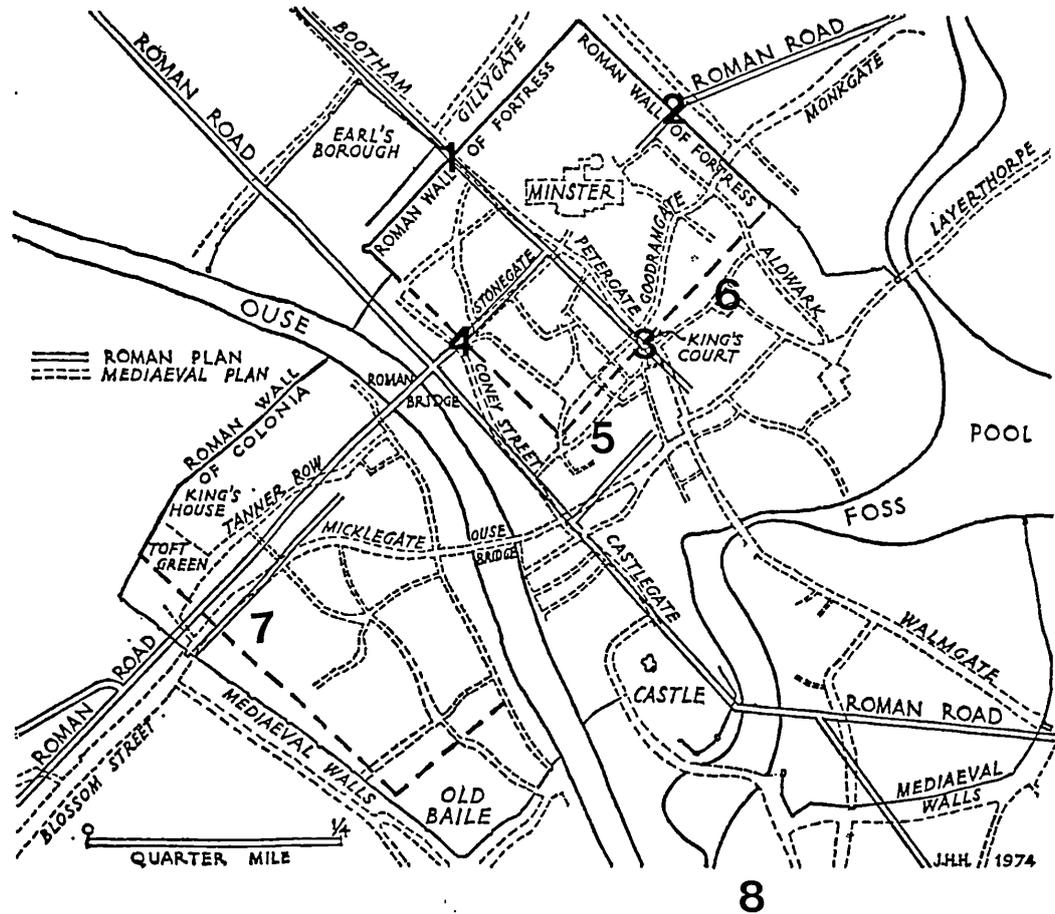
² *PNERY*, pp.297, 298; D.M. Palliser, 'The medieval street-names of York', *York Historian*, 2 (1978)pp.13, 15; Gazetteer, Petergate.

³ P. Wenham, 'Excavations in Low Petergate, York, 1957-58', *YAJ*, 44, (1972) p.77.

⁴ For a fuller discussion of the extent of the archbishop's shire, See below, pp.84-109.

Map 2:

Adapted from J.H. Harvey, *York* (1975), p.9, with the addition of Blake Street as it extended from St. Helen's Square to High Petergate before 1299



Mediaeval York superimposed on the Roman fortress, to the north-east of the Ouse, and the civil *colonia* opposite. The city incorporated both, together with suburban commercial districts, and the port to the south and east. The new pattern of streets is largely based on the crossing of the river at Ouse Bridge and consequent deflection from the Roman alignment.

- 1 *porta dextra* (Bootham Bar)
- 2 *porta decumana*
- 3 *porta sinistra* (King's Court)
- 4 *porta praetoria* (St. Helen's Square)
- 5 Jubbergate
- 6 St. Andrewgate
- 7 Holy Trinity Priory
- 8 Fishergate (excavations of late Anglian settlement)

have survived as a notable topographical feature into the Norman period.¹ It was the survival of the Roman defences, and other buildings such as the *principia*,² which influenced the development of the medieval street plan in this area. This is most strongly indicated by the alignment of Goodramgate and Blake Street, which both cross the fortress area diagonally, ignoring the rectilinear Roman street-plan. Mr. H. G. Ramm has suggested that Goodramgate originally extended in an almost straight diagonal line from the *porta sinistra* to the *porta decumana*, which he suggests was not stopped up until some time after the late twelfth century when it was replaced by a gate on the site of the present Monk Bar as the principal eastern entrance to the city.³ Although an attractive theory, it has not proved possible to substantiate this from documentary sources of the late twelfth century and after which all suggest an alignment of streets and tenement boundaries in Goodramgate and Ogleforth similar to that recorded in

¹ *RCHNY*, 1, p.12; H.G. Ramm, 'A Case of Twelfth-Century Town Planning in York?', *YAJ*, 4 (1968), p.134; Andrews, in *Archaeological Papers from York*, pp.194, 200.

² Part of the *principia* remained standing and in use until the ninth or tenth centuries. D. Phillips (personal comment).

³ Ramm, 'A Case of Twelfth-Century Town Planning in York?', pp.134-135.

the 1852 Ordnance Survey map of York.¹ This gives no indication of an abandoned extension of Goodramgate towards the *via decumana*, but nevertheless indicates how greatly the street disregards the presumed Roman street plan. However, Blake Street can be shown quite clearly to have extended originally from the *porta praetoria* to the *porta dextra*, for the northern portion of this street was only lost when enclosed in 1299 and its alignment still clearly influences property boundaries today.²

The influence, and even the nature, of settlement in York between the fifth and ninth centuries remains a major mystery, although recent excavations in Fishergate have dramatically increased the quantity of archaeological material from the latter part of this period. By the later fourth century the area of

¹ For property boundaries in the crucial area bounded by Chapter House Street, Ogleforth, Goodramgate and College Street, see BL, Cotton MS Claudius D xi, fos 201v-204; YML, L2/1 pt iv, fo 44v; M2/5, fos 252, 277; VC 3/Vi 130; 'Vicars choral Cartulary', nos 58, 99-101. The early diagonal alignment of Goodramgate to the south-west of College Street is confirmed by an identification of property described in a deed of c. 1177 x 1181, which refers to a tenement on a site between nos 32 and 34 Goodramgate (YML, L2/1, pt iii, fo 62v (printed in *BYC*, i, no 160), VC 3/Vi 110, 139, 140) A late twelfth-century reference to Monk Bar as *Gurumlid*, further confirms that by that date Goodramgate followed its present alignment (BL, Cotton Ms Claudius D xi, fo 202v).

² See below, Gazetteer, *Tenement 6*. The triangular open space in front of the Assembly Rooms in Blake Street was created by demolishing neighbouring buildings in 1734-36, and was not a feature of the medieval plan as earlier writers have suggested. (Drake, *Eboracum*, Appendix, pp.lix, lxi (plan); Raine, *Medieval York*, p.116; Harvey, *York*, p.91)

occupation was beginning to contract, as cemeteries encroached upon some previously occupied areas of the *canabae* and some buildings in the *colonia* fell into disuse.¹ However no evidence has been found to confirm the theory that the end of Roman York coincided with extensive flooding, although it is still believed that the fifth century was characterised by prolonged decline and dereliction.²

Some evidence of continued occupation within the ruins of the Roman town, in the seventh and eighth centuries in particular, indicates a continued if small population within both the *colonia* and the fortress, but the evidence has, to date, been too slight to indicate continued established settlement in these areas.³ The most persuasive theory is that centres of population in York became dispersed over a much wider area around the city. The Domesday entry for York lists 84 carucates in twelve different villages around the city which paid geld with the city and are included in the description of the *Civitas Eboraci*.⁴ Some of these villages are even

¹ Brinklow, in *Archaeological Papers from York*, pp.25-26; Ottaway, in *ibid.*, pp.32-33.

² H.G. Ramm, 'The End of Roman York', in R.M. Butler (ed.), *Soldier and Civilian in Roman Yorkshire*, (Leicester, 1971), pp.179-199; Andrews, in *Archaeological Papers from York*, p.178.

³ Andrews, in *ibid.*, pp.199-200.

⁴ *Domesday*, fo 298 b, c. They were the villages of Osbaldwick, Murton, Stockton, Sandburn, Heworth, (Gate) Fulford, Clifton, Rawcliffe, Overton, Skelton, *Nortun* and Wigginton, and all lie to the east of the Ouse.

now still largely detached from the modern suburbs of York, and all lay largely outside the liberty of the later medieval city.¹ As Professor A.G. Dickens first suggested, it is possible that an extensive *civitas* existed distinct from the smaller defended burgh, as also seems to have been the case in other Roman towns such as Nottingham, Gloucester, Colchester and Leicester, although not Lincoln.² Indeed such a definition of the city of York in the pre-Conquest period would conform well with the late Roman use of *civitas* to describe an administrative district.³ Within this area the various commercial, administrative and ecclesiastical functions of the Anglian city could have occupied quite distinct sites.⁴ There is now a persuasive body of, albeit partially circumstantial, evidence to suggest that the central elevated points of both the fortress and *colonia* were largely occupied by

¹Although outside the jurisdictional liberty of the city, the citizens' rights of common and pasturage extended over significant areas of both these townships and others which were adjacent to the city's liberty to the west of the Ouse. (P.M. Tillott and K.J. Allison, 'The Boundaries of the City', in *VCHY City of York*, pp.311-318)

² A.G. Dickens, 'York before the Norman Conquest', in *VCHY City of York*, p.20.

³ P. Salway, *Roman Britain*, (Oxford, 1981), p.583.

⁴ The poly-focal character of Anglo-Saxon urban settlement has been argued from a number of case studies, including Winchester and Southampton, London and Norwich. (Biddle, 'Towns', pp.114-115; A. Vince, 'The Aldwych: Mid-Saxon London Discovered?', *Current Archaeology*, 93 (1984), pp.310-312; J.S. Campbell, 'Norwich', in M.D. Lobel (ed.), *The Atlas of Historic Towns*, vol 2 (1975), p.3..

ecclesiastical precincts, and that these represent the sites of the church built by Edwin in 627 (later rebuilt as the first Minster), and of a second church dedicated to *alma Sophia* consecrated by Archbishop Ælberht in 780.¹ The presence of such an important foundation in the fortress area might explain the continued repair of the northern defences of the Roman fortress throughout the Anglian period.²

The location of the *wik*, or commercial settlements of Anglian *Eoforwik* may well have been located in areas of the city relatively isolated from the prestigious ecclesiastical and possible royal precincts, just as the *canabae* of Roman York had been relatively distinct from centres of government and administration. Professor David Palliser has argued the case for a *wik* on the south-west bank.³ However, recent excavations in Fishergate have revealed what appears to be a fairly

¹ The archaeological and documentary evidence for early church foundations in York has been most recently discussed by R. Morris, 'Alcuin, York and the *alma Sophia*', in L.A.S. Butler and R.K. Morris (eds.), *The Anglo-Saxon church: Papers on history, architecture and archaeology in honour of Dr. H.M. Taylor*. Council for British Archaeology, Research Report 60, (1986), pp.80-89. The issue has also been raised by D.M. Palliser, 'York's West Bank: medieval suburb or urban nucleus?', in *Archaeological Papers from York*, pp.104-105. The problem of identifying the archbishop's shire and the pre-conquest holdings of the church in York is further discussed below, pp.100-108.

² R.A. Hall, 'The Topography of Anglo-Scandinavian York', in R.A. Hall (ed.), *Viking Age York and the North*, p.32.

³ Palliser, in *Archaeological Papers from York*, pp.105-107.

extensive Anglian trading settlement of the eighth and ninth centuries occupying an area to the east of the Foss, remote both from the centres of occupation of Roman York and also from the extensive cemetery areas of the Roman city which were largely clustered to the west of the *colonia* and fortress.' This settlement lay within what were to become the suburbs of the later medieval city.

The major legacies of the Anglian period to the later medieval city now appear to have been the addition of a third focus of settlement to the east of the Foss in Walmgate and Fishergate, the establishment of prestigious ecclesiastical foundations within the walled city, and possibly the confirmation of a special relationship and interdependence between the residents of the defended urban core and the neighbouring rural townships.

The period following the Viking conquest of York in 866 in many respects represented a consolidation of York's emerging prosperity and political importance, and also quite literally of its, by then, sprawling pattern of streets and dispersed settlements. The late ninth

¹ Andrews, in *Archaeological Papers from York*, pp.199-200, nos 45, 70; R. Kemp, 'Pit your 'wics' or how to excavate Anglian York', *Interim*, vol II, no 3 (1986), pp.8-16; R.J.F. Jones, 'The Cemeteries of Roman York', in *Archaeological Papers from York*, p.34.

and tenth centuries generally were a period of special significance in urban development in north-west Europe, one feature of which was the apparent re-organisation and planning of space within towns often on a roughly rectilinear plan.¹ In York the major impact of the Scandinavian settlement was the revitalisation of commercial life near the centre of the city, in particular in the area to the south-east of the fortress around modern Coppergate, Pavement and the Shambles, and in the southern part of the *colonia* along Skeldergate.² This shift in the emphasis of settlement is thought to have been responsible for the removal of the crossing over the Ouse from its Roman position opposite the fortress to the present position of Ousebridge with a consequent realignment of the main thoroughfare across York away from the fortress to the present alignment of Micklegate and Ousegate. The whole area of the defended city to the west of the Ouse can be interpreted as being planned in relation to the displaced thoroughfare,³ and indeed the streets to the south of Micklegate may represent a somewhat distorted grid. Certainly the names of these streets recorded in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries - Skeldergate, Littlegate and

¹ H. Carter, *An Introduction to Urban Historical Geography* (1983), pp.74-77.

² Andrews, in *Archaeological Papers from York*, p.180; Hall, in *Viking Age York and the North*, p.33.

³ Palliser, in *Archaeological Papers from York*, pp.102-3, 105.

Besingate parallel to the Ouse, crossed by Lounlithgate and Bichill roughly parallel to Micklegate, may indicate their consolidation in the period of Scandinavian settlement, moreover excavation in Skeldergate suggests that property boundaries aligned on the present street were first established in the later ninth century.¹ The Coppergate excavations also revealed extensive replanning after c. 910 with the establishment of property boundaries which have remained unchanged until the modern period.² To the east of the Foss, Walmgate may have been a third focus of Scandinavian settlement, whilst tenement boundaries in Aldwark outside the fortress area were also first established in this period.³

The distinctive contribution of the new settlement of the late ninth and tenth centuries was thus a permanent influence on the shaping of the later medieval city not just in the confirmation of a new street pattern, especially in the *colonia* and to the south-east

¹ Palliser, in *Archaeological Papers from York*, pp. 102-103, 105; Andrews, *ibid.*, pp.201-202; 'Littlegate' can be identified with both St. Martin's Lane and Bishophill Senior from various descriptions of the location of the property of Bolton Priory (*Husgabel Roll*, no 343; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1313-17*, p.166; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1560-63*, p.14; PRO, E.303/22/34; Chatsworth House, Hardwick MS 20, fos 109-112). 'Besingate' can be identified with Lower Priory Street from an identification of an isolated property belonging to the vicars choral (YML, VC 3/Vi 193/2; YCA, Acc 1, plan).

² R.A. Hall, *The Viking Dig*, (York, 1984), pp.49-50.

³ Andrews, in *Archaeological Papers from York*, p.202, nos 70, 71.

of the fortress, but also in the establishment of property boundaries which, unlike those of earlier periods, continued to influence the pattern of building and ownership throughout the medieval period. Just as crucial in many respects was the foundation of parish churches. To date seventeen parish churches have been identified from archaeological, architectural or documentary evidence as having been in existence by 1100, although none have yet been identified as having a definite existence before c. 900.' It remains probable that many more churches, at present only known from the documentary record to have existed by the twelfth century, will be demonstrated also to have been founded in the tenth or eleventh centuries, although it would be unsafe to assume that all will prove to be of pre-Conquest origin.

With one exception the churches so far identified as of pre-Conquest foundation all lie outside the area of the Roman fortress, and the majority are associated with those areas believed to have been particular

¹ P.M. Tillott, 'The Parish Churches', in *VCHY City of York*, pp.365-403 passim; *YAJ*, 40 (1960), pp.496-506; J.R. Magilton, *The Church of St. Helen-on-the-Walls, Aldwark, AY*, 10/1 (York, 1980), p.18; R.B. Dobson and S. Donaghey, *The History of Clementhorpe Nunnery, AY*, 2/1 (York, 1984), pp.5, 8; H.G. Ramm, 'Excavations in the Church of St. Mary Bishophill Senior, York', *YAJ*, 48 (1976), p.35-68; R. Kemp, 'Getting your Priorys Right', *Interim*, vol II no 2 (1986), pp.19-27.

centres of Anglian and Scandinavian settlement.¹ There is also a striking absence of Scandinavian-age settlement in the fortress area. Excavations at 1-5, Aldwark and 65, Low Petergate suggested development began in the eleventh century with the establishment of property boundaries and new building, but on the whole the absence of occupation levels within the fortress area between the Roman and Norman periods, is striking.²

York's evolution during its first thousand years followed a complex path, and the effect on our understanding of the city's development in the early medieval period of the excavations in Coppergate and Fishergate demonstrate that much remains to be learned. Peripheral areas, such as Walmgate and Fishergate, did not necessarily evolve as subsidiary suburban districts, but possibly as important commercial settlements in their own right. By the late eleventh century the fusing of these disparate areas of settlement into a single urban conglomeration was already well-advanced, but the process of growth and evolution did not end with the Norman Conquest.

¹ Holy Trinity, Goodramgate, in existence by c. 1082, is the only parish church of proven pre-Conquest origin in the fortress area.

² Andrews, in *Archaeological Papers from York*, pp.201, 203, nos 25, 29; Wenham, 'Excavations in Low Petergate, York', pp.65-78; Hall, in *Viking Age York and the North*, p.34.

From the Norman Conquest to the Black Death

The immediate impact of the Norman Conquest on the city may have been disastrous. In 1068-69 two castles were built, one on either side of the river Ouse.¹ The more important occupied the neck of land between the rivers Ouse and Foss and was later to become the centre of county government in Yorkshire, and a liberty free from the jurisdiction of the mayor and citizens in the later medieval period. It is possible that its initial construction involved the destruction of a significant area of the Anglo-Scandinavian town,² and certainly the damming of the river Foss associated with the construction of the castle, caused extensive flooding both in the adjacent district and created the king's fish pool of the Foss to the north-east of Fossbridge, which extended as far as Tang Hall fields.³ Devastation by water was compounded by destruction by fire. In autumn 1069 the Norman garrison fired the houses nearest the castle and the fire was said to burn all the way to the Minster and to last for two days, although not

¹ On York's castles, see *RCHNY*, 2, pp.57-89; T.P. Cooper, *York: the Story of its Walls, Bars and Castles* (1904); T.P. Cooper, *The History of the Castle of York* (1911).

² *Domesday*, fo 298a.

³ *Domesday*, fo 298b; *The Viking Dig*, p.119; and see below, p.94.

completely destroying the town.¹

However the period of consolidation following the Conquest, rather than the initial burst of destruction of the military conquest itself, was to have much the profounder influence on the evolution of the city's landscape. In broad outline it appears that the process of nucleation, already apparent in the re-settlement of the southern part of the *colonia* and the Coppergate area in the Scandinavian period, continued the momentum of development in the city until the mid-fourteenth century. In particular the areas of Fishergate and Walmgate became increasingly peripheral and suburban, just as the central districts from Micklegate to Goodramgate became more densely occupied.

Of the various forces influencing this continuing process of consolidation, the first and possibly most important was the widespread reformation of the church in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, and in particular the establishment of new monastic communities in York which resulted in the creation of six new religious precincts within the city and its suburbs, as well as the reformation and refoundation of the clergy of the Minster, and of the canons serving the church of

¹ Dickens, in *VCHY City of York*, p.18; Douglas, *William the Conqueror*, pp.218-220. No archaeological evidence for this destruction by fire has yet been found (R.A. Hall, personal comment).

Christ Church in Micklegate. By 1089 the site of the new Benedictine abbey of St. Mary in Bootham extended over 12 acres, that of the refounded hospital of St. Leonard enclosed an area of approximately 4 acres within the south-western corner of the old fortress walls, and the precinct of the reformed community in Micklegate, rededicated as Holy Trinity Priory, extended to seven acres within Micklegate Bar.¹

To the east of the Foss in 1087-1095 William II confirmed to Whitby Abbey the church of All Saints in Fishergate.² Together with adjacent land this became a cell of the abbey, to which the first abbot retired, while another early charter refers to a community of monks living there.³ This small community certainly maintained some sort of residence in Fishergate, although it has not yet proved possible to reconstruct it in detail. In c. 1265 x 1278 the community made an agreement over the diversion of water within their 'area' in York,⁴ but a series of enfeoffments of the mid-thirteenth century suggests that they may have no longer fully occupied the site.⁵ Although traditionally

¹ K.J. Allison, 'The Sites and Remains of Religious Houses', in *VCHY City of York*, pp.357,360,363; and see below, pp.90-91,99,108.

² *The Chartulary of Whitby Abbey* (hereafter cited as *Whitby Chartulary*), J.C. Atkinson (ed.), i (SS, lxix, 1879, p.5).

³ *Ibid.*, pp.8, 206; Serlo de Percy was the first prior.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.234.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 203, 713.

the church of All Saints has been located to the east of modern Fawcett Street, a site nearer the river to the west of modern Fishergate is perhaps more likely.¹

Three other new religious houses in the suburbs may also have been established around pre-existing parish churches, although conclusive proof of the early foundation of two of these churches has not yet been forthcoming. The Benedictine nunnery of St. Clement was founded by Archbishop Thurstan in c. 1125 x 1133 in Clementhorpe and a substantial stone building excavated on the site may represent the remains of an earlier church dedicated to St. Clement.² In Walmgate the hospital of St. Nicholas was established before 1161 (and possibly before 1132), on a site of twelve acres given by St. Mary's Abbey.³ The last religious house founded east of the Foss incorporated the church of St. Andrew in Fishergate which is first identified in a grant of the church to St. Mary's Abbey in c. 1140-1160,⁴ although a grant of a similar date records the

¹ *Whitby Chartulary*, pp. 203, 234, 713; Raine, *Medieval York*, p.300; PRO, SC.6/4612 m.11; *YCR*, 3, p.120.

² R.B. Dobson & S. Donaghey, 'The History of Clementhorpe Nunnery', (*AY*), 2/1, 1984, pp.5, 8, 9.

³ *BYC*, 1, p.251. Little is known about the precinct and early church, except for the survival of a doorway dating from c. 1180-1220 (D. Stocker, 'Lost Monuments of York, I', *Interim*, 7, part 3 (1981), p.8).

⁴ *J. Ryl.*, Mss 220-221, fo 4.

gift of the church to Newburgh Priory.¹ In c. 1200 the church became the focus of a new priory of Gilbertine canons and recent excavations on this site have revealed the plan of the priory buildings.²

In the thirteenth century the number of religious houses in York was further expanded by the foundation of six houses of friars, four of which, the Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites and Austin Friars, were established permanently in new precincts within the city walls, in Castlegate, on the King's Tofts, between Hungate and Fossgate and in Lendal.³ Finally, in the 1240s a new college was established for the vicars choral of the Minster on land bought in Goodramgate.⁴

It is difficult to assess to what extent these new foundations initially involved the displacement of existing settlement. The land given to Whitby Abbey in Fishergate for their cell was described as *mansuras*, and once as *domus cum tofta*, possibly implying developed

¹ *Charters of the Honour of Nowbray*, p.138 (February 1142-June 1143).

² *VCHY*, 3, p.255; Kemp, 'Getting your Priorys Right', pp.19-27.

³ The history of these foundations and their sites has been most recently discussed by Professor Barrie Dobson, 'Medieval Ideal and Practice in Late Medieval York', in *Archaeological Papers from York*, pp.113-114.

⁴ See below, pp.121-122.

land,¹ while the later foundations, such as the college of the vicars choral, almost certainly involved some displacement of existing inhabitants.² It is quite clear, however, that once established the continued expansion and enclosure within stone perimeter walls of all these precincts involved the destruction of housing and even entire streets. Thus the enclosure of St. Mary's Abbey within a stone wall in the 1260s was achieved at the expense of incorporating formerly occupied tenements within their close in St. Marygate and Bootham,³ while in 1292 and 1299 St. Andrew's Priory and St. Leonard's Hospital were allowed to enclose adjacent streets for the enlargement of their precincts.⁴ Similarly the expansion of the Franciscans' precinct between 1237 and 1314 involved the enclosure of two strips of land from the adjoining street (possibly Castlegate), as well as a lane, part of the castle ditch and finally all the houses and plots of land in Castlegate and Hertergate which were adjacent to their

¹ *Whitby Cartulary*, pp.5, 63. The term *mansura* occurs relatively infrequently in York, but seems to be used as a description of a burgage plot which might contain several buildings (cf. *mansura terre*, *BYC*, i, pp.174, 176, 182). The local usage was thus possibly rather different from that in Winchester (M. Biddle and D.J. Keene, 'Winchester in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', in M. Biddle (ed.), *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages*, pp.337-338).

² 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 59-64, 82-86, 151; *YML*, VC 3/Vi 142-145, 423.

³ *J. Ryl.*, MSS 220-221, fo 20; *Cal. Close Rolls 1259-61*, p.315.

⁴ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1281-92*, p.507; *Gazetteer*, *Tenement 6*.

precinct.¹ The Austin, Dominican and Carmelite Friars were also extending their precincts in the period between 1236 and 1382.² However it was not only the new establishments which were allowed to encroach upon inhabited areas in this manner. At the beginning of the thirteenth century the dean and chapter cleared away a number of properties in Petergate which were considered too close to the new Minster, and the extension of the east end of the Minster in the fourteenth century similarly involved the partial demolition of houses in the Minster Close.³

The continued expansion of these precincts meant that by 1300 an area of approximately 52½ acres, in addition to the land within the Minster Close to the north-east of Petergate, was enclosed within the precincts of religious institutions. Although such precincts did not necessarily exclude all secular inhabitants, so far as can be judged from the evidence of later rent accounts, most secular housing which grew up subsequently within these precincts was confined to developments around their perimeters.⁴ Only St.

¹ *Cal. Close Rolls 1234-37*, pp.497-498; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1266-72*, p.261; *1272-81*, p.395; *1281-92*, p.338; *1313-17*, p.166.

² Allison, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.361-363.

³ *Gazetteer, Tenements 55-57*; and see below, p.103.

⁴ This is in marked contrast, for example, to the crowded conditions within Westminster Abbey's precinct (G. Rosser, Lecture on Westminster at the Fifteenth-Century History Colloquium, September 1986).

Leonard's Hospital was described as containing eleven cottages within its site at the Dissolution, although most of the other houses, including even the friaries, drew rents from tenants in neighbouring streets.¹ Even within the Minster Close by 1431-32, the keeper of the Fabric had only eight secular tenants.²

The expansion of religious precincts, most of them enclosed behind stone walls, had a marked impact on the developing topography of the city in restricting the area available for settlement, although their influence on York was not restricted to this alone. The Norman reformation of the Minster clergy, in particular the expansion of the number of canons to thirty-six entailed an increased need for prebendal houses in the vicinity of the Minster, and it is argued below that this resulted in significant areas of land in Goodramgate, on the south-west side of Petergate and in the northern part of Stonegate being acquired by the chapter for such residences.³ Surviving descriptions and inventories of such properties suggest that they were substantial stone buildings with extensive ranges of service buildings, courtyards and gardens in addition to the principal hall and chambers, and indeed the remains of one such

¹ PRO, SC.6/4601, 4460, 4466, 4563, 4571, 4595.

² YML, E 3/12 *et seq.*

³ Gazetteer, *Tenements 12-20*; and see below, pp.111-113.

stone house belonging to the prebend of Ampleforth still survive.¹

It seems probable therefore that the century after the Norman Conquest witnessed a large area of the former fortress area being rebuilt in stone - possibly involving the re-use of surviving Roman masonry.² Quite apart from the substantial encroachment onto land available for settlement which this represented, it also seems to have stimulated demand for goods and services encouraging further new settlement in this area of the city. In particular it may have encouraged the development of suburbs to the east of the city outside Monkbar in Newbiggin and Monkgate.

The name Newbiggin first occurs in deeds of the late twelfth century describing an area to the north of Monkgate around St. Maurice's church and extending as far as the limits of St. Maurice's parish next to a grange belonging to St. Mary's Abbey in Gillygate (modern Clarence Street) called Pagan's Grange (later Paynlathes Crofts or Penley Groves).³ The area may

¹ *RCHNY*, 5, p.225; for other houses of canons, see Gazetteer, *Tenements* 15-17, 50, 55-57, 59-60; *Testamenta Eboracensia*, 3, J. Raine (ed.) (SS, xlv, 1864), pp.9-22, 125-137; and see below, pp.92, 147.

² Wenham, *Excavations in Low Petergate*, p.78; Gazetteer, *Tenements* 41-43.

³ J.Ryl., MSS 220-221, fo 29v.

represent a newly-planned suburb and it is perhaps significant that it seems to correspond with an area belonging jointly to the archbishop and the dean and chapter.¹ Certainly by c. 1284 the prebendary of Fridaythorpe had 50 tenants here, which can perhaps be identified with burgage plots, an average of fifty feet wide, occupying the north side of Monkgate and the east side of Newbiggin (modern Lord Mayors Walk) and still apparent in property boundaries shown in the Ordnance Survey map of 1852.² On the south side of Monkgate and in Barkergate (modern St. Maurice's Road), the area of housing also seems to have been expanding in the thirteenth century as properties formally described as curtilages, crofts or selions in these streets were, by the late thirteenth to early fourteenth centuries described as messuages with buildings.³ However development here seems to have been restricted to the street frontage of Monkgate and Barkergate near Monk Bar, and certainly north of modern Love Lane, since land nearer the Foss continued to be cultivated as agricultural land and gardens, some of which contained

¹ Palliser, 'Medieval street-names of York', p.13; Ramm, 'A Case of Twelfth-Century Town Planning in York?', pp.132-135; Andrews, in *Archaeological Papers from York*, p.203 no 41; see below, p.92,110. (There is however no evidence that Newbiggin ever extended to the south of Monkgate as Mr. Ramm suggested.)

² 'Husgabel Roll', p.86.

³ *Yorks. Deeds*, 9, p.175; NYCRO Clervaux Cartulary, fcs 92, 93, 94v, 97v; YML, VC 3/V1 17-19, 20, 29.

dovecots.¹ Among the recorded occupations of landowners of these newly-developed properties were parchment-makers and leather-workers, as indeed was also the case within Monk Bar around Aldwark and Spen-Lane.² This suggests a service industry growing up near the Minster Close, and a study of later craftsmen's wills and the 1381 poll-tax return suggests that the parishes of St. Maurice and Holy Trinity, Goodramgate and adjacent parishes near Monkbar remained a centre of the parchment industry in the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.³

Similarly Petergate and Stonegate, near the western entrances to the Minster Close, were another area where the population seems to have been orientated towards serving the needs of the church and its visitors. A survey of the title deeds for Petergate suggests that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries goldsmiths, spicers, bell-founders and potters as well

¹ NYCRO Clervaux Cartulary, fos 92, 93, 94v, 97v; YML, VC 3/V1 17-19, 20, 29; YML, VC 3/V1 26, 36-40; NYCRO, Clervaux Cartulary, fos 93v, 95-96. Until 1290 the corner of land near the Foss in Barkergate was the site of the Jewish cemetery (M. Williamson (ed.), *AY*, 12/2, forthcoming).

² YML, VC 3/V1 3, 5, 20, 30, 113a, 257-261; BL, Cotton MS Nero D iii, fos 73v, 78; Cotton MS Claudius B iii, fo 113.

³ Swanson, 'Crafts and Craftsmen in Later Medieval York', p.457. There was a similar concentration of parchment-makers close to the cathedral in Lincoln, although not in Winchester (Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, p.154; Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, p.287).

as mercers were particularly prominent in this area.¹ Again this concentration of crafts is supported by the evidence of the 1381 poll-tax return and of later craftsmen's wills, while archaeological excavation in Hornpotlane suggests that buildings were increasing in density in this area in the later thirteenth century.²

The Norman reformation of the Minster clergy and the invention of the cult of St. William after 1153, which attracted pilgrims to his shrine in the Minster may have been decisive in encouraging a re-location of population within the city. Equally influential in promoting a shift in centres of population was the rebuilding of the defences in the thirteenth century, which may have contributed to a decline in the area of the city beyond the Foss.

Recent archaeological excavation near Walmgate Bar seems to have confirmed the suggestion of Mr. T. P. Cooper that the defences to the south-east of the Foss across Walmgate and Fishergate were first constructed as

¹ Goldsmiths - see Gazetteer, *Tenements* 11, 17, 23, 50. For spicers and mercers see *Tenements* 7-9, 18, 21, 22, 23, 25, 29, 30, 32, 37-40, 41-42, 47. For potters and bell-founders see *Tenements* 11, 32, 37-40, 41-43, 45.

² Swanson, 'Crafts and Craftsmen in Later Medieval York', pp.189-190, 459; Gazetteer, *Tenements* 41-43.

late as the reign of King John.¹ It would thus appear that the new defences divided the existing settlements of Walmgate and Fishergate, contributing to a decline which may have already been apparent in the Fishergate area due to the flooding of the new defences of the castle above castle mills. Quite apart from the evidence that these two street-names applied to both *intra* and *extra-mural* sections of road,² there is also evidence to suggest that in both these streets there were a relatively large number of early church foundations which subsequently declined in importance.

In Fishergate there were five parish churches, four of which, St. Stephen's within the walls and St. Andrew's, St. Helen's and All Saints without, are known to have been established by the late eleventh century,

¹ B. Barber, 'Underneath the Arches', *Interim*, vol 10, no 4 (1985), pp.38-41; B. Barber, 'Foss Islands Road', *Interim*, vol 11, no 1 (1986), pp.22-29; Cooper, *York: the Story of its Walls and Castles*, pp.106-108. The early reference to 'Walmgatebarr' in 1150 x 1161 (*BYC*, i, p.251), does not necessarily indicate an earlier existence of these defences since it seems that most of the major approach roads to York were blocked by wooden bars, or tree trunks, some distance outside the defended gateways, and possibly marking the outer limit of the suburbs (Raine, *Medieval York*, pp.5, 26, 307). The wooden bar on the Mount is the best documented, see, for example the description of land given to Furness Abbey in 1228 as lying in the suburb of York '*inter portam et baram de Mikelith*', otherwise described as '*infra barram*' (*Reg. Gray*, p.232; BL, Lansdowne MS 402, fo 102v; Cotton MS Claudius B iii, fo 41v; YML, L2/1, fo 46v; *YMF*, ii, p.138; *YCA*, G 70.33. Compare D. Keene, 'Suburban Growth', in M.W. Barley (ed.), *The Plans and Topography of Medieval Towns in England and Wales* (Council for British Archaeology Research Report No 14, 1976), p.78.

² *PNERV*, pp.286, 300; Falliser, 'Medieval street-names of York', pp.9, 16.

while the fifth, St. George's, within the walls, was in existence by the late thirteenth century.¹ Large areas of Fishergate were clearly associated in ownership with the advowsons of these churches. In particular, Roger de Mowbray and his father, Nigel d'Albini, were associated with both the churches of St. Andrew and All Saints, going so far as to describe All Saints in 1108 x 1114 as lodgings (*ospitibus*) which belonged to their land in (Bustard-)Thorp.²

Charters of the early thirteenth century also seem to suggest that Fishergate was at least partly developed with housing.³ William and John, the sons of Henry de Fishergate, gave Drax Priory the toft, near St. Helen's church, where their father used to live, and Robert Franceys sold the priory his rights in a toft with a house built upon it in Fishergate.⁴ Indeed the husgable roll of c. 1284 suggests that Fishergate contained a minimum of 75 tofts owing 7s. 4d. in husgable rents to the crown, while some of its earlier inhabitants such as Henry de Fishergate were among the most prominent

¹ Tillott, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.368, 380, 382, 403; R. Kemp, on St. Andrew's church, which his excavations have shown to be of possible tenth-century origin (personal comment).

² *Whitby Cartulary*, p.206; *Charters of the Honour of Mowbray*, pp.138, 199.

³ See above, pp.59-60.

⁴ Bodl. Top. Yorks., c.72, fos 48-49.

citizens in York.¹

Walmgate also had four parish churches outside the limit of the new fortifications, and patterns of landholding suggest that the building of the ramparts created a new and artificial division between *intra* and *extra-mural* parts of the street. Land in Bretgate (modern Navigation Road) was described as belonging to Fulford and the landholdings of St. Nicholas' Hospital outside the walls seem to have been associated with a share in the advowson of the church of St. Peter-le-Willows inside the walls.² Like 'suburban' districts of Winchester and other towns,³ both Walmgate and Fishergate were defined by boundary ditches. Those of Fishergate are particularly well-recorded in early title deeds and seem to have coincided with modern Cemetery Road and possibly to have been marked at the point where they met the road to Fulford by a bar.⁴ It is tempting to speculate that this ditch might have been connected

¹ For Henry de Fishergate, see Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, p.46; R.B. Dobson, *The Jews of Medieval York and the Massacre of March 1190* (Borthwick Paper, No 45, 1974), p.32.

² *EYC*, 1, pp.248, 251; Bodl., Fairfax 7, fo 9v.

³ Keene, 'Suburban Growth', p.77.

⁴ Gilbert de Crayke, brother of Benedict de la Barre de Fishergate sold to Drax Priory land which backed onto the 'great ditch which encircles the lands of Fishergate on the east side'. Later deeds describe this as the road which leads from Walmgate Bar to Fulford (Bodl., Top. Yorks. c.72, fo 49r-v; J.Ryl., MSS 220-221, fos 50v-52). In 1414 the limit of the city's jurisdiction here was marked by a wooden bridge and stone cross (*YMB*, 2, p.39).

with the ditch observed in 1973 in Leadmill Lane some distance within the present walls, again suggesting that the new defences cut across a pre-existing settlement area.¹

If Walmgate and Fishergate had been distinct settlements in their own right, by the fourteenth century their 'suburban' status seems to have brought about something of a decline. By 1375 the area between Fawcett Street and Barbican Road was known as the Benehills,² and while there was clearly some housing, especially in Walmgate, it was apparently not an extensively settled area. By the later fourteenth century, the churches of St. Stephen, St. Mary and St. Michael had been abandoned altogether,³ while the remaining parishes outside and just within the walls were jointly assessed at a contribution of only 60s. in the parish subsidy assessment of 1420 or 1434.⁴ This was the lowest contribution of any parish in the city, equalled only by the parishes of Aldwark, Layerthorpe and Monkgate. A more detailed parish assessment of 1436 makes the position even clearer. For in the southern and eastern suburbs only the three parishes of St.

¹ Andrews, in *Archaeological Papers for York*, p.205.

² *YMB*, 1, p.4; *YMB*, 3, pp.8, 74; Palliser, 'Medieval street-names of York', p.5.

³ Tillott, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.394, 397, 403.

⁴ *YMB*, 3, p.184.

Maurice to the east and St. Margaret and St. Lawrence to the south near Monk Bar and Walmgate Bar were assessed at more than 20s. and so accounted for most of the taxes owed, while the parishes of Fishergate in particular were all assessed at less than 5s.¹

If the building of defences around the eastern part of the city seems to have contributed to a marked decline in the population of that area, elsewhere in the city the refortification of the city also involved some destruction of property. An inquisition of 1241 found that twenty-three houses and tofts were pulled down or lost in the widening of ditches around *Mikellit* (Micklegate Bar) and Blossomgate,² while it has already been shown how the enlargement of ecclesiastical precincts, which was often accompanied by the building of perimeter walls, could encroach upon inhabited streets. The reasons for the enlargement, and subsequent rebuilding in stone of the city's defences have been often discussed, but in the context of a study of landholdings in the city it should be emphasised here that the major episode of wall building in York occurred

¹ *YNE*, 3, p.187.

² *Yorkshire Inquisitions*, 1, W. Brown (ed.) (*YASRS*, xii, 1892), p.1. It is not clear whether this simply refers to the ditch around the present walls alone, or perhaps to the improvement of Scarcroft dike, which ran parallel to Blossomgate to the east, as well. For Scarcroft dike in 1335 see *YCA*, G 70.15. All York's suburbs, like Fishergate, seem to have been defined by prominent ditches.

in the second half of the thirteenth century when hostility between competing jurisdictions in the city had reached something of a peak as the newly-autonomous mayor and commonalty sought to define and extend their legal privileges and to limit those of the great religious landlords, notably St. Mary's Abbey, St. Leonard's Hospital and the liberty of St. Peter of the Minster.¹ The construction of the city walls could therefore be interpreted as an expression of assertive self-confidence on the part of the citizens and the erection of other public buildings, such as the new Ousebridge with St. William's chapel erected by 1223, might be interpreted in a similar context.² The city's Common Hall is first recorded in 1271.³ Although its site is not mentioned, it seems probable that it was on or near the site of the present Guild Hall in Coneystreet and that it had once been the house of Hugh son of Lewin, one of the leading burgesses of York in the later twelfth century.⁴ Other public buildings,

¹ *RCHNY*, 2, pp.11, 160-161; Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.33, 38-40; M.W. Barley, 'Town Defences in England and Wales after 1066', in *The Plans and Topography of Medieval Towns*, pp.68-70.

² See below, pp.191-192.

³ PRO, Just 1/1052 m.15.

⁴ In 1190 x 1210 Gerard de Stokesley and Hugh his brother, sons of Lewin, gave Durham Priory their land and stone house in Coneystreet which their father had held of the priory (*EYC*, 1, pp.198-200). In 1445 Durham Priory still drew a free rent of 4s. from the site of the new Guild Hall then being rebuilt (*YCA*, G 16; PRO, SC.6/708 m.10). For Hugh son of Lewin see Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.26, 30, 45-46, 51.

such as the Tollbooth, city court rooms and prison, occupied sites on the new Ousebridge and in Thursdaymarket and these too may have involved some limited encroachment onto private land. Thursdaymarket (modern St. Sampson's Square) was one of the principal market places of the late medieval city,¹ but two deeds of the mid-thirteenth century which describe this *forum jovis* as *Arkiltoftes* perhaps suggest that it had not always fulfilled this public function.²

The combined impact of the reformation of the church, of the refortifying of the city and of the provision of public buildings and spaces by a new self-conscious civic government thus had a significant impact on the evolving topography of York in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The net effect was to enhance a trend towards increasing density of settlement within the new walls and around the central area of the city which had already been apparent before the Norman Conquest. Settlement was particularly dense around the main market places and thoroughfares leading into the city, and thus while some older areas of settlement like Fishergate may have declined in importance, other new suburbs grew up outside the walls near the Minster and St. Mary's Abbey.

¹ K.J. Allison, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.484-485.

² YML, VC VI 50, 51, 53.

This increasing density of occupation within the central areas is evident in the continued subdivision of properties into smaller units of ownership and occupation. By the twelfth century the subdivision of tenements in the central area of the city was already a common practice. In York, as in Winchester and London, the original units of burgage tenure seem to have been considerably larger than the average house plot and frequently occupied a width of 50 feet fronting onto the street, while the house plots of middling-sized town houses were more commonly 1 perch, or about 16½ feet wide.¹ Such a regularity of plan is perhaps not as striking in York as in some of the newer planned towns of the post-Conquest period.² Nevertheless reconstruction of tenement patterns in various parts of York suggests that there was a considerable degree of regularity throughout the city. In particular excavations in Skeldergate revealed two tenements whose boundaries were established in the late ninth century. The two tenements together occupied a street frontage of about 50 feet, and the evidence of title deeds for these properties suggests that together they formed a single burgage plot and were owned in the late thirteenth

¹ The evidence for the size of burgage plots and building plots is discussed in more detail below in the introduction to the Gazetteer.

² E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'The First Half-Century of the Borough of Stratford-upon-Avon', *Economic History Review*, xi (1941), p.57; Platt, *The English Medieval Town*, p.65.

century by the Staveley family who were recorded in c. 1284 as paying 2d. husgable for one toft in Skeldergate.¹ The subdivision of burgage plots, or tofts, into building plots was thus already an established feature of the urban landscape in the Scandinavian period. However there is some evidence to suggest that by the thirteenth and early fourteenth century land use within the central area of the city was becoming even more intensive, as buildings were extended further towards the rear of plots in the thirteenth century, as is evident from sites excavated in Aldwark, Goodramgate, Hornpotlane and Tanner Row.² Such increased density of building probably also accounts for the continued subdivision of burgage plots into smaller units of landownership. In Petergate, for example, there is some evidence to suggest that burgage plots had originally extended the whole length from Petergate to Patrickpool, but by the mid-fourteenth century most of these large holdings had been divided in two between the two halves fronting onto either street, and similar divisions occurred elsewhere in the city.³ Thus streets

¹ Andrews, in *Archaeological Papers from York*, p.201, no 56; *AY*, 8/3, forthcoming; *Yorks. Deeds*, 1, p.216; PRO, Enrolled Deed, De Banco Roll, 142/211; 'Husgabel Roll', p.90 no 315.

² Andrews, in *Archaeological Papers from York*, pp.203-205, nos 29, 31, 47, 62, 81, 82; Gazetteer, *Tenements 41-43*.

³ Gazetteer, *Tenements 27-32*. For a similar subdivision of tenements between Goodramgate and Aldwark, Ousegate and Coppergate, Micklegate and Tanner Row, see 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 56, 84-86; BL, Add. Egerton MS 2147, fos 7-8v; Cotton MS Nero D iii, fos 169-171; *YMB*, 3, pp.72-73.

such as Patrickpool which had originally been subsidiary to major thoroughfares like Petergate may have achieved a greater importance in the street plan. The further division of building plots between a principal dwelling house or capital messuage to the rear, which was likely to be occupied by a craftsman or merchant of some wealth, while the street frontage was developed with smaller shops and solars, known by the fifteenth century as cottages, was equally a common feature of later twelfth and thirteenth century York, as it was in many other towns.¹

By the thirteenth century 'marginal' and undeveloped lands were reclaimed for building. In 1288 it was claimed to be a common custom of the city that citizens with riverside property were allowed to extend it into the river and such activity in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries has been revealed in excavations in Coneystreet and Skeldergate.² Similarly in 1303 Roger Mek acquired a licence from the crown to enclose land next to Fossbridge from the banks of the river Foss,³ and there is some evidence outside the walls in Monkgate that the owners of crofts on the south side of Monkgate

¹ See below, Gazetteer, Introduction.

² *Yorkshire Inquisitions*, 2, pp.55-56; Andrews, in *Archaeological Papers from York*, p.204, nos 51, 79.

³ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1301-1307*, p.150.

had reclaimed land from the margins of the Foss to the south of Love Lane at the rear of their properties for use as agricultural land, in much the same manner as riverside tenements in King's Lynn and Hull were lengthened by the enclosure of the river bank on the opposite side of a river-side street.¹ In the early fourteenth century the city corporation itself was also reclaiming land in Skeldergate along the Ouse and enclosing land from the ramparts adjacent to the main bars, and around Thursdaymarket, the Minster Gates and in Tanner Row adjacent to the city walls for building, while there was also a considerable amount of encroachment into churchyards, especially in the area of York between the Foss and the Ouse, for the erection of rows of cottages.²

Both the archaeological and documentary records therefore suggest that between the twelfth and mid-fourteenth centuries conditions in the city centre were becoming steadily more crowded in the area between the Ouse and Foss, along Micklegate and in the riverside streets of Northstreet and Skeldergate and around Fossbridge, whilst new developments in the eastern

¹ V. Parker, *The Making of King's Lynn*, pp.38-39; R. Horrox, *The Changing Plan of Hull 1290-1650*, nos 1-71 in Hull Street, pp.11-58. Land in Monkgate was frequently owned by the same landlord as the land behind it between (modern) Love Lane and the Foss (NYCRO, Clervaux Cartulary, fos 92v-96v, 106).

² See below, pp.192-193, 205, 209-210, 213, 227-229.

suburb were also extending the occupied area near the Minster. While some of this increasing density of occupation may be due to the pressures of an increasing population in York,¹ it should also at least be considered that it was due in part to an internal relocation of population within the city which resulted in the centre becoming more important at the expense of more peripheral areas. Indeed it is argued below that much of the new building undertaken by the mayor and commonalty and by church landlords, was not a simple response to demand for housing alone, but rather resulted from a concern to improve the exploitation of estates to meet rising levels of expenditure to which these landlords were committed.²

Given the increasing density of population it is not surprising that civic ordinances were so often preoccupied with the problems of waste disposal and water supply. Residents were not to allow piles of dung to accumulate in streets and lanes but either to deposit it on one of the wards' public tips outside the walls or on the river bank beneath the castle where people from neighbouring villages might come and take it away to fertilise their fields. Similarly butchers were not to throw their offal in the river by Ousebridge, but to

¹ Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, p.52.

² See below, Chapter Five.

take it further down river. Pigs were not to be allowed to roam freely, and nor were street vendors to ride on horse-back.¹

The plan of the medieval town was also marked by a network of public ditches which carried waste and water into the ditches within the city ramparts and into the rivers. Most ditches followed the backs of tenement boundaries, but where they crossed the street, they had to be bridged and kept clean.² Every tenement was also served by private gutters draining waste either into one of the public sewers or into a sump in the backyard.³ Possibly most citizens in York got their water supply from wells or water carried from the river.⁴ There is little evidence of a public piped water supply in the medieval city, although at least one tenement in Skeldergate had a private water pipe closed by a *loker*.⁵ Another common source of clean water was rain water, and it is apparent that most substantial houses had two systems of gutters, one at ground level, made of wood or stone, and one at roof level to gather up clean water.⁶

¹ *YMB*, 1, pp.12-19, 39, 164; *YMB*, 2, p.70.

² *YMB*, 1, p.43; *YMB*, 2, pp.37, 109.

³ *YMB*, 2, pp.7, 15, 251; *English Miscellanies*, pp.17-22.

⁴ The vicars choral made constant repairs to wells in their properties (*YML*, VC 6/2, 6/6).

⁵ *English Miscellanies*, p.13.

⁶ *YMB*, 2, pp.112, 219.

To summarise: by the middle of the fourteenth century the street plan of York had largely evolved into the pattern it was to retain throughout the rest of the medieval period. The major market places, public buildings, churches, religious houses and other amenities were established, and a system of timber-framed building had evolved which has left us with some of the oldest private houses surviving in the city today.¹ These visible developments were to some degree the consequence of demographic ~~economic~~ pressures, but were also profoundly influenced by the decisions landlords took concerning the manner in which their estates should be run. It is this administrative background to property ownership which will be the focus of the following chapters.

¹ *RCHMY*, 5, pp.143-145; P. Short, 'The Fourteenth-Century Rows of York', *Archaeological Journal*, 137 (1979), pp.86-136.

CHAPTER THREE: THE GROWTH OF THE MINSTER'S ESTATES IN YORK C. 1050-1300

It is almost impossible to contemplate the history of York without considering the history of St. Peter's Minster. From the building of the first minster in 632/3 its presence has dominated the city, and the influence of its community has been exercised in every aspect of the city's development. It was no coincidence that the streets of York recorded in 1968 as preserving the most ancient and listed buildings were generally those which until the nineteenth century had formed the core of the Minster's estates in the city,¹ and it is the development of those estates that is the subject of this chapter.

The Minster community was the oldest as well as the wealthiest landowner in medieval York, the origins of whose estate may be traced back to the seventh century, although it is only after the Norman Conquest that its history begins to be documented. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries were a period of rapid growth of the Minster's holdings in York; and during this period of expansion the organisation of the Minster community also underwent several major reforms with

¹ Viscount Esher, *York. A Study in Conservation*, (HMSO, 1968), p.81.

important consequences for the administration of its city properties. Not all these changes are well-recorded in surviving documents, and the origin, extent and exact nature of the Minster's estates have all been the subject of debate and controversy among historians of the city.

The Origins of the Minster Estates

It is at least legitimate to assume that the church of St. Peter of York must have been endowed with estates to support it, including property in York, since its first foundation in the seventh century. Admittedly nothing is known of such endowments, and even the location of the pre-Conquest Minsters within the city is shrouded in mystery and controversy, although a growing body of evidence makes a location somewhere within the present Close seem probable.' Undoubtedly the Minster and its endowments would have suffered during the Danish invasions, but in 934 the Minster received a generous grant of land in Amounderness from Athelstan, and the Archbishops Wulfstan I, Oscytel and Oswald all

' Hill and Brooke, in *York Minster History*, p.5; K. Harrison, 'The Saxon cathedral at York', *YAJ*, 39 (1958), pp.436-444; D. Phillips, *The Cathedral of Archbishop Thomas of Bayeux*, (*Excavations at York Minster*, II), (1985), pp.1-5, 51-53; Morris, 'Alcuin, York and the *alma Sophia*', pp.80-81; Palliser, 'York's West Bank', pp.104-105. See also below p.108.

seem to have taken particular care to harbour and increase the church's resources.¹ Although there is still no direct evidence for any property holdings in York, it seems probable that we should also look to the middle decades of the tenth century as the period when the later medieval holdings of St. Peter within the city began to be securely established.

Whatever their precise extent, the landed estates of the Minster may have been held in common under the management of the archbishops until the mid-eleventh century,² although recent research has suggested that this estate was already divided between an episcopal *mensa* and a capitular *mensa* by 1030.³ A further division took place after 1060 when provision began to be made for the endowment of individual prebends from both *mensae*.⁴ The endowment of prebends involved yet more alienation of land from the archbishop to the chapter, and was clearly in progress by 1086 but was largely completed by 1114.⁵ Exactly how this process affected the church's holdings in York has not been

¹ Hill and Brooke, in *York Minster History*, pp.13 and n 18; *BYC*, pp.1-10; C.R. Hart, *The Early Charters of Northern England and the North Midlands* (Leicester, 1975), pp.117, 123-124.

² Hill and Brooke, in *York Minster History*, p.28.

³ Brown, 'The Peculiar Jurisdiction of York Minster', pp.20-22.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.23-25, 30-31.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.33.

established, nor have the Minster's estates been satisfactorily identified.

The earliest description of the church's holding in York is a survey into the privileges and legal titles of Archbishop Thomas I within and without the city of York, which was made not long after the accession of Thomas to the see of York in 1070.¹ This text described the extent of the archbishop's privileges as extending from, 'first Layerthorpe, and on the north Monkgate, and from Thurbrand's house all as far as Walmgate, and all Clementhorpe and St. Mary's Church, with sac and soc and toll and team, and every third penny which comes in Walmgate and in Fishergate, and the third penny from the sale of fish on the Foss,² and the third penny which comes from 'les gildegarde'.³

¹ F. Liebermann, 'An English document of about 1080', *YAJ*, 18 (1912), pp.412-16; discussed and translated by A.G. Dickens, 'The 'shire' and the privileges of the archbishop in eleventh century York', *YAJ*, 38 (1953), pp.138-139; (original: *YML*, L2/1 pt 1, fo 61). This document is difficult to date accurately. The witnesses include Hugh (son of Baldri), sheriff of Yorkshire, who held this office from 1069 until some time after 1078 and who died in 1086.

² The meaning of the text is not clear here, and the Old English of the original was clearly not understood by the fifteenth-century copier. Liebermann has 'from the Fishmarket ... on the Foss ...', p.415; Dickens has 'fish from the Hebrides sold ... on the Foss', p.138 and note.

³ Liebermann, 'An English document of about 1080', pp.413-415; this survey continues with a description of rights to merchants' tolls in the shires of the bishop and the king, of jurisdiction over church law and of the bishop's mints.

Compared with this survey the description of the archbishop's shire in Domesday is less concerned with the territorial extent of the archbishop's jurisdiction:

In Eboraco civitate tempore Regis Edwardi praeter Scyram archiepiscopi fuerunt vi scyrae. Una ex his est vasta in castellis. In quinque scyris fuerunt Mille et quadrigentae et xviii mansiones hospitatae. De una harum scyrarum habet archiepiscopus adhuc terciam partem. In his nemo alius habebat consuetudinem nisi ut burgensis ... praeter canonicos unicumque mansissent .../Archiepiscopus autem de sua scyra habebat plenam consuetudinem.¹ .../In scyra Archiepiscopi fuerunt T.R.E. hospitatae ducentae mansiones hospitatae undecim minus. modo sunt centum hospitatae inter magnas et parvas. praeter curiam Archiepiscopi et domos canonicorum. In hac scyra habet Archiepiscopus. quantum rex habet in suis scyris.²

The closeness in date of these two descriptions and a certain similarity in their concern to compare the privileges of the shires of the archbishop and the king, may suggest that the earlier document was in some sense drawn up as part of the preparation for the Domesday survey itself. However the significant differences between the two, in particular the precise enumeration of *mansiones* within the shire in Domesday Book, contrasted with the more descriptive assessment of the extent of the shire in the earlier document, hardly

¹ *Domesday*, fo 298a.

² *Domesday*, fo 298b; the entry for York continues with a description of the 84 carucates which gelded with the city, and within which both the archbishop and the canons had extensive holdings.

support such a view. Nevertheless, the earlier document of c. 1070 x 1080 may have been used as a basis for the third and latest surviving survey of the archbishop's privileges in York, which was produced c. 1106.¹ This later document was produced as the result of an inquest into alleged infringements of the privileges of the church of St. Peter and the archbishop by the sheriff of Yorkshire.² After an account of the rights of the canons of St. Peter, it contains a description of the extent of the archbishop's privileges:

Terra autem illa, quam Archiepiscopus habet in civitate Eboraci, debet esse tam quieta et libera ad opus Archiepiscopi in omnibus consuetudinis, sicut dominium regis est regi...Praeterea in Walbugath et in fiskargat, cuiuscunque terra sit, tertia pars redditus debet esse Archiepiscopi in placitis, et in theloneo, et husgable; et in omni consuetudine; et totum bladum delatum de Austriding, et pisces inde delati, debent ibidem in eadem consuetudine vendi; et totum theloneum erit archiepiscopi in clementesthorp de omnibus navibus quae illuc applicuerint, et iuxta clementesthorpe inferius quantam terra Archiepiscopi durat et tota consuetudo piscium Archiepiscopi ex ambabus partibus aquae.³

¹ *Visitations and Memorials of Southwell Minster*, A.F. Leach (ed.) (Camden Society, New Series, 48 (1981), pp.190-197. For the authenticity and context of the production of this document see Brown, 'The Peculiar Jurisdiction of York Minster', pp.105-106.

² *Visitations and Memorials of Southwell*, p.191; a writ was subsequently issued confirming the archbishop's rights. (HCY, 3, p.22).

³ *Ibid.*, pp.195-196.

These early surveys have been fundamental to several attempts to reconstruct the extent of the archbishop's shire and the 'third part' mentioned in Domesday, the nature of which has been debated since at least the time of Francis Drake.¹ The 'third part' has now been satisfactorily identified by Professor Geoffrey Dickens using the accounts of c. 1070 x 1080 and 1106 as the right to the 'third penny' from the districts of Walmgate and Fishergate to the east of the Foss, and from the Gildegarths on Bishophill which can be compared, for example, to the rights of the earl of Huntingdon in Cambridge.² However, the location of the shire in which the archbishop enjoyed full custom has been less well established. Dickens' assertion that the shire should be identified with the core of the later liberty of St. Peter in the streets around the Minster Close, and that it should be conceived of as 'a distinct quarter of the

¹ Drake, *Eboracum*, p.571. See also G. Benson, *York: From its Origin to the End of the Eleventh Century*, (York, 1911), pp.60-61; T.P. Cooper, *The History of Bishophill*, (York, 1901), p.1; C. Stephenson, *Borough and Town*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1933), p.191.

² Dickens, 'The 'shire' and the privileges of the archbishop', pp.133, 137-41; Dickens, 'York before the Norman Conquest', p.20. The Gildegarths, known later also as Besingate, can be identified with an area of land near modern Lower Priory Street within the parish of St. Mary Bishophill Junior. This site may have been especially connected with the hanse house of the gild merchant of York which is referred to in an archiepiscopal charter of c. 1130. (YML, VC 3/V1 102, 193/2; BI Prob. Reg. 2, fo 503v; EYC, i, p.88; cf. D.M. Palliser, 'The medieval street-names of York', *York Historian*, 2, 1978, p.5). The identification of Gildegarths with land to the north of Lower Priory Street is strongly suggested by a nineteenth-century plan in the City Archives locating the only property of the vicars choral there (YCA, Acc 1).

city rather than a chequered patchwork of houses',¹ has been effectively refuted by John Harvey, who fully demonstrated the special relationship between the archbishop and areas of Bishophill and the western suburbs of York.² However, Harvey may have gone too far in stressing the significance of evidence suggesting that by the fourteenth century the archbishop's holdings were greater on the west bank of the Ouse, and thus in some sense more important,³ for Dickens' observation that lands from the shire may have been alienated to the dean and chapter under the first Norman archbishops for the endowment of new prebends, remains an important one.⁴

The identification of this shire remains essential to any understanding of the later medieval fee of St. Peter. In particular the exact relationship between the 'shire' and the later medieval liberty of St. Peter of the dean and chapter needs to be re-examined. Several surveys of the later liberty survive. The most important is that made 18 March 1276 in the course of a dispute between the dean and chapter and the city

¹ Dickens, 'The 'shire' and the privileges of the archbishop', pp.142-3.

² J.H. Harvey, 'Bishophill and the Church of York', *YAJ*, 41 (1965), pp.377-393.

³ *Ibid.*, pp.386, 390; cf. Palliser, 'York's West Bank', pp.104-105.

⁴ Dickens, 'The 'shire' and the privileges of the archbishop', p.146.

corporation over the extent of the former's secular jurisdiction within the city, and contains a description both of the territorial extent and of the legal privileges of the liberty.¹ This survey can be compared with a later survey of the dean and chapter's jurisdiction made c. 1390.² These both describe an area around the present Minster Close, as well as several outlying areas principally associated with churches in the city which were appropriated to the common fund. However the later document has to be used with caution for the preamble suggests that it is principally concerned with defining the spiritual jurisdiction of the dean and chapter compared with that of other peculiars within the church of York.³ However both surveys provide some useful additional evidence about the origin of the later medieval Minster's estate.

The archbishop's shire can perhaps be most easily identified through the location of tenements which owed the husgable rent to the archbishop rather than to the king. In Lincoln, Stamford, Winchester, Durham and the Bishop of London's soke in London, the right to the

¹ YML, L2/1 pt iv, fos 37-45v; L2/2a, fos 21-22v; 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', no 119, pp.124-125 includes a copy of the section referring to the Bedern. W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum* vi (3) (1846), pp.1193-1194, has a slightly inaccurate printed version.

² YML, M2/2c, fos 31-34, and see above, pp.18-19.

³ BI, D.C. Act Book, 1, fo 241.

equivalent burgage rent (variously called landgable, gafol or landmale), was a principal element in defining the right to other customs, and so the limit to sokes or independent jurisdictions.' John Harvey has already identified some properties in Bishophill paying this rent to the archbishop,² but his special interest in that area led him to overlook instances of the archbishop's right to husgable in other areas of the city. The identification of such properties, together with others within the lordship of the archbishop, suggests that the majority of the shire was indeed incorporated into the liberty of St. Peter by the end of the reign of Henry I, largely through the endowment of new prebends. However the shire was not confined to a single territorial area, and it was not entirely alienated to the dean and chapter. A significant 'rump' of the archbishop's shire survived to be administered quite independently of the new St. Peter's liberty until c. 1300. Equally the area of the archbishop's shire did not correspond at all exactly to that of St. Peter's liberty as it was surveyed in 1276, for quite apart from the 'rump' of the shire which remained independent, the dean and chapter were also able to acquire new lands in

¹ Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, pp.55-62; F. Barlow, 'The Winton Domesday', in *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages*, pp.7-8; Camsell, 'The City of Durham', pp.133; Taylor, 'The Bishop of London's City Soke', p.174.

² Harvey, 'Bishophill and the Church of York', p.384.

York from different sources and to incorporate them within their new liberty.

The survey of the privileges of Thomas I in York of c. 1070 x 1080 describes an area in the eastern and southern suburbs of the city.¹ Following the order of that survey; in Monkgate the holdings of the archbishop were concentrated on the north side of the street, in the ownership of St. Maurice's church and adjacent land. The church of St. Maurice is first mentioned in c. 1195 x 1210, when it belonged to the canons of the Minster.² By 1218 the church, together with rents from lands in Monkgate, was divided between the prebends of Sherburn-in-Elmet and Fridaythorpe.³ It is probable that both these prebends had originally been endowed with lands of the archbishop,⁴ and there is other evidence to suggest that this area of Monkgate had belonged to the archbishop's shire. In 1218 Archbishop Walter de Gray had transferred the prebend of Sherburn's share in the church to the new prebend of Fenton. However some time before 1240 Gray revised the endowments again, by transferring the church entirely to

¹ See above p.84.

² *BYC*, 1, 224-225.

³ *The Register, or Rolls of Walter Gray Lord Archbishop of York* (hereafter cited as *Reg. Gray*), J. Raine (ed.), SS, lvi (1872), p.133.

⁴ Brown, 'The Peculiar Jurisdiction of York Minster', p.32.

Fenton, and compensating Fridaythorpe with a grant of all the men holding land from Fenton in Newbigging and Monkgate with all rents and services, husgable, St. Peter's pence, and all liberties, rights and customs.¹ In 1276 this land was said to extend to 19 acres and to pay husgable to the prebend who was also in receipt of husgable from properties here in c. 1284.² A reconstruction of properties in this area suggests that they were bounded on the north-west side by a ditch which divided them from the lands of St. Mary's Abbey in Newbiggin on the other side. This ditch was later known to tenants in Monkgate as the ditch of St. Mary's,³ but to tenants in Newbiggin, on the other side, as the ditch of the archbishop.⁴ Above all, the references to the payment of husgable to a prebend otherwise endowed with lands from the archiepiscopal *mensa*, and the clear association of the archbishop with the boundary ditch of the area suggest that this was the area of the archbishop's shire in Monkgate referred to in the survey of c. 1070 x 1080. The omission of Monkgate from the

¹ *Reg. Gray*, pp.184-185. Some of these lands were later held by the vicars choral whose records confirm the payment of rent to Fridaythorpe ('Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 106, 107).

² YML, L2/1 pt iv, fo 45; 'Husgabel Roll', p.86 nos 48-81. 19 acres would perhaps correspond to the area of St. Maurice's parish north of Monkgate described in 1370 (Raine, *Medieval York*, pp.278-279).

³ 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 93, 106, 107; *Yorks. Deeds*, 2, no 546.

⁴ *J. Ryl.*, MSS, 220-1, fo 57.

later survey of 1106 may reflect its transfer in the interval to the prebends of Sherburn and Fridaythorpe.¹

Continuing to follow the order of the survey of c. 1070 x 1080, in Layerthorp the church of St. Mary is first mentioned in title deeds of the mid-thirteenth century, which refer to adjacent properties which paid husgable to the archbishop,² as did other properties in Layerthorpe.³ By 1331 the advowson of the church belonged to the common fund of the dean and chapter.⁴ Accordingly, like other churches in the city appropriated to that fund, it may once have belonged to the archbishop.⁵ Although the evidence is not substantial, it is possible that the whole area of the parish of St. Mary, Layerthorpe was part of the archbishop's shire in the late eleventh century.⁶ By

¹ On the south side of Monkgate, in Barkergate and in Jewbury, title deeds for the properties refer only to the fee of the king and to payments of husgable to him. See 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 99-101; *J.Ryl.* MSS 220-1, fos 32-33; Dobson, 'The Decline and Expulsion of the Medieval Jews of York', p.47; NYCRO, Clervaux Cartulary, fo 96v.

² YML, VC 3/V1 210-212; 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 111-113.

³ NYCRO, Clervaux Cartulary, fo 98v; BL, Egerton MS 2147, fo 21.

⁴ Tillott, in *VCHY City of York*, p.394.

⁵ Compare the church of St. Mary Bishophill Junior, pp.96-97 below.

⁶ The location of the medieval parish of St. Mary Layerthorpe is suggested by the area of St. Cuthbert's parish to the east of the Foss. St. Mary's was united to St. Cuthbert's in 1548. P.M. Tillott, 'The Boundaries of the City', in *VCHY, City of York*, pp.311-312, 379.

the thirteenth century most of the land within this parish, together with the adjacent area of Tang Hall fields, was, like the land in Monkgate, part of the prebend of Fridaythorpe, and was said not to belong to the king's fee.¹ Tang Hall fields may be identified with the six carucates of the archbishop which belonged to the farm of his hall, and which by 1086 had been reduced by the flooding of the king's pool of the Foss.²

The area of the archbishop's shire in Walmgate is still largely to be established. Some property in extra-mural Walmgate owed the archbishop husgable.³ St. Lawrence's church in Walmgate was confirmed to the chapter in 1194 together with other churches which may once have belonged to the archbishop,⁴ but the parish of St. Edward, which was adjacent to the church's lands in Tang Hall and Osbaldwick to the east of Walmgate, would conform better to the description of the archbishop's

¹ *Reg. Gray*, p.19; *Yorks. Inq.*, 2, p.18; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1292-1301*, p.382.

² *Domesday*, fo 298b, '*... habet Archiepiscopus .vi. carucatas quas possunt arare .iii. carucae. He sunt ad firmam aule suae. Haec non fuit hospitata. T.R.E. sed per loca culta a burgensibus. nec est similiter. De hac terra necavit stagnum regis .ii. molendinos novos valentes .xx. solidos. et de arabili terra et pratis et artis plene .i. carucata. T.R.E. valuit .xvi. solidis modo .iii. solidis.*' One arm of the fish-pool of the Foss extended into Tang Hall fields and Tang Hall Beck. (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1272-81*, p.398; Cooper, *York: the story of its walls and Castles*, p.67).

³ 'Husgabel Roll', p.82 citing a reference in the Merchant Adventurers' Deeds.

⁴ *HCY*, 3, p.95.

lands extending 'all as far as Walmgate'.¹ Little is known of St. Edward's church, although by 1302 it appears to have been in the archbishop's gift.²

To the south-west of the river Ouse J.H. Harvey has reconstructed the location of archiepiscopal holdings in some detail.³ Outside the city walls many of the archiepiscop's properties in this area were never alienated, and continued to be leased by the archbishops well into the eighteenth century, so that it is possible to reconstruct their history in greater detail than is possible in the eastern suburbs. These western suburbs included Bishop's Fields with the archbishop's grange west of the Tadcaster Road, and part of the manor of Dringhouses, Campleson fields next to the Knavesmire, and Nun Ings by the river Ouse to the east.⁴ While these were not alienated, other lands of the archbishop nearer the city, and within its defences, on this side of the Ouse were alienated in the early twelfth century.

¹ *Domesday*, fo 298b; see above p.84.

² Tillott, in *VCHY City of York*, p.380.

³ Harvey, 'Bishophill and the Church of York', pp.378-381, 383-384.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.383. However these may not have formed part of the 'shire' but may be the 'fields near the city' held in chief by the archbishop and listed separately from the city's entry in *Domesday*: *Archiepiscopus habet iuxta civitate .xv. carcatas ad geld. quas possunt arare .xv. carucae. Ibid habet in dominio .ii. carucae et lx acras prati. Haec terra habet .i. leuuga longitudine. et i. latitudine. Istud et illud totum quod habet in civitate .T.R.E., valuit .viii. libris. modo .x. libris.* (*Domesday*, fo 302c) This land came under the manor of Sherburn-in-Elmet.

In particular land in Clementhorpe was given by Archbishop Thurstan for the foundation of a house of Benedictine nuns in 1125-1133.¹ Several later documents show that land in Clementhorpe continued to be held from the archbishop.² Land outside Micklegate Bar was given by Archbishop Gray to Furness Abbey in 1228 and from it he reserved his right to customs and dues from merchants passing and descending there,³ while pleas concerning it were heard in the archbishop's court.⁴ and the adjacent property still owed the archbishop hushgale in the mid-thirteenth century.⁵ Several fourteenth century deeds also continue to refer to 'land of the archbishop adjacent to this property.'⁶

Within the city defences in Bishophill the church of St. Mary Bishophill Junior may plausibly be identified with the church of St. Mary in the survey of c. 1070 x 1080.⁷ Throughout the middle ages this church was known as the church of St. Mary of the Bishop

¹ J.E. Burton, *The Yorkshire Nunneries in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, (Borthwick Paper No 56, 1979, p.6).

² Harvey, 'Bishophill and the Church of York', p.392.

³ *Reg. Gray*, p.232; BL, Lansdowne MS 402, fo 102v, Claudius B iii, fo 41v; YML, L2/1 pt ii, fo 46v, *YMF*, 2, p.138.

⁴ BL, Cotton MS Nero D iii, fo 153.

⁵ YML, L2/1 pt ii, fos 89, 89v.

⁶ NYCRO, Clervaux Cartulary, fo 108v.

⁷ Harvey, 'Bishophill and the Church of York', p.380.

(*Sancte Mariae episcopi*), and indeed it was probably a conflation of the name of the church with the original name of the area - Bichill - which led to the adoption, after the later thirteenth century, of the name Bishophill for the area.¹ The medieval name clearly suggests a strong association with the archbishop, and the fabric of the church tower makes it clear that the building pre-dates the conquest.² By 1194 the church belonged to the common fund of the dean and chapter,³ while adjacent land formed the chief residence of the prebendary of Bichill (later Knaresborough) who was otherwise endowed with lands from the archiepiscopal *mensa*.⁴ Dr. John Harvey's speculation that the adjacent parish of St. Mary Senior may also once have belonged to the archbishop cannot however be supported.⁵ The advowson of this church never belonged to the Minster, and properties within the parish paid hushgale to the

¹ Harvey, 'Bishophill and the Church of York', pp.380-381; Palliser, 'The medieval street names of York', p.5.

² Moulden and Tweddle, *Anglo-Scandinavian Settlement South-West of the Ouse*, p.10.

³ HCY, 3, p.95.

⁴ Brown, 'The Peculiar Jurisdiction of York Minster', p.32; YML, L2/1 pt iv, fo 45v.

⁵ Harvey, 'Bishophill and the Church of York', p.390. Harvey bases this suggestion on the cognomen of the church which was known in the middle ages as *ecclesia Sanctae Mariae Vetus*. However this cognomen is not recorded before 1252. Earlier references to the church describe it simply as the church of St. Mary in Lounlithgate. The cognomen, *Vetus*, is perhaps more likely to be derived from its proximity to the Old Baile (*Vetus Ballia*). See *Yorks. Fines 1246-1272*, p.75; *EYC*, i, no 208; *Pedes Finium Ebor, 1199-1214*, p.37, Raine, *Medieval York*, p.234.

crown.¹ It is however probable that the neat division of the area from Bishophill Senior to the walls, between the two parishes of St. Mary Junior and Senior in 1852, obscures a more complicated pattern of earlier lordship, especially since the prebends of Bichill's residence included land in Lounlithgate (Victor Street) now within the parish of St. Mary Senior.² This was, moreover the area of the Gildgarthes in which the archbishop shared custom with the crown, and which may have had some kind of special public function in the eleventh century.³

The Old Baile, now within the parish of St. Mary Senior, also had a special association with the archbishops, who attempted to protect it from incursions by the citizens, and who were held responsible for its maintenance by the mayor and citizens, the latter insisting it was 'outside the ditches of the city'.⁴ The Old Baile itself was one of two castles erected in 1068-1069, and archaeological evidence may be taken to suggest that the Baile area lay outside the city's

¹ *VCHY, City of York*, p.366; 'Husgabel Roll', pp.89-91 (properties in Skeldergate, Lounlithgate and Besingate); BL, Cotton MS Nero D iii, fo 82.

² YML, L2/1 pt iv, fo 45v.

³ See above, p.87.

⁴ *RCHMY*, 2, p.87.

defences before this date.¹ If so, the Baile area might have formed part of the late Anglo-Saxon archbishop's holdings in Clementhorpe.

It accordingly follows that while the holdings of the archbishop did not quite encircle the city, they nevertheless included extensive areas in all the major suburbs of the eleventh-century city. Even in the northern suburbs of the city, where the archbishops retained no title in the later middle ages, at the time of the Domesday survey, Archbishop Thomas claimed land in Bootham which had been given to the new foundation of St. Mary's Abbey.² His loss of this land was later compensated by the gift of the church of St. Stephen in Fishergate c. 1093-95.³ All these properties, when combined with the holdings of the archbishop and canons in the satellite villages of the city, suggest an impressive concentration of landed possessions in the immediate vicinity of the city at about the time of the Norman Conquest. Moreover, in all the evidence relating to the archbishop's estates after 1066, there is little to suggest that they were later actively interested in

¹ Excavations found little trace of pre-Conquest occupation in the area of the Baile (P.V. Addyman & J. Priestley, 'Baile Hill, York', *Archaeological Journal*, 134 (1977), p.126.

² See below, p.143-144.

³ *BYC*, 1, p.267. Both the archbishop and the canons also had extensive holdings in the adjacent village of Clifton in 1066 and 1086. *Domesday*, p.189b.

acquiring new land in York. Indeed nearly all the surviving evidence relates to the alienation of archiepiscopal holdings to the canons and to other religious foundations. This suggests, quite apart from the corroborating evidence of Domesday and the survey of c. 1070 x 1080, that the acquisition of these properties pre-dated the Conquest.

The same arguments apply to the holdings of the archbishop within the central area of York, even though these are mentioned neither in the survey of c. 1070-1080 nor in 1106. As Francis Drake first suggested, the reference in Domesday to the court (*curia*) of the archbishop and the houses of the canons within the archbishop's shire does strongly suggest that the Minster Close was an important part of the archbishop's holding before 1066.' Despite the lack of early evidence concerning the internal lay-out of the Minster Close, and although both documentary and archaeological traces of the pre-Conquest Minster continue to prove elusive, it is possible to confirm from other sources that the Close had had a special association with the archbishops and that already by 1070 it was considered the residential centre for the Minster clergy.

' Drake, *Eboracum*, p.571; Dickens, 'The 'shire' and privileges of the archbishop', p.141.

The separate reference in Domesday Book to the houses of the canons, who enjoyed full custom 'ubicumque mansissent', suggests that already by 1086 the canons were no longer living in common, but already had independent residences.¹ Indeed, the reference seems to anticipate the position in 1106 when the rights of the canons were treated separately from those of the archbishop: the liberty of St. Peter had obviously begun to develop independently from that of the archbishop.² Dr. Sandra Brown has suggested that the process of establishing a prebendal system at York was started by Archbishop Thomas not long after his arrival in York in 1070, and has tentatively identified fourteen out of a final complement of thirty-six, prebends as the earliest foundations, dating from as early as c. 1070 x 1086.³ Twelve of these prebendal estates were established with lands from the *mensa Capituli* outside the city, but each would also have required a residence within York. Unfortunately there are few references to

¹ *Domesday*, fo 298a; Brown, 'The Peculiar Jurisdiction of York Minster', p.30.

² *Visitations*, pp.192-4; *HCY*, 3, pp.34-36. Brown, 'The Peculiar Jurisdiction of York Minster', pp. 55-57. Compare London where the bishop's soke was held independently from that of the dean and chapter (P. Taylor, 'The Bishop of London's City Soke', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* (1980), p.174.

³ Brown, 'The Peculiar Jurisdiction of York Minster', pp.31-32; these were the prebends of Upper Poppleton (later Givendale), Holme, Bugthorpe, Grindale, Husthwaite, Langtoft, North Newbald, South Newbald, Osbaldwick, Riccall, Salton, Stillington, Strensall, and Warthill.

any of the latter before the later twelfth century. Nevertheless, it is striking that of these twelve early prebends, at least seven had their residences within the Minster Close and in the immediate vicinity of the Minster. Moreover, the residences of the five major dignitaries of the Minster, and of some of the five archdeacons (all of which offices were also established by Thomas I), occupied the remainder of the area of the Close, apart from the precinct of the archbishop's palace itself.

It is possible to reconstruct the arrangements in the Minster Close in some detail.¹ On the north-east side of Petergate were the residences of the sub-dean and the precentor (between the archbishop's palace and the west gate of the Close).² Between the west gate and the church of St. Michael-le-Belfrey a row of properties was occupied by a changing population of archdeacons and canons of the Minster. By the late twelfth century they were often enfeoffed, especially to senior servants and minor clergy of the archbishop and the chapter.³ At least one was described as owing 'husgable to the

¹ For properties fronting Petergate, see Gazetteer, *Tenements 45-61*.

² *Reg. Gray*, p.133; YML, L2/2a, fo 47; VC 3/Vo 7.

³ YML, L2/1 pt ii, fo 45r-v; pt iii, fos 3, 17, 42, 62, 67v; pt iv, fos 8, 44r-v; L2/2a, fos 21v-22; M2/3a, fo 20; BL, Cotton MS Claudius B iii, fos 40, 99v.

archbishop from whom it was held in free burgage.¹ Between 1202 and 1210 a number of these properties were repossessed by the dean and chapter for the enlargement of the cemetery around the Minster, and after 1290 the land was partially used for the building of an enlarged nave and a new west end to the Minster.² To the east of Minster Gates lay the Deanery, which was built on the site of the south-east wing of the Roman *principia*.³ The extensive grounds of the Deanery marked the eastern and southern limits of the Close. North-eastwards from the Deanery extended a street within the Close, which was entirely occupied by the prebendal residences of Langtoft,⁴ Warthill,⁵ Grindale,⁶ and Strensall.⁷ The front portion of these residences was later removed in order to make room for the enlargement of the east end

¹ YML, L2/1 pt ii, fo 45; BL, Cotton MS Claudius B iii, fo 40; *EYC*, i, no 280.

² YML, L2/1 pt iii, fos 17, 62; pt iv, fo 8; BL, Cotton MS Claudius B iii, fo 99v; PRO, SC.6/4563 m.122.

³ PRO, E.40/5783, C.143/31/13; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1292-1301*, p.558; *1301-1307*, p.19.

⁴ YML, L2/1 pt ii, fo 14v; pt iii, fo 63; BL, Cotton MS Claudius B iii, fo 13; Nero D iii, fos 7, 179v 180; *EYC*, i, nos 282-285.

⁵ YML, M2/5, fo 349; BL, Cotton MS Claudius B iii, fo 16v, Vitellius A ii, fos 136, 142 (note); *YMF*, i, nos 48-49.

⁶ BL, Cotton MS Claudius B iii, fo 16v; Vitellius A ii, fo 136; YML, M2/5, fo 343v.

⁷ YML, M2/5, fo 343v; VC 3/Vi 139-140, 168; *Reg. Gray*, p.133.

of the Minster in the fourteenth century.¹ The church of St. Mary-ad-Valvas to the east of the Minster was removed at the same time.² To the north-east of the Minster, land between Ogleforth and College Street was occupied by the residences of Salton,³ Husthwaite,⁴ by land of the Treasurer,⁵ and by Langtoft.⁶ North of the Minster were the residences of the Treasurer and the prebend of Stillington.⁷ The northern corner of the Close, within the angle of the Roman fortress walls, was entirely occupied by the archbishop's palace. Some remains of the chapel and of an arcade still survive,⁸ but the earliest documentary references are of the early thirteenth century.⁹

¹ The foundations of these buildings were found during the Minster excavations. (A.D. Phillips, personal comment) The area of the residences was further reduced in the early nineteenth century (B.I., Map 24, OS 1852), and the remainder almost completely consumed in the extension of Deangate through to Goodramgate.

² Tillott, in *VCHY City of York*, p.389; *RCHNY*, 5, pp.xl, 117b.

³ YML, M2/5, fos 252, 277.

⁴ YML, M2/4g, fo 35v.

⁵ *Reg. Gray*, p.133, records the transfer of this land to the new prebend of Wistow.

⁶ YML, M2/5, fo 277.

⁷ There are substantial remains of a twelfth-century stone building on the site of the treasurer's residence. *RCHNY*, 5, p.69.

⁸ *RCHNY*, 5, p.129a.

⁹ *Reg. Gray*, p.133; YML, L2/1 pt iii, fo 17; BL, Cotton MS Claudius B iii, fo 99v.

The disposition of canon's residences in the Minster Close c. 1200 therefore seems to suggest both that the twelfth-century precinct was laid out around a regular rectangle of streets which essentially preserved the alignment of the Roman fortress, and also that it was almost entirely occupied by the residences of the earliest offices of the chapter, themselves established before 1086. Since these offices were also all otherwise endowed with lands from the *mensa capituli*, it is likely that the area of the Minster Close had been alienated by the archbishops to the community of canons before 1070: this itself may explain the otherwise curious omission of the Minster Close from the survey of the archbishop's shire in c. 1070 x 1080 and 1106. However, some indications that the Close had originally been part of the archbishop's shire remained, not least in the presence of the palace within the precinct, but also in the reference to the payment of husgable to the archbishop from property near the west end of the Minster.¹ By 1276 the houses of the canons were said to belong to the fee and liberty of St. Peter from a time beyond memory: they did not pay geld, neither did tenants in the Minster Close pay husgable to the crown.² This exemption of the Close from geld and husgable was never challenged, unlike other central areas of the

¹ Gazetteer, *Tenement* 57

² YML, L2/1 pt iv, fo 44r-v; L2/2a, fos 21v-22.

liberty,¹ which again suggests that the exemption originated from a time when the Close was part of the archbishop's shire.

However the archbishop's shire in the central area was not confined to the Minster Close. The reconstruction of property holdings in the Goodramgate area shows there was an extensive area of properties to the east of the Close which were also part of the shire. These properties are either described as being of the fee or barony of the archbishop, or as paying hushgale to the archbishop.² In one case a dispute concerning a property c. 1278 was directed to be heard in the court of the archbishop, presided over by his bailiff.³ Detailed analysis suggests that the archbishop's properties in this area occupied the whole of the western side of Goodramgate to the north of Holy Trinity church as well as Ogleforth. On the east side of the same street the shire included all the properties from Monk Bar up to and including a part of the Bedern. In Aldwark the shire was confined to the western end of the street and contained some five to six tenements on both

¹ See below, pp.127, 170, 174.

² YML, VC 3/Vi 1, 3, 113b, 120, 125, 126, 128, 139, 140, 167; 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 34, 35, 37, 48, 49, 51, 82; L2/1 pt iv, fo 44v; L2/2a, fo 22v; BL, Cotton MS Nero D iii, fo 73; Reg. Gray, pp.133, 272n; Chatsworth House, Hardwick MS 20, fo 99.

³ YML, VC 3/Vi 128.

sides of the thoroughfare. The eastern limit of the shire was the rear boundaries between tenements in Goodramgate and St. Andrewgate. This boundary largely coincided with the parish boundaries, but more significantly it corresponded to the line of the south-east wall of the Roman fortress. The point at which Aldwark crosses the line of this wall also marked the limit of the shire. The area of the archbishop's holdings thus corresponded with a significant portion of the parish of Holy Trinity, Goodramgate, the advowson of which the archbishop shared with Durham Priory by 1162,¹ and a portion of the parish of St. Helen-on-the-Walls.²

No trace of archiepiscopal holdings has been found in Stonegate, or on the west side of Petergate, even though these were central areas of St. Peter's liberty by the thirteenth century.³ It would thus appear that the area of the archbishop's shire in central York corresponded almost exactly with the area of the northern half of the Roman fortress, bounded on three sides by the fortress walls and on the fourth by the *via principalis*, or Petergate. The one intrusion into this area was the church, and part of the parish of Holy

¹ *BYC*, ii, p.303.

² This may represent the one quarter of the advowson acquired by the common fund of the dean and chapter from an unknown source (Palliser, in Magilton, *The Church of St. Helen-on-the-Walls*, p.7).

³ *YML*, L2/1 pt iv, fos 43v-44v; *Gazeteer*, *Tenements* 7-9, 12, 21, 29-30.

Trinity, Goodramgate, and the area immediately around the south-east gate of the Roman fortress. Recent excavations have suggested that the south-east wall of the fortress was finally destroyed as a topographical feature in the tenth/twelfth centuries,¹ and this would indicate that the archbishop's holdings were established in the northern fortress area before that date. The identification of such a symbolically important area as a major part of the church's endowments, established plausibly by the mid-tenth century, suggests that the northern half of the Roman fortress was *among* the earliest endowments of the church of St. Peter in York.

However much of the eastern area of this central archiepiscopal shire was not alienated to the dean and chapter directly. During the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries a block of properties on the west side of Goodramgate was used to provide endowments for the treasury and the prebend of Bramham, and to provide prebendal residences for the prebends of Newbald and Wistow.² These became part of the liberty of St. Peter.³ But the remainder of the properties in Aldwark and Goodramgate continued to be considered part of the

¹ *Medieval Aldwark*, (AY, 10/2), forthcoming.

² *Reg. Gray*, p.133; *EYC*, 1, p.136; *YML*, VC 3/Vi 139; *BL*, Cotton MS *Vespasian*, E xix, fo 96v.

³ *YML*, L2/1 pt iv, fo 44v.

archbishop's shire (or barony as it came increasingly to be known). Together with the remaining tenements of the shire in Micklegate, Layerthorpe and Clementhorpe, the shire was actively administered by the archbishop's bailiffs and their court, and tolls and husgable continued to be collected there throughout the thirteenth century. The archbishops, especially Walter de Gray, also took an active interest in the disposal of lands within the shire, and occasionally used their lordship of the shire in the patronage of new religious foundations such as the vicars choral.¹ Indeed in the Hundred Rolls inquiry of 1279 the archbishop claimed the right to maintain a gallows, to administer the assize of bread and ale and to hold a court for certain (citizens) living in the Goodramgate area.²

Goodramgate, therefore, was by far the largest area of the archbishop's shire within the walls to survive into the late thirteenth century. As this street too was steadily acquired by the vicars choral in the decades before 1300, it also passed into the jurisdiction of the dean and chapter. After 1279, there is no further reference to an archbishop's shire or barony in York.

¹ See below, p.121.

² *Rotuli Hundredorum*, vol 1, W. Illingworth & J. Caley (eds.) (1812), p.119.

The Development of the Capitular Estates: Prebendal Endowments and the Common Fund

The lavish endowments of the reformed *post-Conquest* dean and chapter of the Minster was thus the major reason for the decline and eventual eclipse of the archbishop's shire in York, as during the early twelfth century the canons achieved increasing autonomy in the administration of these endowments. One factor in the increasing independence of the dean and chapter was undoubtedly their acquisition of lands from outside the archbishop's shire. Among the most important of these were the estates given by Ulf son of Thorald which included substantial holdings in York.¹ From the survey of St. Peter's liberty of 1276 these can be identified as land in the Bedern in Goodramgate, in Monkgate next to the archbishop's holdings and in Bootham. By 1276 they were annexed to the common and the prebends of Strensall and the Treasurer.² Their close proximity to land of the archbishop's shire may be coincidental, or may suggest a desire to consolidate the Minster's possessions in those areas of the city. However they

¹ Ulf was later celebrated by the chapter as a founding patron of special significance, whose arms were given a prominence within the Minster equalled only by those of the crown. The 'horn of Ulf' is still preserved in the Treasury as a token of his gift. His identity, however, remains obscure. (Hill & Brooke, in *York Minster History*, p.39; *Domesday*, fo 303a,b).

² YML, L2/1 pt iv, fos 44v, 45.

were certainly not held from the archbishop, for by 1276 the chapter had negotiated an agreement whereby the lands of Ulf were exempted from husgable and other tolls and their tenants were submitted to the jurisdiction of the dean and chapter in return for an annual payment of 6s. 8d. to the mayor and citizens.¹

The lands of Ulf are the only independent acquisition of land by the chapter which can be securely dated as early as the eleventh century. Throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the chapter continued to make occasional acquisitions of other properties in York which lay outside the archbishop's shire. Among the most important acquisitions made by the chapter were the properties on the south-west side of Petergate and in Stonegate, which by 1276 provided the official residences of at least seven prebendaries and three other major officials of the chapter.² Unfortunately there is virtually no direct indication of the manner by which these properties came into the possession of the chapter.³ Despite the claim made in both 1086 and 1276 that the houses of the canons were exempt from the

¹ YML, L2/1, fo 39.

² YML, L2/1 pt iv, fos 43v-44v; Gazetteer, *Tenements 12-20*.

³ The prebendary of Masham's houses in Petergate were given to the prebendary c. 1219 x 1228. However since the donor, William son of Richard, was himself a canon, this may not mark the original acquisition of the land by the chapter. (YMF, i, p.83).

payment of all custom to the crown,¹ the later survey makes it clear that the majority of the property on the south-west side of Petergate and in Stonegate within St. Peter's liberty did indeed pay hushable rents to the crown. It thus seems certain that, however acquired, these properties were not part of the pre-Conquest archbishop's shire, nor the *capitular mensa* in 1086, nor of the land of Ulf, and had probably been acquired by the chapter since 1086.

Of the minority of properties outside the Minster Close in Stonegate and Petergate which were exempt from the payment of hushable in 1276, a number belonged to the prebend of Bramham, which was annexed to the priory of Nostell, and may have been exempt by virtue of the charter of liberties given to that house by Henry I.² The reason for the exemption of some property in Swinegayl, and of the archdeacon of Richmond's property in Stonegate is not clear, and indeed even the jurors in 1276 were not certain about the latter's status. The property known as Mulberry Hall in Stonegate was also exempt (nos 35a-39 Stonegate). Its name might possibly suggest that it had once belonged to the family of Roger de Mowbray, earl of Northumbria, who was a prominent

¹ YML, L2/1 pt iv, fos 43v-44v; Gazetteer, *Tenements 7-9, 12-21, 29-30*; *Domesday*, fo 298a.

² VCHY, iii, p.231. These were properties at no 11, High Petergate and nos 79-87 Low Petergate. Gazetteer, *Tenements 7-9, 29-30*.

landowner in the city,¹ and founder of the prebend of Masham.⁴ In c. 1109 x 1114 Mowbray's father, Nigel d'Aubigny promised restitution to the church of St. Peter of lands which he had wrongly withheld from them;² and there is some evidence from the mid-thirteenth century that a Roger de Mowbray was in possession of some property in Stonegate.³ Nevertheless it is only speculation to suggest that the exemption of Mulberry Hall might date from a period when it had formed part of the honour of Mowbray.

Not all the York property originally held by the dean and chapter was assigned to officials and prebendaries. The establishment of a common fund, later to be administered by the chamberlain of the chapter, can probably be traced back to the original division between the episcopal *mensa* and the capitular *mensa*.⁵ By 1194 the common fund was already generously endowed.⁶ In York these endowments then included six parish

¹ The name Mulberry Hall is first recorded in 1276 as *MULBERIAHALLE*. On his seal Roger de Mowbray's name is spelt *MVLBRAI*. *Charters of the Honour of Mowbray*, p.lxxxii. For his possessions in York, see *ibid.*, p.xxiv n.

² *YMF*, II, p.51.

³ *Charters of the Honour of Mowbray*, p.8.

⁴ *Chartulary of Fountains*, p.274.

⁵ Brown, 'The Peculiar Jurisdiction of York Minster', pp.47-50.

⁶ R.B. Dobson, 'The Later Middle Ages, 1215-1500', in *York Minster History*, p.59.

churches;¹ and by the early fourteenth century the number of city churches appropriated to the common fund had increased to nine and one mediety.² Several of these churches served areas of York within the archbishop's shire and had probably originally belonged to the episcopal *mensa*; but in other cases the churches were not necessarily associated with the Minster's early estates,³ and their acquisition by the chapter was perhaps simply part of a general trend for the advowsons of parish churches to be acquired by ecclesiastical corporations.

In addition to three city churches the dean and chapter also administered a growing number of rents and tenements in the city. By the later fourteenth century this responsibility was principally divided between the chamberlain of the common fund and the bailiffs of St. Peter's Liberty, although the latter may originally have accounted, as subsidiary officials, to the common fund.⁴

¹ *HCY*, 3, p.95. These were the churches of St. John, Ousebridge, St. John, Hungate, St. Lawrence, Walmgate, St. Andrew, St. Andrewgate, St. Martin, Coneystreet and St. Mary, Bishophill Junior.

² The additional churches were St. Mary-ad-Valvas, St. Michael-le-Belfrey (both within the Minster Close), St. Stephen, Fishergate and a mediety of the advowson of St. Helen-on-the-Walls, Aldwark. (Tillott, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.382, 389, 395, 403).

³ For example, one fourth share of the advowson of St. Helen-on-the-Walls was given to the Minster by Thomas de St. Lawrence in 1194 x 1212 (*YML*, L2/1, fo 29v).

⁴ *YML*, E1/1. Arrears of the bailiffs are included in the first surviving chamberlain of the common fund's account for 1370-1371.

By 1370 the common fund was owed rents from tenements in Petergate, Stonegate, Hungate and Monkgate worth approximately £16 a year;¹ while by 1487 the bailiffs of St. Peter's Liberty had a large, if rather decayed, estate of properties widely distributed across the city.² Despite the late date of these (the earliest surviving) accounts for the two offices, it is clear from extant rentals that many properties were acquired much earlier. For example, a group of tenements around the Minster Gates and in Stonegate administered by the common fund are recorded as belonging to the common of St. Peter as early as the mid-thirteenth century.³ These may represent the residue of the chapter's original endowments not assigned to prebendaries.⁴ Similarly, a free rent of 2s. in Aldwark owed to St. Peter's bailiffs in 1487 was already owed to the dean and chapter c. 1240.⁵ Moreover both the chapter's estates contained a number of properties adjacent to the cemeteries of capitular churches,⁶ belonging to

¹ YML, E1/1. Martinmas 1370-Pentecost 1371.

² YML, F3/1. Michaelmas 1487-1488.

³ Gazetteer, *Tenements 17, 50.*

⁴ BL, Cotton MS Claudius B iii, fos 42, 88; YML, L2/1 pt iv, fo 44.

⁵ BL, Cotton MS Claudius B iii, fo 58v.

⁶ For example, property next to the churches of St. Lawrence and St. John, Hungate, and the site of St. Stephen's, Fishergate in 1487 (YML, F3/1).

chantries founded in those churches,¹ or belonging to chantries and obits in the Minster itself.²

Indeed, once the endowment of the prebendaries was complete, it was almost entirely through the later endowment of obits and chantries at Minster altars that the estates of the dean and chapter continued to grow. At first it may have been the common fund which was the principal beneficiary of these endowments. However as the number of these endowments increased in the thirteenth century new arrangements were made. The most important innovation was the foundation in the 1240s of an independent college of vicars choral in the Bedern to the east of the Minster Close. The new college both took over the administration of chantry endowments originally conferred upon the dean and chapter and attracted many new endowments of their own, becoming in the thirteenth century the chief beneficiaries of new chantry endowments in the Minster.

¹ YML, F3/1, L2/2a, fos 68v, 80.

² The common funds estate included property in Stonegate belonging to the chantry for the souls of Jordan and all canons of the Minster (YML E1/1, M2/4g, fo 43v).

Origins of the Estate of Vicars Choral

The first references to vicars in York Minster occur in the mid-twelfth century.¹ At that date each vicar was probably housed and supported by the canon for whom he deputised in the cathedral choir. This responsibility is reflected in the fourteenth century by the continued attachment of vicars to individual prebendal stalls, and by the obligations of each canon to provide £2 a year to the college for his own vicar, to provide dinner regularly for his vicar and to bequeath him his cope.² In York the earliest record of these arrangements is to be found in the chapter statutes of 1291, but similar arrangements were already in force at Salisbury, Lichfield and Chichester by the early thirteenth century, suggesting that the practices in York may also have been of earlier origin.³

Yet it seems unlikely that the financial support provided by the canons was ever intended to be entirely sufficient for the vicars, or that their duties were ever intended to be absolutely limited to deputising for the canons in the choir. By the 1160s the vicars of

¹ Dobson, in *A History of York Minster*, p.89.

² F. Harrison, *Life in a Medieval College* (1952), pp.46, 180-181, 188-190.

³ K. Edwards, *The English Secular Cathedrals in the Middle Ages*, (Manchester, 1967), pp.263-4.

St. Peter were already associated as a distinct group within the Minster clergy; and by the 1190s they appear under the authority of their own succentor, a vicar, suggesting that before 1200 they already enjoyed a limited form of corporate organisation.¹ At about the same time individual vicars are found associated with new chantry foundations in the Minster, so that from at least c. 1200 some vicars had means of support independent of their canon. One of the earliest known 'cantaria' in York at the altar of St. Nicholas and St. Gregory in the crypt was endowed in 1201 with properties in Cottam, Bishop Burton and in Petergate in York (59-63 Low Petergate) for the support of Nicholas the altar priest.² The endowment was made to the dean and chapter, but it seems probable that Nicholas was a vicar choral,³ and certainly by 1276, and on every subsequent occasion that the chantry priest is named, the incumbent was a vicar and the property was administered in the fourteenth century as part of the vicars' estate.⁴ It was not unusual for vicars choral to be supported in

¹ YML, L2/1 pt ii, fos 16v, 39 (printed in *BYC*, i, p.136, *BYC*, ii, p.92); YML, L2/1 pt iii, fo 3; *YMF*, ii, pp.63, 107-8, 111, 114; *BYC*, i, pp.259, 263.

² *YMF*, ii, pp.141, 143; *Gazetteer*, *Tenement 21*.

³ Three contemporary charters of 1189 x 1217 record a vicar named 'master Nicholas' or 'Nicholas the chaplain'. See *BYC*, i, p.242n; *YMF*, ii, p.107.

⁴ YML, L2/1 pt iv, fo 44; L2/2a, fo 21v; M2/4g, fo 40v; 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', p.317.

this manner, for in Lichfield too the vicars choral were given the estate of the '*martilogium*' of their cathedral in the early thirteenth century.¹

Much less ambiguous were the increasing numbers of endowments made directly to the vicars of St. Peter or to the dean and chapter on behalf of the vicars. Among the earliest were grants made to the vicars through the influence of one of their own succentors, Richard son of Roger de Ousebarn, who acquired properties for the vicars in Great Ouseburn,² in Aldwark,³ and in Petergate,⁴ in the 1220s and 1230s. Thus although the vicars choral were not formally granted the right to administer their own estates until 1252,¹ it is clear that both individually and corporately the vicars choral had been building up their estates throughout the first half of the thirteenth century.

In the first half of the thirteenth century, before the vicars acquired their new college and common residence in the Bedern, the majority of the property

¹ J.C. Cox, *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, part ii, The William Salt Archaeological Society, vol. VI (1886), pp.159, 165-167, 171, 186.

² YML, VC Vo 1.

³ YML, VC Vi 1.

⁴ YML, VC Vi 314; 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 170-171; Gazetteer, *Tenement 7*.

they acquired consisted of rents either given to the vicars in alms (in one case in return for the promise of burial in the Minster),² or sold for cash.³ Altogether, between 1220 and 1283 the vicars acquired annual rents worth £12. 17s. 2d., and they became increasingly involved in the purchase of such property. As Dr. Nigel Tringham has shown, the normal formula in these sales was that one mark should be paid for every shilling of rent purchased; frequently the vendor stressed his own "great necessity" as the reason for the sale.⁴ However, during this period it is also clear that the vicars were pursuing a policy of building up an estate in Micklegate and Goodramgate, although properties elsewhere continued to be received as gifts. In particular, eleven of the rent-charges they purchased at the time came from only four properties in Micklegate, which became progressively burdened with rents until finally the title to the land itself was acquired by the college.¹ Such a method of acquiring property by the steady accumulation of rent-charges in return for lump sums

¹ Dobson, in *A History of York Minster*, p.90; *The Statutes etc. of the Cathedral Church of York*, J. Raine (ed.) (2nd ed., Leeds, 1900), pp.17-20.

² 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 11, 52, 182-3, 199.

³ *Ibid.*, nos 2, 15-17, 20-23, 28, 29, 44, 74, 79, 96, 104-5, 115, 166, 174-6, 179, 193.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.lxi.

¹ *Ibid.*, nos 5, 12, 13, 24-26.

only just lay outside the limits of usury as prescribed by canon law in the thirteenth century, but was a method used by other institutions in acquiring land.¹

A new stage in the evolution of the estate of the vicars choral of the Minster began with the creation of a communal college in the 1240s. Most accounts of the history of this college have always attributed the initial endowment of land in Goodramgate to William de Lanum, a canon of the Minster, dating it to 1248.² Yet the title deeds for the Bedern suggest that the provision of a group of properties amalgamated into the college site should be attributed not only to Lanum, but also to Archbishop Walter de Gray and John le Romeyn senior.³ It is possible that Gray, one of the most active administrative reformers of the medieval Minster, may have been the instigator of the new foundation. Romeyn, who was successively sub-dean, archdeacon of the East Riding, and treasurer of the Minster, as well as a close associate of Gray, may have been the chief executor of the plan. He was the most generous of the earliest patrons of the vicars, providing them in the

² J.T. Noonan, *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), pp.154-164.

³ F. Harrison, *Life in a Medieval College*, p.29.

⁴ 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 37, 38, 58, 62, 82, 84, 85, 86; YML, L2/1 pt iv, fo 44r-v; L2/2a, fo 22-v.

1220s and 1230s with lands and rents in the rural suburbs of Layerthorpe and Tang Hall, in Monkgate and Jewbury, as well as with a substantial house and gardens in Goodramgate.¹ At any rate the foundation of the college must have been complete by Lanum's death before 1249, and before the college's charter in 1252.² Gray and Romeyn both died in 1255, but their project was completed by their successors Archbishop John le Romeyn junior, and John Mansel, the treasurer of the Minster, who confirmed and enforced the vicars full rights to their properties in and near the Bedern.³

The founders of the new college were representative of the patrons of the college after its foundation. A few laymen gave modest endowments,⁴ as did some members of the college themselves;⁵ but the most substantial patronage was given by the Minster canons and especially by the senior officials of the chapter. Among the more important gifts were those of Robert de Winchester (precentor c. 1235-1240), who bequeathed a group of properties by Holy Trinity

¹ 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 58, 99-101.

² Lanum died between 1244 and 1249. *YMF*, ii, p.9.

³ 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 60, 63, 64.

⁴ *Ibid.*, no 182.

⁵ *Ibid.*, nos 89, 151; *YML*, VC 3/V1 42.

Goodramgate,¹ and his successor as precentor Simon de Evesham (later archdeacon of the East Riding and of Richmond), who gave the college a valuable group of properties on the corner of Petergate and Stonegate.² Roger Pepin, the sub-dean of York at the time of the college's foundation, William de Langton who was dean from 1263-12, and Canon William Walesby, his contemporary, provided further substantial rents and properties in Petergate, Goodramgate and Aldwark.³ From the endowments of these patrons the vicars built up a substantial estate of properties in the streets adjacent to their new college and in the nearest suburbs of Monkgate and Layerthorpe. Before the foundation of the Bedern, the vicars' properties seem to have been relatively evenly distributed between the Minster area, other areas of York and their rural properties. However, by 1309 c. 62% of their rent income was drawn from those areas of York nearest to the college.⁴

Perhaps the most important consequence of the foundation of the Bedern for the Minster's estates, therefore, was that it allowed the profits of the ancient endowments of archbishop and chapter in York to

¹ 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 174-176.

² *Ibid.*, nos 188-190, Appendix 1 a-d; Gazetteer, *Tenements* 15-17.

³ *Ibid.*, no 45; YML, VC 3/Vo 5; L2/1 pt iii, fo 96v.

⁴ YML, VC 4/1/1.

be recouped and re-applied to the maintenance of the Minster. To a large extent the new endowments of the college were drawn from the old area of the archbishop's shire or from the more recent endowments of the chapter. Professor Dobson has estimated that as the habit of non-residence among the Minster's canons developed in the twelfth century, only between a third and a half of the true value of the Minster's original endowments remained available to the use of the dean and chapter.¹ In York many of the estates of both the archbishop and chapter had been enfeoffed to free tenants for a relatively nominal free rent. The endowment of the vicars' college therefore afforded the double opportunity of re-applying the York property of some prebendaries to those who actually performed acts of corporate worship in the Minster, and of repossessing in demesne alienated lands within the Minster fee. Patrons of the Minster thus attempted to prepare their endowments for the college by buying out free tenants and any quit-rents with which the property had become burdened. Thus Simon de Evesham spent in excess of 57 marks over a period of 15 to 20 years buying up the rights to reserved rents worth more than 30s. per annum, as well as the rights of other tenants, from the three tenements which he gave the

¹ Dobson, in *A History of York Minster*, p.58.

vicars in Petergate in 1261.¹ Even then the land remained burdened with several rents to other altars and officials of the Minster.² Evesham was principally concerned to reduce rents owed outside the Minster community. Indeed several major endowments of the vicars in the later thirteenth century consisted principally of purchasing for the vicars the fuller use of property to which they already enjoyed some title. In 1292 Langton's bequest effectively gave the vicar serving his chantry, land which the dean and chapter had already been given for the vicars in 1240 x 1244 by Lady Alice Neville,³. In other cases the vicars bought out rents reserved by other landlords from their property themselves. In the 1270s and 1280s some of the rents owed from the Bedern itself were purchased, at the rate of 1 mark for each shilling of rent, purchased which was similar to the rate they had paid for rent-charges on the Micklegate properties.⁴ As a consequence of all these efforts, by 1309 the vicars paid only £1.15s. 3d. in foreign rents (including husgable) from an income

¹ YML, VC 3/Vi 376-378, 388, 389, 416; Metcalfe, *Deeds in Extenso*, vol 5 no 52; 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 188-190, App. 1 a-d; Gazetteer, *Tenements 15-17*.

² 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', no 190.

³ BL, Cotton MS Claudius B iii, fo 113.

⁴ YML, VC 3/Vi 112, 114.

from rents in York of £27. 0s. 9d.¹ The profits from their endowments were thus considerably greater than, for example, those of the monastic landlords of other city properties in 1228.²

The determination of the chapter to re-acquire the rent from lands within their own fee was typical of many religious institutions and urban landlords of the period.³ However, in the case of the Minster this took the important form of endowing a new organisation within the Minster community. The endowment of the vicars' college also had other important consequences for the Minster and the city. A number of the vicars' endowments in Goodramgate, Aldwark and Layerthorpe consisted of land from the rump of the archbishop's shire which had never been alienated to the chapter. Accordingly as the dean and chapter claimed jurisdiction over the vicars' new possessions, the endowment of the college tended to increase the jurisdiction of St. Peter's liberty further at the expense of the archbishop's shire. This expansion of the chapter's liberty to include the vicars' endowments is clearly

¹ YML, VC 4/1/1.

² See below, pp.140-141.

³ B. Harvey, *Westminster Abbey and its Estates in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1977), p. 165; E. Miller, *The Abbey and Bishopric of Ely* (1951), pp.167-168; F.R.H. Du Boulay, *The Lordship of Canterbury* (1966), pp.204 ff.

shown in the two surveys of St. Peter's liberty in 1276 and 1376, both of which included areas formerly of the archbishop's shire.¹ Nor was the expansion of St. Peter's liberty limited to the vicars' endowments in the shire. In 1276, and again in 1316, the chapter claimed jurisdiction over all the endowments of the vicars, including properties in Petergate and Micklegate which had not previously belonged to either the capitular or archiepiscopal fees.² The endowment of the vicars thus not only reinforced but also extended the influence of the Minster's privileged jurisdiction in the city and contributed to the increasing hostility in the city to the alienation of property in mortmain, and to the jurisdictional privileges of ecclesiastical landlords.³

Finally, it should be noted that in the years after 1200, new developments in the administrative structure of the Minster led to the evolution of other new departments which were to be of crucial importance in the attraction of new endowments to the church in the later middle ages.

¹ YML, L2/1, fo 44-45; M2/2c, fos 31-34.

² *Ibid.*; Gazetteer, *Tenements 17, 21.*

³ See below, pp.168-174.

In particular several chantries were founded in the Minster whose endowments were not administered by the vicars choral.¹ Occasionally they were founded by canons who were also patrons of the vicars, as in the case of the chantry founded at St. Andrew's altar by John le Romeyn senior in 1244 x 1245,² and generally their patrons were canons and clergy of the Minster. As in the case of the vicars' endowments, the endowments of these chantries often included lands repurchased within the capitular fee, but some included property elsewhere and represented a gradual extension of the Minster's estates in the city. Thus Elias Bernard, a canon, in c. 1230 repurchased from tenants land in the fee of the common fund in Stonegate for his chantry, but also purchased some 'new' property in Micklegate.³ The best survey of these chantries' endowments is that made of all the chantries in the Minster c. 1376.⁴ The chantries of Roger de Insula (dean 1220-33), Geoffrey of Norwich (dean 1233-38) and Laurence of Lincoln (archdeacon of York 1241-45), possessed rents in seventeen different streets throughout the central and

¹ Dobson, in *History of York Minster*, p.96.

² YML, L2/2a, fo 52; M2/4g, fos 14v, 39v-40.

³ BL, Cotton MS Claudius B iii, fo 126.

⁴ YML, M2/4g, fos 36v-43v.

western parts of the city.¹ However, the establishment of a separate fabric fund in the later thirteenth century was to have an even more marked effect in the later middle ages in attracting new endowments to the cathedral from outside its original possessions. Initially the fabric fund had been a part of the common fund; for example these two departments of the Minster continued to share the income from donations at St. William's shrine in the cathedral.² Unlike the vicars choral, the fabric fund only ever drew a small proportion of its income from property in York. Even though during the fourteenth century it built up an estate of some 150 rents in York, these were always greatly exceeded in value by the fabric's other sources of income.³ By the 1260s one property in Petergate already owed a rent to the fabric,⁴ but there is little evidence of the fabric building up an extensive fee in

¹ YML, M2/4g, fos 37, 39, 41v. These chantries' endowments continued to be administered independently by the chantry priest under the founders' successors in office. In other cases the administrative responsibility was less clear. Vicars choral often served at chantries even if they did not administer their estates, and were, for example, owed 5 marks a year from property in Stonegate administered by the common fund for the vicar serving Jordan's chantry (YML, M2/4g, fo 43v). In other cases, such as that of Taunton's chantry founded in 1304, the vicars administered the property of chantries not explicitly established for them (YML, VC 3/Vo 6; Harrison, *Life in a Medieval College*, pp.184-185).

² YML, E1/1 *et seq.*; *The Fabric Rolls of York Minster*, J. Raine (ed.), SS, xxxv (1859), *passim*.

³ YML, E3/12, 24 December 1431-1432.

⁴ 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', no 190; Gazetteer, *Tenements 15-17*.

York before the fourteenth century. Since no complete rent accounts of its estate survive before the fifteenth century, the evidence provided by these accounts will therefore be discussed in Chapter Five below.

Conclusion

The preceding survey of the complicated administrative evolution of the Minster's estates in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries indicates that it is impossible, in the absence of any account rolls, to assess the total value of the Minster's landed income in the city of York. The sparse survival of the relevant records makes generalisations hazardous. Nevertheless in the period from 1050 to 1300 two general trends are apparent. Before 1066 the church's estates in the city had been extensive. The lands of the archbishops and canons included extensive areas of the eastern, western and northern suburbs, but within the walled areas of the city they were relatively limited and well-defined, within the northern half of the former fortress and within the central area of the former *colonia*. The reformation of the Minster community by the first Norman archbishops, particularly in their establishment of a prebendal system, made essential the enlargement of the capitular estates. This was especially urgent in the area of the Norman Minster itself, so that the new

prebendaries and chapter officials could be properly housed. This process can be compared with the enlargement of the cathedral close in Lincoln following the reformation of the secular chapter there.¹ Thus, as the York chapter developed an administrative autonomy from the archbishop, and as lands from the archbishop's shire in the western and northern suburbs of the city were either alienated to other religious institutions or retained within the archbishop's barony of Sherburn, this resulted in a new concentration of the capitular holdings in the walled city and suburbs nearest the Minster. To some extent this concentration was balanced by the acquisition of new properties elsewhere in the city. In particular the acquisition of some parish churches and their associated holdings, and the endowment of chantries in the thirteenth century, meant that the dean and chapter established an important presence as landowners within the crown's fee in York. Indeed by 1300 there was scarcely a street in the city where the Minster clergy did not have some kind of holding, but the overall size and distribution of their estate was very different from that two centuries earlier.

¹ Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, pp.115-126.

During the thirteenth century the dean and chapter also began to concentrate on consolidating their possession of their York fee. Although some endowments were attracted from patrons outside the cathedral, the greater part of the expansion of the York estate was funded by the canons themselves. All the English secular cathedrals were confronted with similar problems in the twelfth century as the prebendal system became formalised, and as the habit of non-residence grew, so that valuable prebends increasingly came to be treated as sinecures by prominent churchmen.¹ The problem was less that the Minster was understaffed, than that in effect it lost the greater part of the value of its endowments. Viewed from the perspective of the cathedral itself, the growth of chantry foundations and the creation of the college of vicars choral can be interpreted as an attempt to recoup the resources of the church to the use of the Minster, and not just as a purely liturgical reform. On the whole it proved a successful experiment, as by the early fourteenth century three quarters of the vicars' and most chantries' income from property was drawn from rents in York. Thus by 1300 the day to day running of the Minster and its resident clergy was considerably more dependent on its York estate than it had been in 1050.

¹ Edwards, *English Secular Cathedrals*, pp.20-21.

It can be concluded that the growth of St. Peter's estates ensured that the Minster community exercised a very real influence in the city as landlords by 1300. The physical growth of the capitular estates was matched by attempts to extend their legal franchise, which was copied by other ecclesiastical landlords in the city. The resistance which this provoked was an important catalyst in the development of autonomous civic government in York. Similarly efforts to consolidate the economic enjoyment of the fruits of their fee significantly altered the conditions by which individual citizens were able to own and enjoy land within the city. The consequences of the Minster community's management of their urban estates for the citizens and residents of York will be examined below. Ironically, the more extensive the Minster's authority grew, the more vulnerable it became to attack and eventual erosion.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE ORIGINS AND GROWTH OF MONASTIC ESTATES IN YORK, C. 1080-1300

Quite apart from the growth of the landholdings of St. Peter's Minster in the city, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries also witnessed a significant expansion in the landholdings of other ecclesiastical communities in York. It was perhaps inevitable that York as the ecclesiastical metropolis of the north, and an important trading centre should both possess a high concentration of religious communities established within itself, and attract the interest of religious houses further afield seeking to establish permanent hospices in the city for their representatives. As a consequence by the thirteenth century large areas of the city had been encroached upon by ecclesiastical landlords holding their land in frankalmoign and thus claiming special privileges of exemption from local courts, and more especially from contribution to the farm of the city. Such problems were faced in many other boroughs.¹ This chapter seeks to describe how monastic landholdings in York were acquired, and to assess the consequences for the city of the general expansion of ecclesiastically-owned estates in the city in the years before 1300.

¹ C. Gross, 'Mortmain in Medieval Boroughs', *American Historical Review*, 12 (1907), pp.733-42.

York was, to some extent, unusual among English towns in that prior to the Norman Conquest comparatively little urban property seems to have been held by the monastic communities. Certainly the archbishop and the metropolitan church of St. Peter had significant endowments in the city. It is also possible that a community of canons at Christ Church in Micklegate had a local estate, and the church of Durham may have been in possession of some land in York continuously since the seventh century.¹ Apart from these estates, however, the lack of new monastic foundations north of the Humber in the tenth and early eleventh centuries meant the absence in York of those influential ecclesiastical landlords who were so prominent in some other towns. In Winchester, for example, six of the seven great fiefs in the early twelfth century were held by ecclesiastical lords and at least four of these comprised estates belonging to local monasteries and the bishop before

¹ According to Simeon of Durham in 685, King Egfrith and Archbishop Theodore gave St. Cuthbert 'all that land in the city of York that lies from the wall of St. Peter's church to the great gate towards the west, and from the wall of St. Peter's church to the city wall towards the south'. (*Symeonis Dunelmensis Opera et Collectanea*, 1, H. Hinde (ed.) [SS, 1:, (1868)], p. 140) Professor Palliser has suggested a location for this property on the west bank. (Palliser, 'York's West Bank', p. 104) However in the context of the known history of the bishop of Durham's estates in York from the later eleventh century, a site including Holy Trinity, Goodramgate and adjacent properties in the same parish might be more plausible. (See below, pp.160-161). For the pre-Conquest community of Christ Church, see J.E. Burton, 'The Origins and Development of Religious Orders in Yorkshire c. 1069-c. 1200'. (History D.Phil. Thesis, York, 1977), pp.48-9.

1066.¹ Between them, in 1148, they accounted for 65% of the total number of tenements in the city.² It is much more difficult to produce equivalent figures from other cities, if only because they lack the detailed contemporary surveys which made the computation of the Winchester figures possible. However in Oxford and Lincoln monasteries outside those cities were already established as important landowners within them by 1066.³

One of the most important consequences of the Norman Conquest in York was the subsequent rapid increase in the involvement of the church in the local property market. The manner in which the estates of the Minster were substantially reformed and enlarged has already been described. Even more marked was the impact of the foundation and endowment of seventy-one new monastic houses in Yorkshire between c. 1079 and 1250, in addition to the foundation of new hospitals and collegiate churches.⁴ This number was subsequently further increased by the foundation of houses of friars. Over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries

¹ Biddle & Keene, in *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages*, pp.349, 357.

² *Ibid.*, p.369.

³ J. Cooper, 'Medieval Oxford', in *VCH Oxford*, 4, (1979), p.8; Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, pp.370-373.

⁴ *VCHY*, 3, p.17, and map facing p.1.

this growth in the number of religious foundations had a major impact on the city.

Within the city and suburbs of York alone, thirteen religious institutions were established on new sites before 1250, not including the community of Holy Trinity Priory which was substantially reformed after the Conquest.¹ In addition to the sites which they occupied most of these institutions were also active in building up estates of lands and rents in the city. So too were the new foundations of the county. By 1290, at least forty-six of the new religious houses of Yorkshire, together with three from County Durham and two from Lancashire, had established hospices or acquired other properties within the city.² An increase in church interest in urban property, and particularly in the acquisition of properties by fairly distant religious houses was not unique to York. Such increased activity can also be found in Winchester, Oxford and Canterbury, for example;³ yet the scale of the acquisition of property by the church appears to have been more marked than in the cathedral cities of the

¹ See above, pp.56-59.

² See Table 4.1.

³ Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, p.194; Cooper, in *VCH Oxford*, pp.11, 41; Urry, *Canterbury under the Angevin Kings*, p.67.

south, especially Wessex, where monastic institutions had been well established as landowners before the Conquest.

In c. 1228 a survey was made of lands given or alienated in alms to the church in the city of York.¹ It is possible that this survey was produced as a result of growing disquiet over the number of properties being alienated in free alms to the church, a disquiet which had already been expressed in 1217 and which was ultimately to result in the mortmain legislation of 1259-1279.² Five membranes of the document survive, listing lands in twenty-three parishes within the central and western areas of the city. Membranes dealing with the parishes to the east of the Foss, in Walmgate and Fishergate, appear to have been lost, and are absent from the survey. Moreover, nine parishes from the central and western areas of the city are also notable for their absence. Of these nine, eight were probably omitted because the entire area of the parish

¹ PRO, E.135/25; Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, p.49. This survey was also brought to my attention by Dr. David Smith who is preparing a discussion of this document in relation to contemporary efforts to control alienations in mortmain. It can be dated by comparing the gifts of lands recorded in it with the evidence of cartularies, in particular the gift of land in North Street by Alice, widow of Nicholas de Bugthorpe, to St. Leonard's Hospital (BL, Cotton MS Nero D iii, fo 165v).

² F. Pollock & F.W. Maitland, *The History of English Law before the time of Edward I*, volume 1, (Cambridge, 1911), pp.333-334. S. Raban, *Mortmain Legislation and the English Church, 1279-1500* (Cambridge, 1982), pp.14-15.

lay within the liberty of St. Peter, St. Mary or the archbishop's fee.' It is less easy to explain the omission of St. Helen Stonegate. Architectural evidence, although ambiguous, suggests that there was a church on the site in the twelfth century,² and the earliest certain documentary reference to the church is in 1235.³ Thus it is almost certain that the church had been founded by the date of the survey. Part of the parish lay within the liberty of St. Peter and another part within Davy Hall. Possibly the remaining small portion of the parish did not contain any lands alienated to religious institutions although the church itself, in 1235, belonged to Moxby Priory.

However incomplete, this survey lists 163 properties given to 32 different religious institutions. Two general impressions emerge quite clearly. Firstly, a large area of the city around Ousebridge, Coneystreet, Jubbergate and the Shambles, which before the Norman Conquest was apparently quite 'free' of church lordship,

¹ These were St. Clement, St. Giles, St. John-del-Pyke, St. Mary-ad-Valvas, St. Mary Bishophill Junior, St. Mary Layerthorpe, St. Michael-le-Belfrey and St. Olave. The parish of Holy Trinity, King's Court appears to be omitted. However two consecutive paragraphs headed Holy Trinity, Goodramgate (which formed an adjacent parish), and a comparison of the lands listed in them with the evidence of charters, suggests that the second paragraph in fact concerns Holy Trinity, King's Court.

² *RCHNY*, 5, p.20.

³ Tillott, in *VCHY City of York*, p.383.

had by the thirteenth century witnessed a very significant expansion of ecclesiastical property. Secondly, much of this expansion had occurred in the preceding thirty years. Thus of the 139 cases in which the approximate date of the acquisition of land is clearly given, 48 properties had been acquired by the church since 1199, compared with 91 in the whole of the preceding century. Indeed 43 acquisitions had been made in the reign of John alone. Thus this local York evidence helps to explain the national opposition to some aspects of church lordship apparent at the beginning of Henry III's reign, especially since the ecclesiastical properties here recorded were both relatively recent and impinged on areas of the city previously subject only to the crown.' Although this dramatic expansion of church lordship would have been all too apparent to early thirteenth-century citizens of York, the survey also seems to show that the amount of rent which the church received from its properties was usually far below their true economic value. While the church was the largest York landowner in terms of the numbers of properties within ecclesiastically-owned estates, in terms of the rent derived from these properties its share of landed wealth in the city was much smaller. In 93 cases the survey contrasts the

' The problem of alienation in frankalmoin in medieval boroughs has been recently discussed by Raban, *Mortmain Legislation and the English Church*, pp.5-6, 13.

annual estimated value of the property with the rent which the ecclesiastical land-owner received from it. The total value of these properties amounted to £67. 10s. 2d., while the amount of rents received was only £19. 19s. 3d. Although these figures are by no means easy to interpret, and nothing is known of the basis of the assessment, it would seem that the ecclesiastical landlords of the city of York were in the early thirteenth century in receipt of less than one third of the real economic value of these properties.¹ In Winchester, at the rather earlier date of 1148, the situation may have been comparable, for although the six great ecclesiastical fiefs owned 65% of all tenements in the city, they received only 28% of all the rents,² suggesting that they received only 43% of the true rentable value of their estates.³

This survey of church lands in York c. 1228 is therefore of the greatest value in preserving a record of ecclesiastical lordship which had already come to extend significantly into the crown fee. Although not yet of overwhelming economic significance, these church

¹ The exact figure was 29.6%.

² Biddle and Keene, in *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages*, p.369.

³ The proportion of rents received from church properties thus appears to be higher in Winchester than in York. However it should be remembered that the York survey of c. 1228 did not include those parishes which were entirely or largely within ecclesiastical liberties, and where the proportion of church-owned rents might be expected to be highest.

acquisitions may have represented a growing challenge to the powers of the newly established mayor and commonalty in their farm of the crown's fee in York. Moreover, as a description of church lands in the whole city, this survey of c. 1228 vastly underestimates the extent of ecclesiastical lordship, for it omits almost the entire area of the dean and chapter's and archbishop's estates as well as those of some of the newer religious foundations such as St. Mary's Abbey and Holy Trinity Priory. The early history of the estates of the Minster itself has already been discussed, but before returning to a general consideration of monastic landholding in York before 1300, it is important to consider the extent of the landholdings of St. Mary's Abbey and St. Leonard's Hospital in particular. For, apart from the dean and chapter, these two religious houses exercised the most extensive economic and jurisdictional lordship in the city by the mid-thirteenth century.

St. Mary's Abbey and St. Leonard's Hospital

The Benedictine abbey of St. Mary and the Augustinian hospital of St. Leonard were the two greatest monastic landlords in York by the fourteenth century. Indeed at the time of their dissolution in the sixteenth century, their estates were still among the

largest in the city.¹ To a large extent the means whereby these two institutions were able to build up their city estates reflect the opportunities available to the whole range of religious institutions acquiring property in the city. Their separate histories therefore repay especially detailed study. Yet it is also true that, once established, the rather different nature of the two institutions was reflected in the different development of their estates. In both cases the internal aims and demands of the institution to a large extent dictated the extent and nature of its participation in the local property market.

St. Mary's Abbey, rapidly to become the wealthiest religious house in northern England, was founded before 1086, under the joint patronage of King William I and Count Alan of Brittany, the first Norman earl of Richmond.² The original site of the abbey was described as:

'ecclesiam Sancti Olavi in qua capud abbacie in honorem Sancte Marie melius constitutum est et burgum in quo ecclesia sita est a Galmou versus Cliftonam et versus aquam.'

¹ See below, Table 4.1.

² For the most recent account of the foundation of St. Mary's Abbey, see Burton, 'The Origins and Development of the Religious Orders in Yorkshire', pp.33-35.

It extended to some four acres,¹ but was enlarged in c. 1088 to a site of some 12 acres by William II who also confirmed the abbey in their possession of adjacent lands towards Clifton and other early endowments.² Indeed a reconstruction of the history of the abbey's estate in York suggests that the decades immediately following the abbey's foundation were the most crucial period of endowment, and that by the 1130s the abbey's fee in the city was already largely established.

By the 1130s the abbey had extensive holdings in Bootham, Gillygate, Newbiggin and Walmgate, and smaller groups of properties in the Marsh, Fossgate, Ousegate, Coneystreet, Micklegate, Clementhorpe and Blake Street. The most important acquisitions had been made as a result of the patronage of the abbey's founders and the new Norman aristocracy of Yorkshire, while, to a large extent, the most important groups of properties were those associated with the gift of parish churches in the city and its suburbs. For example, the church of St. Michael Spurriergate together with six *mansuras* (in

¹ *BYC*, 1, pp.265, 267 n. The abbey occupied a site later known as the 'Earlsborough', possibly the seat of government of the pre-Conquest earls of Northumbria. For a discussion of this site see Tillott, in *VCHY City of York*, p.397, *RCHMY*, 2, p.9.

² *BYC*, 1, pp.264-5.

modern Spurriergate and Low Ousegate), was given to the abbey by William I, and by 1088 Hernegrim, a king's thegn who entered the abbey as a monk, had brought to the abbey the church of St. Saviour and two *mansuras* of land in the Marsh (in Hungate and St. Saviourgate).¹ The church of St. Crux was given to the abbey by Nigel Fossard in c. 1100-1115,² and this gift almost certainly included land belonging to the church in the Fossgate/Shambles area which belonged to the abbey by 1132.³ The church of St. Wilfrid, with land in Blake Street was given to the abbey by Richard son of Fin in 1155 x 1165.⁴ Gifts of other churches proved less permanent. The gift of St. Andrew's in Fishergate, c. 1140 x 1160, must have been rescinded or transferred by 1200, when the church formed the nucleus of the new foundation of St. Andrew's priory,⁵ although the abbey maintained a title to certain lands in Fishergate in the thirteenth century.⁶

¹ *BYC*, 1, p.264; *J.Ryl.*, MSS 220-1, fos 2v, 54; *VCH Yorkshire*, p.202 n.

² *BYC*, 11, p.325.

³ *J.Ryl.*, MSS 220-1, fos 1-2, 47-48.

⁴ *BYC*, 1, p.200; Tillott, in *VCHY City of York*, p.403.

⁵ *J.Ryl.*, MSS 220-1, fo 4; *VCHY*, 3, p.255.

⁶ *J.Ryl.*, MSS 220-1, fos 4, 53.

Similar donors were responsible for other smaller acquisitions. Osbern de Archis, who held sixteen *mansiones* in York in 1086, gave two *mansuras* in St. Saviourgate to the abbey before 1116.¹ Bertram de Bulmer, sheriff of York in 1130 and 1155-1163, and married to a grand-daughter of Nigel Fossard, gave the abbey land in Clementhorpe,² while Geoffrey Hageh, a royal justice, provided a rent in Coneystreet for the soul of his brother.³

These early endowments formed a valuable part of the estate of St. Mary's Abbey in York and their distribution was largely determined by the location of city churches given to the abbey. However, even more important in terms of income and area, were the suburban estates of the abbey which had formed part of its original foundation endowment or otherwise been provided by the immediate family of Count Alan. Here, also, the abbey usually acquired the parish churches, together with the adjacent estates. Thus, to the south of the city Count Stephen, brother of Alan, confirmed to the abbey his possessions in Fulford,⁴ which may have included the abbey's adjacent lands in Walmgate, some of

¹ *BYC*, 1, p.408; *Domesday*, fo 298 b.

² *J.Ryl.*, MSS 220-1, fo 5.

³ *BYC*, 1, p.193.

⁴ *BYC*, 1, pp.270-271.

which were transferred to St. Nicholas' Hospital in c. 1132-1161.¹ The remainder were retained by the abbey and included land in Bretgate which was described as belonging to Fulford.² East of the city the abbey had extensive holdings in Monkgate, Newbiggin and Paynlathes Crofts and the adjacent church or chapel of St. Giles. Some of this property may be identified with the carucate of land at Monkbridge, given to the abbey by the same Herngrim who brought St. Saviour's church to the abbey.³ By the late twelfth century the abbey held a grange near Gillygate, and was acquiring properties in the adjacent street of Newbiggin, approximately mid-way between the grange and Monkgate.⁴ The grange's original name of Pagan's Grange or Pagan's Barn may suggest an alternative donor of this land. However Paganus, or Pain, was a relatively common name in the twelfth century, and the name could as easily be derived from a tenant as a donor.⁵ Paynlathes Crofts was in any case adjacent to the abbey's land in Gillygate, and the vill of Clifton which the abbey had acquired from Count

¹ *EYC*, i, p.251.

² *EYC*, i, pp.247, 248, 251; *J.Ryl.*, MSS 220-1, fo 4v.

³ *VCH*, ii, p.202 n.

⁴ *J.Ryl.*, MSS 220-1, fos 28-30.

⁵ Among tenants and servants of the abbey in the twelfth century were Paganus the bursar who witnessed a number of charters in the period 1147-1161, Pain son of Waldeve, a tenant of lands in Bootham, in 1160-80, and Pain the father of William de Coleby who held land in Heworth near York from the abbey (*EYC*, i, pp.187, 212-3, 258, 479, 496).

Alan.¹ Newbiggin was originally quite distinct from Paynlathes, and it was not until the later thirteenth century that the names Paynlathes and Newbiggin became synonymous.²

The most valuable part of the abbey's estate was their lands in the suburb of Bootham. Before the abbey's foundation, lordship of most of the land in this important suburb, as in the adjoining vill of Clifton, was divided between Count Alan, the archbishop and the canons of the Minster.³ While the abbey's holdings here were very extensive indeed, they excluded several properties, particularly on the north-east side of Bootham, which continued to form part of St. Peter's fee and can later be identified in the detached portions of the parish of St. Michael-le-Belfrey outside the city walls.⁴ Otherwise the abbey's Bootham estate consisted of properties on both sides of St. Marygate, Bootham and, in Gillygate, land which the abbey transferred with

¹ *BYC*, i, p.265.

² *J.Ryl.*, MSS 220-1, fo 31v. Angelo Raine describes a definition of the boundaries of St. Maurice's parish in Newbiggin in 1370 which he suggests arose from a dispute between St. Mary's Abbey and the dean and chapter over spiritual jurisdiction of their tenants here. (Raine, *Medieval York*, pp. 278-9) Some of St. Mary's fee here may have originally belonged to the archbishop's shire.

³ *Domesday*, fo 298c.

⁴ Ordnance Survey, 1852. These had been among the lands Ulf gave to the dean and chapter in 1066 x 1086. (YML, L2/1 pt iv, fo 45)

parochial rights to St. Leonard's Hospital in 1161 x 1184.¹

These early lavish endowments established the shape and extent of the abbey's fee in York throughout the middle ages. For the abbey never again enjoyed a period of such sustained and generous endowment. By 1540, according to a post-Dissolution account, eighty-two out of a total of 114 rents (71.9%) due to St. Mary's were collected from Bootham and St. Marygate, while a further 26 (22.8%) were collected from the other areas of the abbey's most ancient endowments in the city.² This is not to say that the abbey acquired no new proprietary interests in York after the early twelfth century. However, as in the case of the Minster, the monks' major objective when acquiring land was to concentrate on the re-possession of land already within the abbey's fee. Similar policies were followed by other Benedictine houses. Both Westminster Abbey and the cathedral priory of Durham, at least in its Durham city estates, also concentrated on the re-purchase of lands within their fees in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.³ In the case of St. Mary's this process had possibly started by the time of Abbot Clement (1161-

¹ *BYC*, 1, p.215.

² *PRO*, SC.6/4595.

³ B. Harvey, *Westminster Abbey and its Estates in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1977), p.168; Camsell, 'The City of Durham', p.112.

1184) and certainly developed by the time of Abbot Robert de Longchamp (1189-1239).¹ Indeed the surviving cartularies of the house seem to have been compiled principally to record these acquisitions. Thus, for example, all the twelfth and thirteenth century conveyances to the abbey of property in the Bootham area copied into the abbey's major surviving cartulary refer to land already within St. Mary's fee.² Occasionally such conveyances describe the land as belonging to the abbey or owing it rent,³ while on other occasions tracing the descent of the property demonstrates that it was already within the abbey's fee.⁴

Although the abbey of St. Mary did receive some further gifts of property in the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries, these were much less valuable and were composed almost entirely of rents rather than land. By contrast with the earlier endowments these later grants included gifts from some prominent burgess families. In particular the family of Hugh son of Lewin, who was one of the leading citizens and

¹ J.Ryl., MSS 220-1, fos 22v-23.

² J.Ryl., MSS 220-1, fos 9, 15-23, 25-26, 65 (fourteenth century), 67, 68, 71.

³ Ibid., fos 23, 25, 26.

⁴ Ibid., fos 9v-15, 19, 20, 122, 128. This process of consolidation continued in the fourteenth century. See below, p.185.

wealthiest individual landowners in late twelfth-century York, were benefactors of the abbey. Between c. 1180 and 1212 Juliana, Hugh's mother, and his step-daughter Bela de Bonville gave the abbey rents worth £2. 11s. 5d. (plus various rents in kind) from fourteen properties in a dozen streets in the city.¹ This gift was the most generous, but other grants of a similar nature were made by prominent burgesses such as Walter Aurifaber, Emma the daughter of William de Tickhill, Simon son of Adam de Halacre, and William Mauger.²

A reconstruction of the city estate of St. Mary's Abbey therefore reveals that its acquisition depended primarily on the patronage of the Norman aristocracy, especially the family of Count Alan the founding patron, in the immediate post-Conquest period. The distribution of the abbey's fee was determined both by the extent of holdings which Count Alan inherited near the city from the pre-Conquest earls of Northumbria, and by the location of churches of which the abbey was given the advowson. By contrast, later gifts, mainly from York citizens, were both relatively infrequent and considerably less valuable to the abbey. Such conditions were also typical of the manner by which many monastic houses outside York were able to acquire

¹ *BYC*, 1, pp.174-5; *YML*, Dean and Chapter MS XVI, fos 2-3.

² *J.Ryl.*, MSS 220-1, fos 2, 4, 35, 54, 61; *Gazetteer*, *Tenements* 24 and 25.

property in the city. They were not, however, entirely typical of the hospital of St. Leonard's estate in York.

The hospital of St. Leonard¹ seems to have been an older if obscurer foundation than St. Mary's, but it was essentially reformed and refounded in the post-Conquest period as a community of Augustinian canons and sisters.² A writ of William II confirmed his grant to the canons of St. Peter of land before the church of York for building a hospital or lodgings (*hospitalitatem*);³ but later in his reign the hospital was moved to a new site within the south-western corner of the old Roman fortress walls.⁴ Like St. Mary's, the hospital became one of the wealthiest landlords in the city with estates worth approximately £72 a year by 1542.⁵ Unlike the abbey however, most of the hospital's estates do not appear to have been acquired immediately after its re-foundation, but mainly after c. 1150, with the gifts of York citizens possibly playing a more important role. As a consequence the hospital's estate was acquired in a more piecemeal fashion, was more

¹ Initially known as the hospital of St. Peter, the dedication to St. Leonard was not commonly used until after the mid-thirteenth century.

² *VCH Yorkshire*, 111, p.336.

³ *FYC*, 1, pp.117-118; *BL*, Cotton MS Nero D 111, fo 69; *YML*, L2/1 pt 1, fo 62.

⁴ *RCHMY*, 5, p.93.

⁵ *PRO*, SC.6/4601.

evenly distributed across the city and included more significant groups of tenements in the commercial heart of the city and less in the surrounding suburbs. In 1542 it is true that properties in the streets adjacent to the hospital precinct contributed a larger share of the hospital's rent income than any other area of comparable size, yet this still amounted to rather less than 20% of its city rents and was not significantly greater than the income from the hospital's Walmgate properties. In addition, the Micklegate, Davygate and Pavement areas each contributed about 12% of the hospital's total income from York rents.¹ This difference between the estates of the hospital and the abbey was already evident in the survey of monastic lands in York of c. 1228. In the area of the city covered by this survey St. Leonard's had acquired over twice as many rents as St. Mary's, and its acquisitions were generally more recent.²

Although initially the hospital was established under the supervision of the canons of St. Peter, and although the later tradition of the hospital held that the first endowments given to the hospital were the grants made by King Athelstan to reward the charitable works of a group of ministers known as 'culdees' serving

¹ PRO, SC.6/4601.

² PRO, E.135/25. St. Leonard's had acquired 20 properties since the reign of Henry I, St. Mary's only 7.

the Minster, there is little evidence that the hospital ever acquired a significant share in either the capitular or episcopal *mensa* of the Minster. By the mid-twelfth century the hospital held some land in Clementhorpe,¹ and by the later twelfth century it was enfeoffed of several properties along the perimeter of the Minster Close.² By the thirteenth century it also held land in Aldwark, Layerthorpe and Blossomgate.³ All these properties lay within the area of the original archbishop's shire, yet they appear to be isolated tenements and were not held in chief.⁴ The most important stimulus to the growth of the hospital's estates appears to have been the rebuilding of the hospital after a fire in 1137, and the dedication of a new church in the precinct to St. Leonard by King Stephen⁵, followed by Archbishop Theobald's charter of 1150 x 61 which granted an indulgence for patrons bequeathing gifts to the new church.⁶

Prior to the rebuilding of the hospital, however, some important properties had already been acquired in

¹ BL, Cotton MS Nero D iii, fo 112.

² Ibid., fos 7, 103v, 179v-180. Gazetteer, *Tenements* 50, 57, 61.

³ Ibid., fos 73-4, 150, 153.

⁴ The Layerthorpe property, for example, owed rents to the common fund and the vicars choral. (BL, Cotton MS Nero D iii, fo 150)

⁵ *RCHNY*, 5, p.93.

⁶ *EYC*, 1, p.154.

York. Henry I's charter of 1120 x 1133 recorded gifts of land in Ousegate and Coppergate given by John Lardiner, and Lambert and Emma de Fossgate as well as gifts of Eustace son of John and other men and burgesses.¹ The hospital also held the property adjacent to the hospital precinct in Petergate and Blake Street, which by the beginning of the thirteenth century was held by free tenants of the hospital.² It was these centres, around the hospital precinct and Ousegate, where the earliest recorded gifts in the new phase of endowment in the later twelfth century lay.³ As the estate expanded however the gift of parish churches was again important in the development of the estate. The acquisition between c. 1154 and 1170 of the three neighbouring churches of St. Denis, St. Mary, and St. Margaret in Walmgate from the patrimonies of Alexander the priest of St. Denis and Walter son of Fagunulf, was associated with the gift of significant groups of properties in the Walmgate area which became an important focus of the hospital's York estate until the Dissolution.⁴ These however were the only churches in York acquired by St. Leonard's. Other early endowments

¹ *BYC*, i, p.142; BL, Cotton MS Nero D iii, fo 174v.

² *Gazetteer, Tenements 2-6*; BL, Cotton MS Nero D iii fos 85-86, 125-128.

³ The gifts of Ralph Paynell in Petergate and Paganus de Coleby in Ousegate. (*BYC*, i, p.156)

⁴ *BYC*, i, pp.240-250, and see above p.153.

depended largely on the patronage of York burgesses, like Oter de Stonegate's gift in the Marsh area in the mid-twelfth century,¹ the grants of the Hageth and Lewin families in Coneystreet in the later twelfth century,² or the land in Micklegate given by Erneis de Micklegate in 1189 x 1200.³ Thus, although the patronage of the Norman aristocracy to the hospital was not entirely absent,⁴ that of York citizens appears to have been much more important.

It is often difficult, however, to distinguish between sales of property and gifts. By the late twelfth century, the hospital, like St. Mary's Abbey and the dean and chapter, was embarking upon a policy of buying out free tenants and quitrents in its fee,⁵ but it also continued to expand the area of its fee through both purchase and gift. Its new acquisitions demonstrated a special concern to consolidate its estates in the areas of its earliest endowments. Thus between c. 1180 and c. 1270 it was particularly active in consolidating its possessions in Blake Street and

¹ *BYC*, 1, p.232.

² *Ibid.*, pp.192, 195.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

⁴ Roger de Mowbray, Agnes de Percy and Richard Malbis are found among the donors of land in Fishergate, Castlegate and Ousegate. (BL, Cotton MS Nero D iii, fos 103, 123, 168)

⁵ For example see *Gazetteer*, *Tenements 2-5*.

Footlesslane, Lendal and Coneystreet, Petergate, Gillygate, the Marsh area, Ousegate and Coppergate, and in Micklegate.¹

The two estates of St. Mary's Abbey and St. Leonard's Hospital thus offer two rather different models of the manner by which a monastic urban estate could be developed; the one relying upon the generosity of founding patrons, the other upon the piecemeal accumulation of land in return for services to the lay community.

Other Monastic Landlords: Churches and Hospices

To a large extent the other new religious foundations of both the city and the county enjoyed similar conditions to St. Mary's Abbey in the acquisition of urban property. The survey of c. 1228 suggests that, apart from St. Mary's and St. Leonard's, at least thirty religious houses had acquired 105 properties within the crown's fee in York by the reign of Henry III.² Although rather more difficult to interpret, a list of landholders still owing

¹ BL, Cotton MS Nero D iii, fos 79, 85-90, 103-108, 119-121, 125-133, 142-147, 149, 151-153, 167-169, 174v, 176v.

² PRO, E.135/25/1.

contributions to a tallage on rents in the city in 1304, suggests that monastic houses were responsible for a little over one third of the residue due, again suggesting at least that these landlords played a prominent role in the local landmarket.¹

For most monastic landlords the early period of endowment, in the first two generations following their foundation, was the most critical in establishing a fee in the city, and the patronage of their founders' families, and a small related group of the Anglo-Norman barons of Yorkshire was the most important source of their endowments. In the case of York houses, Holy Trinity Priory owed the core of its lordship in the city to the patronage of the family of Ralph Paynell the founder,² while the importance of Walmgate properties in the city estate of St. Nicholas' Hospital also suggests that its foundation endowments remained the basis of its

¹ *Yorkshire Lay Subsidies*, pp.120-121. The total sum outstanding on the tallage on rents was £30. 19s. 4d., of which monastic houses owed £11. 7s. 1d. The dean and chapter and vicars choral owed a further £9. 1s. 7d.

² By 1089 the rents of Christ Church had been 'almost reduced to nothing', and only one of the five places in Yorkshire belonging to it in 1086 were transferred to the refounded priory of Holy Trinity. (*VCHY*, 3, p.389; Burton, 'Religious Orders in Yorkshire', p.49)

later income from city rents.¹ Whitby Abbey's cell in Fishergate benefitted both from the patronage of the original founders of Whitby Abbey, the Percy family, who gave messuages in Ousegate and Fishergate,² and from the patronage of the particular patrons of the Fishergate cell, Nigel d'Albini and his son Roger de Mowbray.³ Clementhorpe Nunnery was poorly endowed, like all Yorkshire nunneries,⁴ yet its original endowment from the archbishop's shire in Clementhorpe remained an essential nucleus of its holdings, and its most important source of income in York.⁵ The influence of founders could be equally important to houses outside the city. In 1161 x 1184 Alan son of Roald, the constable of Richmond, provided his family's foundation of Easby Abbey with a hospice in Bootham,⁶ and William de Flamville similarly bought property in Ogleforth for a hospice for his new foundation at Malton.⁷ Among

¹ PRO, SC.6/4460 m.1.

² *Whitby Chartulary*, pp.3, 5, 6.

³ *Ibid.*, pp.5, 6.

⁴ Burton, *The Yorkshire Nunneries in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries*, pp.11-12.

⁵ PRO, SC.6/4466 m.1.

⁶ BL, MS Egerton 2827, fo 135.

⁷ BL, Cotton MS Claudius D xi, fo 201v.

institutions benefitting from the early patronage of the archbishops of York, Kirkham Priory,¹ Furness Abbey,² and Rievaulx Abbey³ all received gifts of houses and land within the archbishop's fee in York.

Like St. Mary's Abbey, then, many monasteries depended on the influence of founding patrons for the gift of important endowments in the city, so for many monasteries the most valuable property of all was the gift of the advowson of a parish church together with lands in the same parish. It has already been shown how the majority of the new religious communities founded in York after the Conquest were founded through the gift of an existing church,⁴ but for other landlords the acquisition of a city church together with adjacent properties was the principal means by which a significant fee could be established in the city. Thus Durham Priory's estate in York was comprised essentially of the three churches of Holy Trinity, Goodramgate,⁵ All

¹ *Cartularium abbathiae de Rievalle, ordinis Cisterciensis*, J. C. Atkinson (ed.), (SS, lxxxiii, 1889), pp.243-245.

² See above, p.96.

³ *Cartularium abbathiae de Rievalle*, p.262; *YMB*, 2, p.250.

⁴ See above, pp.56-59.

⁵ *EYC*, 11, p.303. Holy Trinity, together with three houses, was included in the foundation grant made by Bishop William to the priory in 1082. In 1162-63 Durham's property in the church was defined as a mediety of the advowson.

Saints, Pavement and St. Peter the Little¹ together with the adjacent tenements.² Similarly, the estate of Holy Trinity Priory was largely shaped by its lordship over tenements within the parishes of its five city churches. The priory acquired from its founder the churches of St. Gregory, Micklegate, All Saints, North Street and St. Helen, Fishergate,³ and between 1086 and 1238 it also acquired the church of St. Cuthbert in Peaseholme Green.⁴ Numerous thirteenth-century references to the priory's lordship of tenements in these parishes and that of Holy Trinity itself can be found, but the importance of these parishes as nuclei of the priory's city estate is best illustrated in the survey of its estates made in 1536.⁵ Finally Kirkham Priory's ownership of the two Walmgate churches of St. Peter-le-Willows and St. Michael-at-the-Bar, although not recorded before 1279,⁶ quite probably dates back to the late twelfth to early thirteenth century, by when it was in possession of a significant group of tenements around

¹ Bishop Walcher was given All Saints by William I. (*Domesday*, fo 298a) The three churches were confirmed to Durham in c. 1121-1128. (*EYC*, 11, pp.274-275)

² *Gazetteer, Tenements 37-40*; Raine, *Medieval York*, p.181; PRO, SC.6/708.

³ *EYC*, vi, pp.57, 66.

⁴ Tillott, in *VCHY City of York*, p.378.

⁵ Bodl., Top. Yorks. c.72, fos 48v, 49; *Chartulary of Fountains*, pp.278, 282, 283; PRO, SC.6/4460 m.1, E.135/25/1 m 4-5.

⁶ Tillott, in *VCHY City of York*, p.399.

Walmgate Bar and in the adjacent street of Bretgate, next to these two churches.¹

One notable feature of all these city estates, which centred around the lordship of a parish church, is that the ties between church lordship and the lordship of properties within the parish was not likely to be maintained in gifts made after c. 1200. Of four city churches given to religious houses after this date, none was clearly associated with the ownership of an area of land within the parish.² Thus by 1382 the advowson, or a share in the advowson, of no less than thirty out of forty-six churches in the city belonged to monasteries, the dean and chapter and the archbishop were patrons of sixteen, leaving only two parish churches entirely in lay control.³ The exercise of ecclesiastical patronage over the parish churches of York was thus considerably more marked than in the country as a whole but was typical of the experience of many other boroughs.⁴ In York at least churches were valuable not only for their

¹ Bodl., MS Fairfax 7, fos 9-11v.

² These were the churches of St. Helen, Stonegate, one mediety of the advowson of St. Mary, Bishophill Senior, St. Martin, Micklegate and St. George, Fishergate given to Moxby, Healaugh Park, Warter and Nun Monkton priories in 1235, 1295, 1306 and 1382. (Tillott, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.383, 388, 380)

³ These were the churches of All Saints, Peaseholme Green and Holy Trinity, King's Court.

⁴ A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation*, 1964, p.208; Platt, *The English Medieval Town*, pp.184-187; Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, pp.110-111.

tithes and the fruits of spiritual jurisdiction, but also because early grants of churches were usually associated with the lordship of adjacent tenements within the parish. Indeed the value of such endowments is shown by the position of both Durham and Kirkham priories among the three wealthiest monastic York landlords from outside the city by the Dissolution (Table 4.1).

For most monasteries outside the city, which did not have the advantage of the lordship of a city church, the most valuable possession in York was likely to be the acquisition of a hospice. It was important that monasteries in the region should have permanent bases in the city which might accommodate their officials visiting the city, and which might also be used as depots for the produce of their estates. Rievaulx's hall in Layerthorpe, for example, was used for the storage of wool and wheat,¹ while Bolton Priory's house in Bishophill was used as a base for the collection of rents from their estates in the York area.² As has already been demonstrated, the influence of a patron might be crucial in obtaining such a property.³ However

¹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1330-34*, p.455; Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, p.50..

² *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1560-63*, p.14.

³ As in the case of Malton Priory and Easby Abbey, see above p.159.

the overall distribution of these hospices, where they can be located, suggests that practical considerations governed the choice of hospice sites, since most hospices were located in areas of the city which would be most convenient for travellers to the city from the mother house. Indeed, as in Winchester and, to a lesser extent London, such hospices were likely to be located near the periphery of the built-up area,¹ although riverside sites were also popular, as they were in Norwich.²

Thus around the main eastern entrance to York, at Monk Bar were grouped the hospices of a number of houses in east Yorkshire. Malton's hospice was on the corner of Ogleforth and Goodramgate,³ and the hospices of

¹ Biddle and Keene, in *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages*, p.389; Keene, 'Suburban Growth', p.81.

² S. Kelly, 'The Economic Topography and Structure of Norwich c. 1300', in U. Priestley (ed.), *Men of Property*, (Norwich, 1983), p.22.

³ First mentioned c. 1150 (BL, Cotton MS Claudius D xi, fols 201v-204); see also 'Husgale roll', p.85; PRO, SC.6/4618 m.8; YML, L2/4f, fo 241v.

Guisborough,¹ Bridlington,² Marton,³ Newburgh⁴ and possibly Wilberfoss⁵ priories were in Aldwark and St. Andrewgate. Again on the east side of the city Kirkham's hospice was in the Marsh district,⁶ and Rievaulx's hall in Layerthorpe.⁷ Outside the western entrance to the city, at Micklegate Bar, were the "Bederne" of Sinningthwaite Priory,⁸ the hospices of Furness and Kirkstall abbeys,⁹ and the final site chosen

¹ First mentioned 1180 x 1220, and 11 February 1210. (BL, Cotton MD Nero D iii, fos 74-75; *FYC*, 1, p.226) It consisted of three tenements acquired in the reigns of King Henry (II?), King Richard and King John. (PRO, E.132/25/1 m.2) See also YML, VC 3/V1 11, 12; *Cartularium prioratus de Gyseburne*, W. Brown (ed.), (SS, lxxxvi, 1889), pp.434-435; PRO, SC.6/4636 m.9.

² First mentioned in 1283 x 1301 [*Abstracts of the Charters and other Documents Contained in the Chartulary of the Priory of Bridlington*, W.T. Lancaster (ed.) (Leeds, 1912), pp.427-428]. See also, Bodl. MS Fairfax 7, fo 9-9v; NYCRO, Clervaux Cartulary, fo 90v; PRO, SC.6/4430 m.18.

³ First mentioned in the mid-thirteenth century (BL, Cotton MS Claudius B iii, fo 113). See also PRO, C.145/180/24, SC.6/4493 m.1.

⁴ First mentioned in 1212 x 1249. (YML, VC 3/V1 408; 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', no 56) See also PRO, SC.6/4546 m.8.

⁵ First mentioned c. 1240. (BL, Cotton MS Claudius B iii, fo 58v) See also BL, Cotton MS Nero D iii, fo 77.

⁶ First mentioned early to mid-thirteenth century (?). (Bodl. MS Fairfax 7, fo 10v)

⁷ First mentioned c. 1131 (*Cartularium abbathiae de Rievaille*, p.262), and see above, p.160.

⁸ First mentioned c. 1284. ('Husgabel Roll', p.88) See also PRO, SC.6/4476 m.1.

⁹ Kirkstall first mentioned c. 1284. ('Husgabel Roll', p.88) See also *The Coucher Book of the Cistercian Abbey at Kirkstall*, W.T. Lancaster and W.P. Baildon (eds.) (Thoresby Society, viii, 1904), p.145; YCA, B1, fo 47v; PRO, SC.6/4590 m.9. For Furness, see above, p.96.

for Sawley Abbey's hospice,¹ while inside the Bar were the principal properties of Healaugh Park Priory (near St. Gregory's Church),² and Bolton Priory in Bishophill.³ All these institutions were in west Yorkshire and Lancashire. Visitors from monasteries to the south of York, perhaps travelled principally along the river Ouse. Drax Priory's main holding in York was originally located by the river in Fishergate,⁴ but c. 1328 it bought a site for a new hospice nearer the city centre in Blake Street.⁵ Selby Abbey may not have had a hospice in the city, but it did have two properties near the river in Skeldergate and Ousegate.⁶ Similarly riverside sites were attractive to houses up river from York. Fountains Abbey's hospice was in North Street.⁷ It is not clear whether any of the houses in south-east

¹ First mentioned in 1235 x 1245 [*The Chartulary of the Cistercian Abbey of St. Mary of Sallay in Craven*, J. McNulty (ed.) (YASRS, xc, 1934), pp.88-93]. See also YCA, G70.15.

² First mentioned c. 1230 (*Healaugh Park Chartulary*, pp.155-156). See also PRO SC.6/4471 m.1.

³ First mentioned c. 1284 ('Husgabel Roll', p.90). See also Chatsworth House, Hardwick MS 20, fos 109-110; PRO, SC.6/4542 m.8; BI, Prob. Reg. 2, fo 601.

⁴ First mentioned in the mid-twelfth century. (Bodl., Top. Yorks. c.72, fos 48-49v)

⁵ Bodl., Top. Yorks. c.72, fo 50-v; *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1327-30*, p.236.

⁶ *The Coucher Book of Selby*, J.T. Fowler (ed.), vol 1 (YASRS, x, 1891), pp.30, 330-332; PRO, C.143/373/15.

⁷ First mentioned 1150 x 1180 (*Chartulary of Fountains*, pp.277-91). See also *Fountains Abbey Lease Book*, D.M. Michlemore (ed.) (YASRS, cxl, 1979/80), p.88; 'Husgabel Roll', p.88; PRO, SC.6/4452 m.15.

Yorkshire ever maintained lodgings in York, indeed they may have found a residence in Hull more convenient. However it is perhaps significant that the only recorded properties in which the priories of Ellerton,¹ Swine and Yedingham maintained a title until the sixteenth century were all in Monkgate, and Fossgate and Walmgate on the Hull Road,² while Meaux Abbey had a property by Fossbridge in Walmgate as well as land in Fishergate.³

Most of the lands acquired for hospices were purchased, although the price paid was not always in cash,⁴ and on more than one occasion the vendor of the hospice site was re-granted it on condition that he continue to make lodgings available for visitors when required.⁵ The acquisition of land for hospices largely marked the end of significant acquisition of city land by monastic establishments outside the city. The survey of lands held in frankalmoign in c. 1228 records numerous small gifts of rents to foreign monasteries and a few institutions continued to make acquisitions in

¹ YML, F 3/1.

² PRO, SC.6/4529 m.2, 4601, 4522 m.4.

³ YMB, 2, p.80; PRO, SC.6/4612 m.11; *Whitby Cartulary*, p.713.

⁴ *Coucher Book of Kirkstall Abbey*, p.145. Oger the priest of St. Gregory's church in York granted Kirkstall Abbey his land outside the gate of Micheleleth (Micklegate Bar) next to the western bar in return for being received into their fraternity, and given the opportunity, if he wished, to enter with one other into the monastery.

⁵ *Sallay Cartulary*, pp.93-95; Bodl., Ms Fairfax 7, fo 10v.

this manner. Typical of such gifts was the rent of 6s. 8d. from a stone house in Micklegate left to the nuns of Newcastle by Maria Flur c. 1190 x 1220, or the rents in Northstreet and Bishophill, given to Godstow Nunnery.¹ Some local houses, such as Clementhorpe and Nun Monkton nunneries managed to acquire quite large numbers of rents in the city in this manner, but although widely scattered across the city, they did not add up to a valuable estate.² After 1300 the number of new acquisitions made by foreign religious houses was very small indeed.³

To a large extent this reduction in the flow of city lands being alienated to religious houses simply reflected a change in religious attitudes as the vogue for chantry foundations began to replace the patronage of monasteries.⁴ Yet without doubt it stemmed partially from the hostility of the civic authorities to increasing areas of the city being acquired in frank-almoign and thus claiming exemption from contribution

¹ BL, Add. MS Egerton 2147, fo 9; PRO, E.135/25/1 m.4-5; *Cartulary of Godstow Priory* (Early English Text Society, Orig. Ser. 130), p.639.

² PRO, E.135/25/1; SC.6/7454 m.1; SC.6/4466 m.1.

³ Between 1300 and 1392 no more than 17 new acquisitions of land in the city were made by monasteries from outside York (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1303-92, passim*). In Winchester the acquisition of land in the city by monastic houses outside also declined after the early thirteenth century (Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, p.200).

⁴ Raban, *Nortmain Legislation and the English Church*, pp.132-135.

to tallages and other tolls and taxes in the city. Indeed it is possible to view the very development of autonomous civic government in York as a response to the threat posed by the growth of ecclesiastical fees in the city.¹ The greatest problem was obviously posed by the greatest landlords, and in particular by the dean and chapter, St. Mary's Abbey and St. Leonard's Hospital. Certainly these landlords were guilty of the charges commonly levelled against corporate landowners. For example, St. Leonard's Hospital, both in acquiring new lands in York to add to its fee such as a large tenement known as Fountains Lane in Blake Street, or in re-purchasing seisin within its fee, tended to acquire the land in frankalmoign only to grant it back to the vendor in fee-farm.²

The problems created by alienations in frankalmoign were fundamental to many of the conflicts between citizens of York and church institutions in the city, such as the claim by the canons of St. Peter in 1226 to be exempt from murage, but it was also compounded by the claim of the dean and chapter and other landlords to hold a court for their tenants.³ The

¹ Reynolds, *English Medieval Towns*, p.116.

² BL, Cotton MS Nero D iii, fos 89-90; Gazetteer, *Tenements 2-5*; Clause 36 of Magna Carta forbade such collusive grants (Raban, *Mortmain Legislation and the English Church*, p.14; Gross, 'Mortmain in Medieval Boroughs', p.742).

³ Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.37-38.

rights of the archbishop were restricted to jurisdiction over those tenants from whom he received the husgable, and this scope of his jurisdiction was finally clearly defined in 1293.¹ By contrast the dean and chapter claimed in 1106 to have the right to hear all pleas involving all their tenants in the city, and this claim was incorporated into later charters.² These new claims were significant for similar claims were also made by other ecclesiastical landlords who received charters giving them similar rights to the dean and chapter, so that not only the York houses of St. Mary's Abbey, St. Leonard's Hospital and Holy Trinity Priory held a court for all tenants within their fee in York, but monastic lords further afield such as Whitby Abbey can also be found claiming a right to hold a court for their tenants in York like the canons of St. Peter.³ Other monasteries often coerced their tenants to submit to the jurisdiction of the dean and chapter.⁴

¹ *Placita de Quo Warranto*, pp.221-223.

² *Visitations and Memorials of Southwell*, p.193.

³ *Whitby Abbey Cartulary*, p.147. Such claims did not necessarily involve exemption from the payment of husgable. Henry II's charter to St. Leonard's Hospital gave it all the rights and liberties which the prebends of St. Peter enjoyed saving husgable (*EYC*, i, p.145), although some land given to the hospital had already been quit of this rent (*EYC*, i, p.182). Audoen's gift of land in Walmgate to Whitby Abbey in 1130 x 1148 also excepted immunity from husgable (*EYC*, i, p.239). Even some of the lands acquired by the dean and chapter still owed husgable to the crown (*YML*, L2/1 pt iv, fos 43v-45v).

⁴ BL, Cotton MS Claudius D xi, fo 201v; BL, Cotton MS Vespasian E xix, fo 96r-v.

These courts were actively maintained, and allowed the landlord to supervise all alienations and inheritance of land within their fee. In 1150 x 1161 St. Mary's Abbey confirmed by grant both the subtenancy of part of a messuage in Ousegate which Alan son of Romund held from their tenant, Ulfric, and the inheritance of Goscelin son of Constantine in a third part of land in Coneystreet in which his father had lived.¹ Both these grants, like all grants within St. Mary's fee, were made and witnessed in the abbey's own court. Indeed most grants made by the abbey, where a former tenant is named, probably represented confirmations of transactions by the abbey's tenants and as a result the abbey usually refused to defend the land against the claims of former tenants. Such grants were nevertheless made with full right of inheritance, as was the right of all the abbey's *frank tenentes* in York. Transactions of land within the fees of St. Peter and of St. Leonard and Holy Trinity were similarly supervised and witnessed by their courts.² The practice was not limited to ecclesiastical courts. Aristocratic landowners might use the shire court, and other private landlords, like Peter son of Herbert in Ogleforth in the

¹ *BYC*, 1, pp.185, 190.

² *BYC*, 1, p.218; BL, Cotton MS Nero D iii, fo 134r-v; *Gazetteer, Tenements 2-5; Chartulary of Fountains*, p.282.

later twelfth century heard pleas concerning their tenants.¹

The growth of church fees in York thus not only threatened the citizens ability to collect tallages and other taxes and, after 1212, to pay the city's farm, but also threatened the jurisdiction of the citizens own portmoot or burghwaremoot in hearing pleas of land within the city. As a consequence it was often in cases of disputed tenure and in the context of challenging the claims of church-owned courts that the citizens are first found collectively asserting their rights of jurisdiction. Thus the first known use of a common seal by the city was attached to a notification to Archbishop Geoffrey that the church of All Saints in the Marsh belonged to Ralph Nuuel, while in 1201 the citizens of York challenged the abbot of St. Mary's right to jurisdiction over a plea.² To this extent the growth of autonomous civic jurisdiction in York can indeed be interpreted in the context of resistance to the encroachment of church jurisdictions in the wider setting of attempts to limit and control the proliferation of private franchises.³ Crucial advances in the powers of the mayor and commonalty were made in

¹ BL, Cotton MS Claudius D xi, fo 201v.

² *BYC*, i, p.230; *Curia Regis Rolls 1201-1203*, p.54.

³ H. Cam, 'The Evolution of the Medieval English Franchise', in *Lawfinders and Lawmakers* (1979), p.36.

the middle of the thirteenth century. In 1256 Henry III's charter established that citizens were not to be impleaded outside the city for lands and tenements held within it, and in 1270-71 it was claimed that an enrolment of a tenement in York was as valid as a final concord made before the king's justices.¹ The new powers won by the mayor and commonalty were partially successful. After the 1260s all transactions within St. Leonard's estate were witnessed by the mayor and bailiffs in the city court,² and there are no further cases of lesser religious and private landlords seeking to use courts other than the city's.

However the rights of other courts besides those of the city were also being defined at the same time. In the mid-thirteenth century a series of disputes between the city and the dean and chapter and St. Mary's Abbey were brought before parliament, and an inquiry into the rights of the dean and chapter in York was finally held in March 1276.³ The list of articles drawn up at this inquiry is at least as interesting as the survey of the territorial extent of St. Peter's liberty which has already been discussed.⁴ The dean and chapter

¹ Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, p.33-35.

² BL, Cotton MS Nero D iii, *passim*.

³ Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.39-40.

⁴ An original copy survives in PRO, J.1/1111 (YML, L2/1 pt iv, fos 37-43).

were confirmed in their right to a court for their tenants, to arrest thieves, to take distresses, and their men were exempt from tallages except for merchandise in the city outside the lands of the church. This jurisdiction was accepted as extending over lands acquired relatively recently, which paid hushable to the king, as well as over more ancient areas of their endowments, and although this definition was challenged in 1315, it was confirmed.¹ The dispute with St. Mary's lasted until 1354 and centred principally on the abbey's claim to hold Bootham as a distinct borough from York. It was finally settled that the abbey's jurisdiction should be limited to St. Marygate and their precinct, and that they should not erect houses on the land before their wall in Bootham between Marygate and Bootham Bar.²

The mayor and commonalty had thus in theory won only a partial victory and large areas of the city, not just within ecclesiastical precincts, but including virtually whole parishes within central areas of the city were lost to their jurisdiction.³ The tide was turning against the church franchises however and coinciding with the limitation and erosion of the lesser private courts were a number of other developments which

¹ YML, L2/2a, fos 30-31; Gazetteer, *Tenements 15-17* (f).

² Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.68-69.

³ See above, pp.138-139.

were largely to undermine much of the threat of the surviving liberties in the city.

It has already been noted that from the late twelfth century a number of the ecclesiastical landlords in York were beginning to reclaim significant areas of their fee into demesne and this was a process which was to continue after 1300. This may have been initiated by a change of attitude in the church at the highest level to the alienation of church land to secular tenants in fee.¹ Equally important was the changing fashion in endowments. Typical of the older type of endowment was the gift of Bela de Bonville and her husband to St. Mary's Abbey in 1180 x 1212 to buy candles for the abbey's altar, infirmary and hosteller and tablecloths for the refectory.² Such a gift incurred no extra expense for the abbey and could only enhance its wealth. The growing enthusiasm for obit and chantry foundations by contrast tended to commit the recipient to increased specified expenditure in the future, and increasingly was combined with an injunction not to alienate land in fee.

These combined pressures, together perhaps with a decreasing ability to supervise subenfeoffments through

¹ Miller, *Abbey and Bishopric of Ely*, p.167.

² *EYC*, 1, pp.174-175.

the erosion of some private courts, led to experiments in restrictions on free tenure, which ultimately resulted in the adoption of the demise at perpetual fee-farm and demise for terms of years.¹ Some of the initial methods used were unusual, such as the deed of hiring employed by Fountains Abbey in letting land in Coneystreet to Roger de Bavent and his wife for their lives in 1194 x 1198,² but the range of devices employed by the vicars choral perhaps best indicates the methods adopted by institutions seeking to keep control of their fee. In one case the tenant was not allowed to alienate or sell the land without first allowing the vicars right of re-entry at the price of 1 mark.³ In another the reversion of the property was explicitly reserved to the vicars and, since the tenant was a canon of the Minster, other canons were excluded from taking the tenancy.⁴ Generally heirs and assigns, however, were not excluded from these early leases, with the exception of the religious and Jews, and no limit was placed on the length of the tenancy.⁵ However by the early thirteenth century some demises for fixed terms were being made in York. St. Leonard's Hospital granted back land for two

¹ Pollock and Maitland, *History of English Law*, ii, pp.106-117.

² *Chartulary of Fountains*, p.275.

³ 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', no 87.

⁴ *Ibid.*, no 195; YML, VC 3/Vi 130.

⁵ 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 27, 148, 180; *Chartulary of Fountains*, p.273.

lives in Petergate, and by the fourteenth century demises at fee farm for fixed terms of years were common.¹ In 1304 the foundation charter of Richard de Taunton's chantry explicitly stated that *nichil alienando in feudo de eodem in eadem statu vel meliori quo recipiunt sustinebunt.*²

Such demises at farm still tended to deal primarily with whole tenements and larger units of landholding, and over a long period of time it was possible for a perpetual farm to become confused with a rent reserved from a free tenant.³ Nevertheless a combination of various causes had encouraged landlords to concentrate more on the economic exploitation of their estates, and to adopt new forms of tenure which substantially reduced the number of tenants holding by enfeoffment and thus altered, to some extent, the nature of their courts' jurisdiction. This shift in attitude was to become even more pronounced in the fourteenth century as landlords let increasingly directly to the poorer occupants of houses on their property by tenancies-at-will. However, between the Norman Conquest and c. 1300 the rapid expansion and consolidation of church property in the city had not only resulted in

¹ 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', no 1; NYCRO, Clervaux Cartulary, fos 89-90.

² BL, Cotton MS Claudius B iii, fo 145v.

³ Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, p.188.

great changes in the appearance of the city, but also stimulated the emergence of new forms of civic organisation which were to be the basis of local government in York into the modern period.

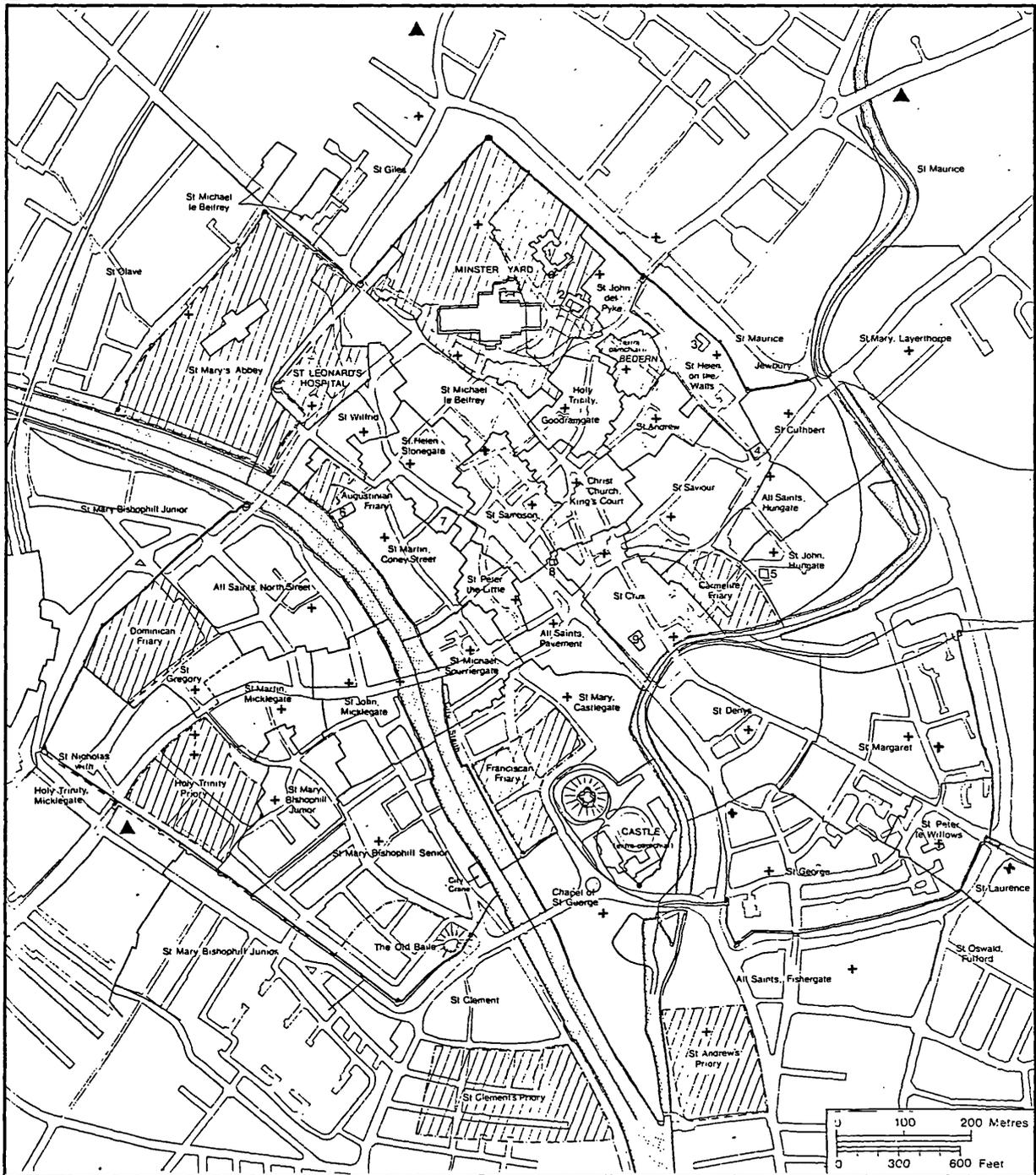
TABLE 4.1: Value of monastic estates in sixteenth century York

<u>Landlord</u>	<u>Value per annum</u> (gross)	<u>Numbers of Tenants</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>PRO Source</u>
St. Leonard's Hospital	£72, 4s, 2d,	120 min,	1542	SC.6/4601
St. Mary's Abbey	£50, 19s,	114	1540	SC.6/4595
St. Nicholas' Hospital	£26, 10s, 6d,	site and all property	1536	SC.6, 4460 m, 1
Holy Trinity Priory, York	£17, 11s, 8d,	65	1536	SC.6/4460 m, 1
Greyfriars, York	£11, 17s, 11d,	3	1539	SC.6/4571 m, 11
Austin Friars, York	£5, 6s, 8d,	17	1539	SC.6/4571 m, 11d
St. Andrew's Priory, York	£5, 5s, 2d,	17	1539	SC.6/4563 m, 122
Old Malton Priory	£5, 5s,	12	1540	SC.6/4618 m, 8
Kirkham Priory	£5	18	1539	SC.6/4557 m, 7
Nostell Priory	£4, 13s, 4d,	various	1542	SC.6/4579 m6
Durham Priory	£4, 3s, 4d,	various	1541	SC.6/708 m, 10
Carmelite Friars, York	£3, 9s,	7	1539	SC.6/4571 m, 10
Drax Priory	£3, 12s, 4d,	5+	1536	SC.6/4482
Fountains Abbey	£3, 6s, 8d,	6	1541	SC.6/4452 m, 15
Guisborough Priory	£2, 3s, 8d,	8	1540	SC.6/4636 m, 9
Clementhorpe Priory	£2, 1s, 6d,	9	1536	SC.6/4466 m, 1
Mount Grace Priory	£2	4	1540	SC.6/4630 m, 3

<u>Landlord</u>	<u>Value per annum (gross)</u>	<u>Numbers of Tenants</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>PRO Source</u>
Rievaulx Abbey	£2, 0s, 0d.	various	1539	SC,6/4553 m,7
Nun Monkton Priory	£1,19s, 8d.	7	1536	SC,6/7454 m,1
Marton Priory	£1, 8s.	5	1536	SC,6/4493 m,1
Sinningthwaite Priory	£1, 1s.	various	1536	SC,6/4476 m,1
Meaux Abbey	£1	2	1540	SC,6/4612 m,11
Cockersand	9s, 6d.	1	1539	SC,6/7304 m,7d
Bridlington Priory	13s, 4d.	1	1537	SC,6/4430 m,18
Swine	14s.	various	1542	SC,6/4529 m,2
Nun Appleton	7s.	various	1542	SC,6/4529 m,8
Newburgh Priory	7s, 8d.	2	1539	SC,6/4546 m,9
Ellerton	13s, 4d.	1	1539	SC,6/4560 m,3
Whitby Abbey	1s.	1	1540	SC,6/4624 m,10
Mount St, John	16s, 8d.	1	1540	SC,6/4458 m,37
Knaresborough	1s.	1	1539	SC,6/7304 m,11d
Easby Abbey	13s, 4d.	1	1536	SC,6/7454 m,3
Blackfriars, York	Nil	Nil	1539	SC,6/4571 m,11d

Note to Table 4.1

Other monasteries holding small estates in York at the time of their dissolution included: Healaugh Park (PRO, SC,6/4471 m,1), Thickhed Priory (PRO, SC,6/4522 m,2), Wilberfoss Priory (PRO, SC,6/4522 m,3), Yedingham Priory (PRO, SC,6/4522 m,4), Roche Abbey (PRO, SC,6/4534 m,1), Bolton Priory (PRO, SC,6/4542 m,8), Byland Abbey (PRO, SC,6/4550 m,7), Pontefract (PRO, SC,6/4584 m,7) and Kirkstall Abbey (PRO, SC,6/4590 m,9).



Later Medieval York, (superimposed on the modern plan).

- + Churches and Chapels
- ▲ Hospitals

CHAPTER FIVE: THE GROWTH AND MANAGEMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL ESTATES IN YORK, IN THE FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURIES

The study of the growth and management of church estates in York prior to 1300 suggests that the extent of the church's participation in the local property market was strongly influenced by institutional demands quite independent of economic trends. Even in the thirteenth century the declining amount of new endowment attracted by monastic houses, and the shift from the enfeoffment of church property in free burgage toward contractual leasing to tenants-at-will, was influenced by religious and jurisdictional concerns as much as economic pressures. While the change to tenancies-at-will may have been in part a response to inflation and the need to increase revenue at a time when opportunities for enlarging fees were becoming restricted, this development also seems to have been a response both to new forms of religious endowment which committed the recipient to increased expenditure of specified amounts,¹ to legal reforms which limited the jurisdictional authority of landlords over their free tenants², and to changes in ecclesiastical attitudes to

¹ Raban, *Mortmain Legislation and the English Church*, pp.135-136.

² H. Cam, 'The Evolution of the Medieval English Franchise', in *Lawfinders and Lawmakers* (1962), p.36; Pollock and Maitland, *History of English Law*, pp.146-147, 587.

property-holding.¹.

It is equally important, especially after 1300, to consider other influences apart from changes in demand for land, which may have affected the church and other institutional landlords in the management of their estates. Twenty years ago Professor Rodney Hilton suggested, from a study of rent accounts from a group of west midland towns, that; 'the main trend after the building expansion of the thirteenth century seems to have been towards institutional ownership of the bigger blocks of urban property ... the income from which served the social purposes of these institutions.'² At about the same time Dr. J.N. Bartlett noted that the urban tenements owing rent to the vicars choral of York increased from some 92 in 1321 to a maximum of 260 in 1426.³ While Professor Hilton concluded that the church was expanding its urban property holdings at the expense of other landlords, Dr. Bartlett did not comment on the reasons for the vicars' ability to increase the size of their estate, but rather used their increasing rent

¹ Miller, 'The Abbey and Bishopric of Ely', p.167.

² R.H. Hilton, 'Some Problems of Urban Real Property in the Middle Ages' in C.H. Feinstein (ed.), *Socialism, Capitalism and Economic Growth* (Cambridge, 1967), p.337.

³ J.N. Bartlett, 'Some Aspects of the Economy of York in the Later Middle Ages, 1300-1550' (History Ph.D. Thesis, London, 1958), pp.186-187.

income as a measure of the increasing prosperity and population of the city. By calculating an 'average rent' from all their York properties, Bartlett sought to show that their increase in income was in fact due to inflation in rental values reflecting increased demand for land, and that the subsequent decline in rental values in the fifteenth century mirrored an economic recession in the city.¹ Historians of other late medieval towns, such as Oxford, Canterbury,² Newcastle,³ Winchester⁴ and Durham⁵ have subsequently studied urban rent-rolls as potential indicators of urban prosperity, and sought to disprove Professor Dobson's gloomy prediction that it seemed unlikely that the study of rent-rolls would ever help elucidate the nature of the late medieval urban economy.⁶ However, when using such sources as a measure of general prosperity it is important to begin by distinguishing to what extent increases and decreases in income and the size of

¹ J.N. Bartlett, 'The Expansion and Decline of York in the Later Middle Ages', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, xii (1959-60), pp.25, 30-31.

² A.F. Butcher, 'Rent and the Urban Economy: Oxford and Canterbury in the Later Middle Ages', *Southern History*, i (1979), pp.11-43.

³ A.F. Butcher, 'Rent, Population and Economic change in Late-Medieval Newcastle', *Northern History*, xiv (1978), pp.67-77.

⁴ Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, pp.243-248.

⁵ Camsell, 'The City of Durham', pp.130-161.

⁶ Dobson, 'Urban Decline in Late Medieval England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, xxvii (1977), p.18.

estates were due to changes in management practice influenced by concerns unconnected to the general demand for tenements in the local property market.

In particular it seems important to re-examine Professor Hilton's original premise that the urban estates of institutional landlords were growing larger after 1300. While it certainly seems to be the case in York that the rent rolls of institutional landlords were increasing in size in the century after 1300, it is important to establish whether this was achieved through an overall expansion in the territorial extent of their holdings in the city or from changes in the management of property already within their possession.

Established landlords

Those institutions which prospered as landlords in later medieval York can generally be divided into two categories: those older landlords who had already reclaimed substantial areas of their York fee into demesne, and those which, through the provision of specific services to the community of York, continued to benefit from new endowments. Those communities which provided obits, chantries and corrodies prospered the most. Relatively few of the monastic houses of Yorkshire continued to make significant new acquisitions

of property in the city after 1300,¹ and some of those with established estates in York tended to withdraw from effective management of properties now usually held from them by free burgage in return for an increasingly nominal rent. Thus Whitby Abbey, which had sustained a fee of some size in York in the twelfth century, by the sixteenth century only drew a small rent from a single cottage in the city.² Generally it was only those monasteries which continued to maintain hospices in the city that might rent out a few cottages around the perimeter of their hospice precinct to tenants-at-will. Both Guisborough and Newburgh Priors had cottages let in this manner in the 1530s.³ The monastic houses of York itself, perhaps not surprisingly, continued to manage their estates more actively. In particular St. Mary's Abbey, which had already re-acquired much of the more important areas of its fee in York by the end of the thirteenth century, continued to consolidate its possession of property in Bootham which enabled it to draw a significant income from its

¹ See above, p.168.

² PRO, SC.6/4624 m.10.

³ PRO, SC.6/4636 m.9; SC.6/4546 m.9; *Cartularium prioratus de Gyseburne*, pp.434-435; see also the fifteenth-century rentals of Nostell Priory and Fountains Abbey (BL, Add. MS 40010; W.T. Lancaster, 'A fifteenth century rental of Nostell Priory', in *Miscellanea*, vol 1 (YASRS, lxi, 1920, p.129).

suburban properties.¹ Lesser communities like St. Clement's Nunnery, St. Andrew's Priory and St. Nicholas' Hospital made very few new acquisitions in York and again these tended to consolidate the more important areas of their fees in the city's suburbs.² Of the monastic institutions in the city it is St. Leonard's Hospital which stands out as exceptional in its ability to attract new endowments. In the half century before the Black Death the hospital acquired by licence seven messuages and rents, worth about 14s. a year, in Blake Street, the Old Baile, Micklegate and Northstreet.³ However most of these rents were exchanges for rents of similar value elsewhere in the city, and it was in the second half of the fourteenth century that the hospital made really substantial gains. Between 1359 and 1398 the hospital acquired forty-four messuages, five tofts, six and a half acres, the reversion of three shops and annual rents worth 41s. 4d., largely in return for obits

¹ In 1309 the abbey received a licence to acquire lands of their own fee to an annual value of £185.10s.10d. (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1307-13*, p.108). All the lands acquired in York in fulfilment of this licence were in Bootham, the suburb adjacent to the abbey. (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1307-13*, pp.236, 610; *1317-21*, p.239; *1324-27*, p.296; *1330-34*, pp.523, 525; *1343-45*, pp.252-253; *1350-54*, p.531; *1364-67*, p.241; *1381-85*, p.332; *1392-96*, p.176). Indeed St. Mary's Abbey might turn down opportunities it had to re-possess tenements in less central areas of its York fee. (*Gazetteer, Tenement 24*)

² *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1313-17*, p.173; *1396-99*, p.574; *1281-92*, p.507; *1348-50*, p.283; *1358-61*, p.363.

³ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1292-1301*, pp.208, 330; *1301-1307*, p.315; *1340-43*, p.188.

and corrodies.¹ These properties were distributed throughout the city and its suburbs, but again they tended to consolidate and expand the hospital's estate in the areas of its more ancient holdings, especially in Petergate/Blake Street, Micklegate, Ousegate and Walmgate, and the majority were acquired as the endowment for obits or corrodies to be provided by the hospital brethren.

Within the York estates of the Minster it was the estates of the keeper of the Fabric Fund and of the college of the vicars choral which prospered most after the mid-thirteenth century and these were both estates which to a lesser or greater extent depended upon the endowment of obits and chantries. By the fifteenth century the keeper of the Fabric's large income was drawn from many other sources apart from rents; and a sixteenth-century calendar of the dean and chapter's title deeds shows that it had by then made significant acquisitions of York property, by consolidating and taking over the administration of some Minster chantries served by independent parsons in the Minster, and of some chantries in parish churches, which it added to

¹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1358-61*, p.186; *1361-64*, p.313; *1364-67*, p.128; *1367-70*, pp.276, 393, 399; *1370-74*, pp. 3,334; *1377-81*, pp. 31, 550; *1381-85*, p.106; *1385-89*, p.268; *1392-96*, p.698; *1396-9*, p.360. YCA, G.41:2-5; BL, Cotton MS Nero D iii, fos 69-72, 92-93, 98, 101, 128, 137-140v, 154, 174-176v. *Gazetteer, Tenements 7-9, 24, 29, 32.*

the core of properties in York it had 'inherited' from the common fund.' Accordingly by 1431-1432 the Fabric Fund had an estate of 96 properties in ten streets producing £69.13s. 8½d. a year in actual revenue.² The estate of the vicars choral will be assessed in more detail below, but it should be emphasised here that the overall growth in the vicars' estate largely reflected the growth in the number of obits and chantries to which the vicars were committed.³

New landlords

Some of the older landowning institutions in York thus continued to prosper in the later middle ages because they continued to attract new endowments by adapting to satisfy the demands of a new religious climate. However the period after 1300 also saw the emergence of new groups of institutional landlords. In particular the late medieval vogue for chantry and obit foundations resulted in a great deal of new wealth

¹ YML, M2(2)a, fos 31, 35v, 37v, 44, 75; E 3/12. For the earlier history of the Fabric Fund estate see above, pp.129-130. See also Gazetteer, *Tenements 11, 23, 26.*

² YML, E 3/13. Calculated by deducting the cost of rents owed, decayed and defective rents from the nominal rent income recorded in the receipts.

³ See below, pp.221-222.

passing into corporate hands even though the endowment of individual chantries might not be substantial.

By the late thirteenth century the fashion for endowing obits and chantries had spread from the Minster to the parish churches. Among the earliest of the parish chantry foundations was the daily mass at the altar of St. Mary in St. Saviour's church founded for Robert Verdinel in 1280 which was endowed with land in Petergate.¹ By the fifteenth century Professor Dobson has identified approximately 140 perpetual chantry foundations in York, about two thirds of which were founded in churches and chapels other than the Minster, of which the majority were founded by York merchants and craftsmen.² More modest obit foundations must have been even more numerous. Through such endowments several parish clergy built up small estates in the city, which, like other small parcels of parish property such as rents from encroachments on the churchyard and rents given for obits or church furnishings, might be administered by groups of parishoners acting as feoffees.³

¹ PRO, E.40/5783; Gazetteer, *Tenement 20*.

² Dobson, 'The Foundation of Perpetual Chantries in Later Medieval York', pp.24-25.

³ *YMB*, 2, p.37; BI, Y/ASP/F.1.1-7, F.3.1,3; BI, Y/MS F.77-96 *passim*; *Yorks. Deeds*, 6, pp.168-180.

Much the most important of the new landlords to emerge in York in the later middle ages, and one which benefitted substantially from this growing vogue for chantry foundations, was the city corporation itself.¹ Indeed, in a century which was notable for the expansion of municipal estates,² that of the mayor and commonalty of York grew particularly rapidly, until by 1377 the joint estate of the city chamberlains and bridgemasters was worth over £116 a year.³

The city's estate developed as a result of the corporation fulfilling its responsibilities in three different areas.⁴ Firstly there were the properties of the city's two central bridges over the rivers Ouse and Foss. These included all the buildings on the bridges themselves as well as properties elsewhere in the city

¹ York was not formally incorporated until 1396, but in common with other boroughs enjoyed several of the privileges conferred by incorporation long before its status was formalised (*Cal. Charter Rolls 1341-1417*, p.442; *YMB*, 1, p.157; M. Weinbaum, *the Incorporation of Boroughs*, (Manchester, 1937), pp.18, 58, 103; Reynolds, *English Medieval Towns*, pp.113-114).

² Platt, *The English Medieval Town*, pp.173-174; Campbell, 'Norwich', p.15; B.C. Jones, 'The Topography of Medieval Carlisle', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, new series, lxxvi (1976), p.79; between 1324 and 1464 the nominal rent income of the chamberlains of Hull increased from £6.16s. 6d. to £106. 0s. 4d. (*Selected Rentals and Accounts of Medieval Hull, 1293-1528*, R. Horrox (ed.), (YASRS, cxli (1983), pp.55, 91).

³ *YMB*, 1, pp.1-12.

⁴ The earliest surviving rent account of the city clearly ordered the properties according to their official origin as well as their location. *YMB*, 1, pp.1-12.

given for the bridges' maintenance and for the civic chapels of St. William on Ousebridge and, later, St. Ann on Fossbridge.¹ These two estates, administered by the Ouse and Foss bridgemasters, were thus similar to the estate of the Bridge Fund in London which was established at about the same time and administered by a board of aldermen for the support of the fabric of London Bridge and its chapel, and which included a large number of properties throughout the city of London.² Like the London Bridge Fund, it is likely that the Ousebridge, and possibly the Fossbridge estates were originally established independently of the corporation of the mayor and commonalty. Indeed it seems that the Ousebridge estate was established before autonomous civic government was fully achieved and recognised in York towards the end of John's reign, for the earliest reference to the Ousebridgemasters is preserved in a deed for property in Jubbergate which was given to Fountains Abbey in 1199 x 1216, and which owed the bridgemasters a rent of 6d. a year.³ It thus seems possible that the Ousebridge estate originated with the campaign to rebuild in stone the bridge which is reputed

¹ For chantries established in the civic chapels, see Dobson, 'The Foundation of Perpetual Chantries by the Citizens of Medieval York', pp.28-29.

² Brooke and Keir, *London 800-1216*, p.110; Williams, *Medieval London*, pp.86-87.

³ *Chartulary of Fountains*, p.270; PRO, E.135/25/1 m.1.

to have collapsed in 1153 under the weight of people waiting to welcome Archbishop William FitzHerbert into the city.¹ Certainly a stone bridge supporting a chapel dedicated to St. William was in existence by 1223, and ten years later Archbishop Gray offered protection to messengers of the bridge (*nuntios pontis*) who were collecting alms for the repair of Ousebridge, said to have been damaged by the river's current.² It thus seems likely that the Ousebridge fund for the support of both the bridge and its chapel, dedicated to St. William of York, was originally established quite independently of the new civic authorities in the city. However, by 1377 it appears that the bridgemasters were regarded as civic officials, and indeed by 1400 the Ousebridgemasters had taken over responsibility for most of the city's estates except those belonging to Foss Bridge which continued to be administered separately.³

The second group of properties belonging to the city estate included a large number of properties enclosed from waste land in the city, which by 1377 were

¹ Dobson, in *York Minster History*, p.37.

² *HCY*, 3, p.117; *Reg. Gray*, p.60.

³ *YCA*, C 80/1 *et seq.*, C 82/1 *et seq.* The Fossbridge estate is not recorded before 1377.

administered by the city chamberlains.¹ The most valuable properties in this group were the stretches of moat around the city walls, which were usually let as pasture, except nearer the city bars where they were sometimes developed and leased as shops and houses.² Within the city these properties also included buildings which encroached upon streets, lanes and market places, like the city's rents next to Minster Gates,³ rooms let over the city bars, and land enclosed from the margins of the river Ouse.⁴ Occasionally this aspect of the city's estate must have conflicted with the responsibilities of the crown's escheator north of the Trent. On several occasions, for example, the city negotiated rents from landowners wishing to build over the street,⁵ although the many encroachments which were not so negotiated came under the jurisdiction of the royal escheator. Over the years fines for such encroachments became difficult to distinguish from

¹ *Cal. Fine Rolls 1307-19*, p.125; *YMB*, 1, 1-5; many municipal estates originated from the right to enclose such properties (Platt, 'The English Medieval town', pp.172-173; Jones, 'The Topography of Medieval Carlisle', p.79; Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, p.242).

² For an example, see *Gazetteer, Tenement 1*.

³ *Gazetteer, Tenement 51*.

⁴ The surviving rentals of the Ouse and Foss bridgemasters provide the best guide to the character of such properties (n. 2 above), although further references occur in the city-rental of 1377, and numerous leases preserved in the Memoranda and House Books and in YCA, H and I.

⁵ 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 129-131.

rents;¹ and even after 1396, when the mayor became escheator for the city, the two sources of revenue had to be separately accounted for.²

A third source of potential income for the city was the administration of chantries founded at various places throughout York. The largest single acquisition of this kind was the endowment provided by Thomas Haxey, treasurer of the Minster, who died in 1425, and left the mayor and commonalty responsibility for the administration of his chantry in the Minster.³ In addition to the sum of 600 marks, Haxey left the city an estate of properties in York nominally worth in excess of £10 a year.⁴ The city also had responsibility, as trustees, for several chantries in parish churches in York. By 1440-41 the Ousebridgemasters were paying the salaries of chantry chaplains in St. Nicholas, Micklegate and St. Mary, Castlegate,⁵ while the city chamberlains paid the salaries of two chaplains in All Saints North street.⁶ A copy of a separate rental for

¹ PRO, E.136/3/11-17, E.136/17/1A *et seq.*, E.136/56/1 *et seq.*

² PRO, E.136/235/18. E.136/74/1-38.

³ *York City Chamberlains' Accounts*, p.xxxvi.

⁴ YCA, C.82.4. This is a separate account for Haxey's estate for the year 1428-29; subsequently his estate was included in the Ousebridgemasters' accounts.

⁵ YCA, C.82.10.

⁶ *York City Chamberlains' Accounts*, p.xxxvi.

properties supporting Esshton's chantry in 1384 has survived, and rents from this and other parish chantry foundations can be identified in the later Ousebridgemasters' rent accounts.¹ More fortunately still, within the city archives the foundation deeds have been preserved for fourteen chantries in eleven parish churches. In most of these cases the city seems to have taken some direct responsibility for the administration of the chantry endowments.² Eight of these chantries can be identified in the 1546 Chantry Certificates and appear to have retained independent administration of their estates.³ Yet in at least four of these chantries, the properties listed in 1546 are different from those recorded in the corporation's archive of foundation deeds,⁴ while properties corresponding to those described in those deeds can again be identified in the Ousebridgemasters' accounts.⁵

¹ *YMB*, 11, p.47; the earliest intact and fully legible Ousebridgemasters' account is *YCA*, C82.10.

² *YCA*, G 70.1-41 *passim*.

³ *The Certificates of the Commissioners appointed to survey the Chantries, Guilds, Hospitals, etc., in the County of York. Part 1*, W. Page (ed.), SS, xci (1894), pp.44, 52, 53, 59, 61, 73, 74, 79.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.44, 61, 71, 74.

⁵ For example, the Ousebridgemasters' account for 1440-41 includes property next to the Carmelite Friary in Stonebow once belonging to William of Pontefract and John Thornton who, in 1412, founded a chantry in All Saints, Pavement with land in Stonebow and 'Church Street'. Although the chantry's possessions were listed in 1546 they did not include any property in Stonebow (*YCA*, C 82.10; G 70.29; *Yorkshire Chantry Certificates*, part 1, p.61; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1399-1401*, p.504).

It thus seems certain that the city acquired a very substantial number of properties as a result of chantry foundations. Indeed between 1322 and 1485 the endowments recorded in the surviving chantry foundation deeds alone, brought to the city's estate some twenty-five pieces of land, as well as rents nominally worth some £41 a year,¹ while between 1376 and 1442 the city's estate as a whole grew from some 202 properties to over 360 and from a nominal annual value of a little over £116 to nearly £200.² It was doubtless as a result of such significant acquisitions of property by civic corporations that in 1391, the re-enactment of the Statute of Mortmain included all lands alienated to guilds, fraternities and civic corporations.³ Within two years of the new Statute, the city of York had acquired a charter to amortise land to the value of £100 a year, for the support of the Ouse, Foss and other bridges, and of chaplains and ministers in the civic chapel on Ousebridge and of other divine services and alms.⁴

¹ YCA, G 70.1-14 *passim*.

² YNB, 1, pp.1-12; YCA, C82.10. The increase in size and value was in almost equal proportion.

³ Raban, *Mortmain Legislation and the English Church*, p.128.

⁴ YNB, 1, p.143; *Cal. Charter Rolls 1341-1417*, p.333. It was possibly after the granting of this charter that the bridgemasters took over full responsibility for all the city's estates, including those formerly administered by the chamberlains.

Thus the most valuable single source of new landed wealth for the city corporation after 1300, was very similar to that of the established religious landlords. But just as the size and value of their estates increased in almost equal proportion, so too they were also faced with the rising costs of maintenance, both of clergy and of property, which such endowments incurred.

The last group of institutional landlords to emerge in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were the religious fraternities and guilds, especially those associated with the foundation of hospitals. Of these the wealthiest and most important was the hospital founded by the fraternity of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Holy Trinity Guild in Fossgate in 1357. Indeed the foundation was marked by the purchase of a royal licence allowing the fraternity to acquire lands and rents to the value of £10 a year which had been fulfilled by the acquisition of lands in York by 1397.¹ By 1442 the estate of Holy Trinity Hospital, its chapel and its fraternity (by then evolved into the Mystery of the Mercers), had a nominal income from York properties of £56.14s.10d. a year.² Of the

¹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls. 1358-61*, p.228; *1396-99*, p.67. Professor David Falliser and Dr. David Smith are currently preparing an edition of the cartulary of the Company of Merchant Adventurers in York.

² *The York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, M. Sellers (ed.) (SS, cxxix, 1918), p.54. After the deduction of the cost of repairs, decayed rents and rents owed, this sum was reduced to £21. 6s. 6d.

many other hospitals founded in York, none attracted a similar degree of wealth.¹ Two rentals for the Maison Dieu on Ousebridge for c. 1350 and 1375 suggest that it had a small estate worth less than £5 a year,² and the surviving accounts of the Guild of Corpus Christi and Hospital of St. Thomas do not record any revenue from rents before 1478-79, when less than £1 was due from properties next to the hospital outside Micklegate Bar.³ Taken together the small endowments which these hospitals and guilds did receive served to increase the amount of property passing into 'institutional' lordship in the later middle ages.⁴

The urban estates of some institutional landlords were therefore undoubtedly expanding in the later middle ages. Indeed the returns of the surveyors of monastic and chantry lands in the 1530s and 1540s considerably underestimated the amount of land and rents which had passed into institutional control for the endowment of religious services. In particular the endowments of the city bridgemasters, so many of which originally derived from chantry ordinations, were not forfeited at the

¹ For other hospitals in York, see R.B. Rose in *VCHY City of York*, pp.420-440.

² YCA, G 24; *YMB*, 1, pp.25-26.

³ YCA, C 99.6.

⁴ YCA, G 15, 67; 70.33; Palliser, *The Reformation in York*, p.24.

Reformation;¹ and in 1536 the city successfully pressed for the abolition of Haxey's chantry without losing the Haxey endowment.² Similarly the endowments of the fraternity of York Mercers, originally acquired for their chaplain, were not surrendered when the chapel of Holy Trinity attached to their hospital was dissolved,³ and the endowments of the vicars choral also survived more or less intact into the nineteenth century.⁴

Professor Palliser has estimated that at the time of the Dissolution, about one quarter of the city's housing stock was in the hands of the vicars choral and chantries, and another quarter in the hands of monastic houses.⁵ Such a figure, which is based on contemporary estimates of about 924 forfeited properties of various types in the city, is almost certainly a serious underestimate since so many properties, originally given for religious endowments, escaped escheat to the crown. The combined extent of the six largest estates in the city alone accounted for over 1,000 properties and this ignores altogether the endowments of the lesser

¹ In the chantry certificates only the stipends owed by the city to their chaplains are recorded, not their endowments. *Yorkshire Chantry Certificates*, part 1, pp.62, 70.

² *York City Chamberlains' Accounts*, p.xxxvi.

³ *Yorkshire Chantry Certificates*, part 1, p.76.

⁴ F. Harrison, *Life in a Medieval College*, pp.203-5,273.

⁵ Palliser, *The Reformation in York*, pp.17, 24.

religious houses and independently administered chantries. Petergate was in many respects not a typical street, if only because of its proximity to the Minster; nevertheless by the end of the fourteenth century virtually every tenement in it was burdened with some commitment to a religious foundation.¹ It is not at all improbable that this was more widely the case throughout the city, and that by the early fifteenth century and certainly by 1500, some part of the outgoings of the majority of properties in the city was dedicated to the support of charitable and spiritual services.

The management of institutional estates

Superficially it would appear that Professor Hilton was correct; the corporations were encroaching upon a larger share of the urban landmarket, but it is important not to exaggerate the extent of this territorial expansion. Certainly growth of the estates of some of the newer landlords represented a significant extension of corporately-held properties, recognised by the 1391 statute. However on both these and older estates the increasing size of rent rolls was also the consequence of changing attitudes to the management of

¹ Gazetteer, *passim*.

urban property, as more tenements were reclaimed into demesne and more tenants brought under the direct supervision of corporate landlords.

In the thirteenth century, institutional landlords had sought to limit the loss of lordship over their fees, threatened by the successive sub-alienation of freely held tenements. This had resulted in the invention of demises at fee-farm and various forms of restricted free tenure which limited the right of the tenant to alienate his land by sale or inheritance. However in many cases such farms still gave a tenant considerable freedom in the development of his tenement and in sub-letting to tenants-at-will. It is apparent from Petergate, as it is from the city as a whole, that most tenements were frequently subdivided by the later thirteenth century, and that the free tenant, even if in full seisin of the tenement, rarely inhabited the whole tenement himself. At the very least the street frontages of such tenements were sub-divided into rows of shops and solars - each often individually occupied.¹ Such sub-divisions were not necessarily a new feature; for example, in 1086 William de Percy held '*vii minutas mansiones continentes .L. pedes lati*', and Hugh, son of Baldric, had twenty-nine '*minuta hospitia*'.²

¹ Gazetteer, *Tenements* 11, 26, 32, 37-40.

² *Domesday*, fo 298 a, b.

To a large extent the expansion of both the size and value of institutional estates after 1300 was achieved by the landlords' extending their control over such humble tenants-at-will.¹ To take a specific example to illustrate this point; between c. 1230 and 1281 the vicars choral acquired a free rent of 25s. from a tenement in Petergate, but a century later they increased their claim on the tenement by acquiring full possession of six shops already built there, thus increasing their rents without significantly altering the territorial extent of their fee.² Many other examples of changes introducing more direct contact between landlord and occupant can be found in the vicars' rent rolls: in 1309 a row of houses in Aldwark constructed by John de Pontebellum were entered as a single entry in the account, but by 1311 they were listed as four separate tenancies.³ Again, between 1328-29 and 1336-37 a single entry for a tenement with three shops on the corner of Stonegate and Petergate was converted into four individual entries and their occupants named.⁴ These four rents together with at least seven others in Petergate were all owed from a

¹ Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, p.207.

² 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 177, 179; PRO, C.143/345/2; Gazetteer, *Tenement 22*; see also *Tenement 21* (f).

³ YML, VC 4/1/1, 6/2/3.

⁴ YML, VC 4/1/3, 6/2/12.

group of only three tenements which the college had acquired in 1266,¹ but the shops had clearly existed for some time before being individually listed in the rent accounts. As a consequence of such changes both the number of tenants and the proportion of farms to free rents listed in the vicars' accounts increased dramatically. Between 1309 and 1371 the farms on the vicars' York estate increased from 46 to 134, while the number of *redditus assisae* increased from a minimum of 37 to only 50, over the same period.²

This development of a closer relationship between landlord and tenant coloured the whole approach of the vicars' chamberlains to the management of their urban estate throughout the later medieval period, and similar policies can be seen in the estates of other corporate landlords. In particular it was apparent in the large number of building projects undertaken by the vicars, which concentrated on the provision of small single-bay two-storeyed dwellings for renting at the cheapest end of the property market. Such a change in policy is apparent elsewhere: in the urban estates of Canterbury Cathedral Priory in Canterbury, London and Sandwich, for example, where the switch to investment in building

¹ Gazetteer, *Tenements* 15-17.

² YML, VC 4/1/1, 16. (The account for Pentecost-Martinmas 1371 is the first which clearly distinguishes between assize rents and farms.)

houses rather than buying land has been attributed to the increased enforcement of the Statute of Mortmain.¹ Again, in the urban estate of St. John's Hospital in Winchester the number of buildings directly accounted for within the estate increased fourfold between c. 1300 and 1417.² In York it is also possible that a shift towards building was encouraged by the more stringent implementation of the Statute of Mortmain,³ which coincided with the growing trend, already apparent in the late thirteenth century, for benefactors of the college of the vicars choral to endow their chantries with cash rather than property. Thus in 1308 Robert de Ford, canon, gave £100 in return for the promise of rents to the value of 7 marks a year to support his chantry, while Peter de Ros, precentor, gave the same sum to secure rents worth 5 marks for his chantry in 1313.⁴

¹ M. Mate, 'Property Investment by Canterbury Cathedral Priory 1250-1400', *Journal of British Studies*, 23 (1984), pp.5-8, 12.

² Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, p.204.

³ Dr. Sandra Raban has suggested that enforcement of the Statute reached something of a peak in the second and third decades of the fourteenth century (Raban, *Mortmain Legislation in Medieval England*, pp.89-90, 189). The college did not acquire their first general licence to acquire lands in mortmain until 1333 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1330-34*, p.379).

⁴ YML, VC 3/Vo 7, 80. Other examples from the later thirteenth and early fourteenth century are YML, VC 3/Vo 47; 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 89, 126, 151. From the mid-fourteenth century this pattern of endowing chantries and obits to be served by vicars became the most common practice (YML VC 3/Vo 13, 19, 43, 45, 52, 53, 55, 59, 60a, 61, 66, 67, 70, 75, 87).

Most importantly, such endowments gave the college much greater flexibility in developing their estates, and indeed it is significant that the biggest building projects, which most transformed their urban estate, were largely financed by exceptional obit or chantry foundations endowed with large sums of cash. Thus at least two rows of cottages erected in Aldwark before 1309 and in 1335 were built for the college by the founders of the chantries they were to support,¹ while over £320 of the £412 raised to redevelop Cambhall in Goodramgate, and Benetplace in Patrickpool in 1360-1364, came from obit endowments.² Indeed the whole movement of rents on the vicars' urban estate can be closely related to the overall flow of obit endowments.³ However the increase in the proportion and number of such tenants-at-will had other important consequences for corporate landlords like the college, as they generally bore the responsibility for all costs of maintenance and repairs. In the changed conditions of the fifteenth century this became an increasing burden and led to yet further changes in the management of some urban estates, leading in particular to a limited withdrawal from direct management, the revival and

¹ YML, VC 6/2/3; 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', no 135.

² YML, VC 6/10.

³ See below, pp.221-222.

elaboration of the fixed-term 'building' lease, and ultimately the development of the entry fine.¹

It is apparent that the income from rents reflected much more than the demand for tenements, and it is essential to bear in mind the 'managerial' factors outlined above in attempting any assessment of general economic trends. A landlord's determination to meet the costs with which an estate was burdened is at least as significant in determining the level of rents and the type of property rented as the demand for tenements. In various legal, economic and religious climates, landlords might follow policies quite different from those that one might expect were they motivated simply by economic factors. The relationship between institutional landlords' behaviour and the local economy is further complicated since at times corporate landlords were given exceptional resources to invest in property, allowing them to raise their rent income beyond the level it would have achieved through natural inflation, while at other periods, landlords might deliberately restrict their income if this also enabled them to reduce some of the costs involved in maintaining their estate.

¹ See below, p.291 n.

The estate of the vicars choral;
the fourteenth century

The influence of institutional pressures on a landlord can best be illustrated from the estate of the vicars choral, since this is the only estate in York for which a series of financial accounts has survived for the fourteenth as well as the fifteenth century.¹ Dr. Bartlett detected two main periods when the income of the vicars choral increased significantly: in the late 1320s to 1330s, and again between 1359 and 1400.² An analysis of the composition of the vicars' York estate suggests that a very significant element in this increase was due to the vicars' ability to invest capital in buying, and especially building, new property. The role of inflation was rather less than Dr. Bartlett suggested, and his chronology of inflation needs to be substantially modified.

Between 1304 and 1347 there was a steady increase in the size and value of the vicars' York estate, which grew from 80 to 148 rents while the overall income from rents increased by about £15 per six monthly term

¹ See above, pp.24-27.

² Bartlett, 'The expansion and decline of York', pp.24-26. The income of the vicars choral before c. 1370 has also been discussed by Dr. Nigel Tringham, although without a detailed analysis of the composition of their estate ('Vicars Choral Cartulary', pp.lxvi-lxxi).

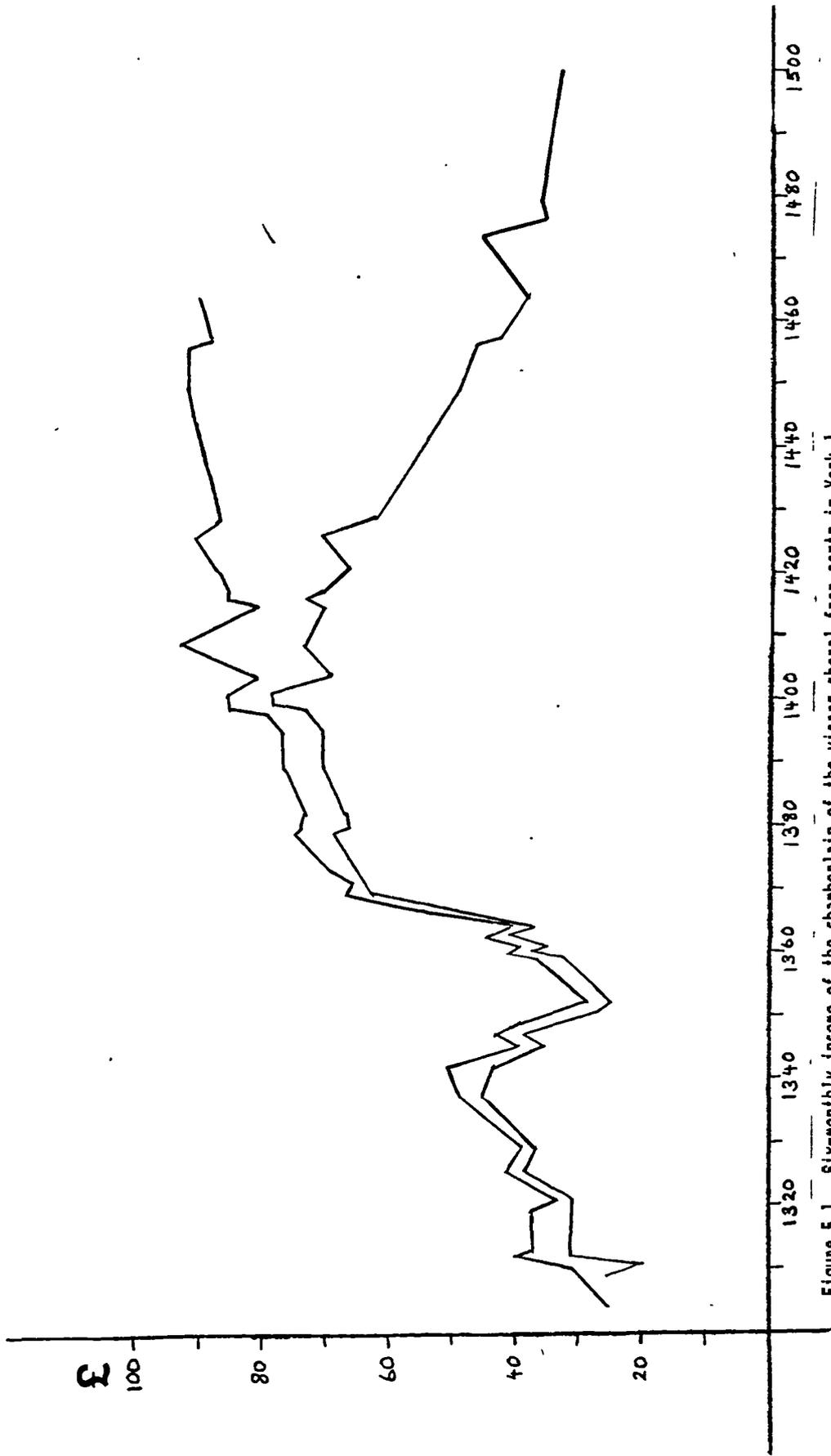


Figure 5.1. Six-monthly income of the chamberlain of the vicars choral from rents in York.¹

¹ Derived from YML, VC 4/1; VC 6/2/1-17.

The upper line refers to the nominal sum of rents owed. Income was higher in Pentecost term because certain annual rents and farms were due in that term only.

The lower line refers to rents actually received after the deduction of decayed and defective rents and rents owed. The cost of repairs to property is shown separately in Table 5.1 and Figure 5.2.

(Figure 5.1). This increase can be attributed mainly to rebuilding, for at least 48 new properties were added to the rent roll through the redevelopment of property already belonging to the college, and especially through the construction of rows of cottages.¹ These properties alone added a potential new income of about £9. 7s. 8d. in six monthly income to the vicars' estate, while other new properties acquired in various streets between 1313 and 1344, as a result of obit endowments, should have produced an income in excess of £3.18s. 8d. a term.² Over the whole period only a small proportion of the increase in the vicars' income (considerably less than 15%), can be said to have derived from an increase in rental values. Certainly there were short term fluctuations in rent levels. Between 1328 and 1347 in particular the vicars' income from York rents was subject to several short-term fluctuations. A brief slump of approximately 10% in the income from rents between 1328 and 1331³ was followed by a sharp upturn in

¹ Altogether nine rows of cottages and shops were added to the vicars' estate on properties already belonging to them in Petergate, Goodramgate, Aldwark, St. Andrewgate and Layerthorpe. They can be identified in the relevant sections of the college's rent rolls, while agreements concerning the building of Ludham, Cliff, Spirity, Chester and Hugate Rents are preserved in the vicars' cartulary (YML, VC 6/2/3, 12; VC 4/1/3, 7; 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 126-131, 135).

² YML, VC 3/Vi 132-135; VC 3/Vo 7, 9, 10, 49.

³ This decline was used by the vicars as justification in seeking the appropriation of the church of Ferry Fryston. They complained that their estate had suffered due to the 'devastation of the Scots' and gave as examples the rents of several of their larger properties which had declined ('Vicars Choral Cartulary', p.lxix, no 227).

1336 and then by an equally steep decline between 1337 and 1342, although by 1347 some stability may have been returning (Figure 5.1). However the scale of these slumps would have been much greater had it not been for a steady increase in the size of the vicars' estate, for just as the completion of two new chantry rows between 1332 and 1336 contributed to a growth in prosperity in that period,¹ so the completion of another four rows between 1337 and 1342 largely masked what would otherwise have been a decline in the vicars' termly income of over £6 by reducing it to a decline of less than £2.²

Therefore the building of chantry rows, in particular, allowed the vicars' chamberlain to maintain a reasonable income at a time when rental values were fluctuating sharply but the cost of obits and chantries was rising steadily (Figure 5.2). The vicars were certainly not alone in responding to both internal demands and market pressures in this manner. At least five York parish churches are known to have been

¹ These were the ten cottages of Ludham and Cliff Rents in Aldwark, which together added £2. 3s. 4d. income to the vicars' rents in Martinmas-Pentecost 1336-37 (YML, VC 6/2/11, 12).

² These were the seven cottages of Spirity and Chester Rents in Aldwark and St. Andrewgate, ten houses in Hugaterent in Goodramgate and a row of nine cottages in Layerthorpe (YML, VC 4/1/7).

building chantry rows between 1316 and 1340,¹ while other rows were erected for the upkeep of other chantries in the Minster.²

While the first epidemic of the Black Death had a significant impact on the vicars' income³ by 1359 rents had largely recovered to their pre-plague levels and in the 1360s and 1370s the vicars experienced a significant increase in their income from York rents (Figure 5.1). The recovery of the 1350s was largely due to a general recovery in the numbers and value of properties leased, but may partly be attributed to an increased commitment by the chamberlain to the repair of older properties. During the 1350s the chamberlain appears to have increased his expenditure on repairs by about 80% in real terms.⁴ Although income had recovered, the cost of obits was increasing even more rapidly and between 1355 and 1364 the chamberlain once again embarked on a policy

¹ These were Lady Row in the churchyard of Holy Trinity, Goodramgate (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1313-17*, p.476-477; and rows in the churchyards of St. Martin, Coneystreet (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1334-38*, p.121), All Saints, Pavement (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1334-38*, p.385), St. Sampson in Newgate (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1334-38*, p.399), St. Michael, Spurriergate (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1334-38*, p.458).

² YML, VC 3/Vo 7; *Gazetteer, Tenement 59*. A row of cottages on this site, apparently of fourteenth-century date and possibly built to support the chantry of Peter de Ros, was demolished in 1924, but a drawing of them is preserved in the York City Art Gallery (*RCHNY*, 5, p.181).

³ Figure 5.1.; see also 'Vicary Choral Cartulary', no 267.

⁴ See below, p.234 and Figure 5.2.

of buying and building property. Two sites of Cambhall and Benetplace were developed with twenty new houses¹ and another five were purchased.² Altogether these acquisitions added £7.17s. 2d. to the vicars' rents in Pentecost term 1366, while in the same year the acquisition of another eleven properties for John de Cottingham's chantry added another £3.12s. 8d.³

The initial increase of about £12 in the value of the vicars' estate in the first half of the 1360s was thus largely due to enlargement of the estate by building and buying. Only about 33% of this increase was due to an inflation in rental values, which represented an increase of about 10% in the average value of rents over the whole estate. However after 1366 inflation seems to have become significant, and a comparison of individual rents suggests it was responsible for about 75% of the £13 increase between 1366 and 1369, a rise of nearly 20% in average rental

¹ YML, VC 6/10. The project of developing Benetplace had been postponed since 1338 (YML, VC 3/Vi 43-45; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1358-61*, p.268).

² These included properties in Petergate (*Gazetteer, Tenement 22*), Hertergate and Thurslane, the Shambles and the Gildgarthes on Bishophill (YML, VC 6/10; VC 3/Vi 102, 193/i and ii; 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 311, 312; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1361-64*, p.333).

³ YML, VC 4/1/13, 14. John de Cottingham, rector of North Cave, endowed a chantry with property, initially held by lease, in 1366 (YML, VC 3/Vi 170-171c, 295).

values.¹ The building of the new chantry rows in the early 1360s was fortuitous, for although originally built as a response to the increasing cost of obits in the 1350s, they soon enabled the college to benefit from the prolonged and substantial general inflation in rental values which occurred subsequently.

Between 1374 and 1399 it is more difficult to assess the changing size of the vicars' estate, since no separate rent accounts survive for the period after 1374.² By 1378 the chamberlain had begun to include totals of rents summarised by street in his final account,³ and although in 1389 a complete rental was endorsed on the account, this does not appear to have become standard practice until 1399.⁴ While it is possible to detect a substantial increase in the size of the vicars' estate after 1371 (and especially between 1378 and 1395) from 183 to 240 tenements, it is more difficult to assess how this was achieved. At least a part of the increase was due to the change in the method of recording rents, for whereas before 1371 there was a tendency in the rent rolls to omit uncollected rents

¹ For a discussion of this increase, see below, pp.245-246.

² YML, VC 6/1/6.

³ YML, VC 6/2/28.

⁴ YML, VC 6/2/36-38.

from the rent accounts, after 1378 the full nominal value of all rents owed to the college were recorded on the credit balance of the account, and unpaid rents were recorded separately on the expenditure balance.

While a study of individual rent levels suggests that the period 1366-1374 had been characterised by a steady inflation in rental values, after 1374 the rate of inflation declined, and after 1389 the level of individual rents all over the estate stabilised.¹ Continued growth in the size and value of the vicars' urban estate between 1371 and 1399 was again due mainly to widespread, if relatively small-scale building work. Between 1371 and 1395 some fifty-three farmed properties were added to the rent roll. Some of this increase was accounted for by new properties acquired for the obit of John de Branketre, treasurer of the Minster,² but was also achieved because by 1378-79 the college's new property in Hertergate and Thurslane had been redeveloped as a group of ten rents. By 1382 new rows, or at least numbers of small rents, can be found in the Minster Close, and by 1395 in Monkgate.³ In addition many older rows and closes, such as those in Hugaterent

¹ See below, p.246.

² This included four messuages, and 46s. 10d. in rents (PRO, C.143/386/8; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1374-77*, pp.350-351).

³ YML, VC 6/2/28. 31, 36.

(*alias* Little Bedern) in Goodramgate, Layerthorpe and Petergate, had been increased in size by 1395,¹ and by 1398 income saved from Cottingham's foundation had been applied together with other money to the building of new rents in Goodramgate, College Street and Ogleforth which, together with the acquisition of a new tenement next to the Bedern, added a further fifteen rents to the college's roll in Goodramgate.²

During the fourteenth century it is thus quite apparent that the increase in both the size and the value of the vicars' estate was largely due to their ability to invest capital in the buying, and especially the building, of new properties to be let at farm and in only two periods in c. 1336 and between 1364 and 1389, can the vicars' estate be described as prospering due to an inflation in the market value of land. The fact that the vicars, and other landlords, were able to let the new properties they built may indicate some growth in the local economy, as Bartlett suggested, or at least the existence of an unmet latent demand. However, while the increased number of tenants recorded in the rent accounts reflects the consequences of a desire to exploit the full economic potential of the college's estates by letting directly to the actual occupants of

¹ YML, VC 6/2/36.

² YML, VC 6/2/36, 37; VC 6/10, 1394 and 1395, VC 3/Vi 148-151.

houses built on the land, it should not be assumed that this desire to maximise the return from property was an end in itself, and indeed the enlargement of the vicars' York estate can be most easily interpreted as an attempt to fund increasing spiritual commitments. Figure 5.2 suggests that both in the 1330s and the 1350s the major periods of building and purchase corresponded with periods when the vicars' financial commitment to obits was increasing most rapidly and faster than their ability to pay for them.¹ After c. 1380 it seems that the natural limit to the vicars' ability to maximise their income from their existing estate had been reached, even though they still had the resources to increase its size.

The fifteenth century

If the vicars were already running into financial problems by the 1380s, these were considerably exacerbated after 1400 when new investment could not prevent the revenue from York rents entering a steady and protracted decline. After 1401 the level of decayed

¹ And see below, pp.221-222.

and defective rents began to rise substantially.¹ Between Pentecost term of 1401 and Martinmas term of 1403-04 the college's income from York rents declined in value by 12.6%.² Thereafter the pace of decline slackened for a while but still continued. By 1409, disregarding the income of St. Edward's Chantry which was added to the chamberlain's account in that year,³ rents had declined by a further 5%,⁴ and by Martinmas term 1421-22 the overall decline since 1401 had reached 22.6%.⁵ Between 1419 and 1421 the vicars made a last ditch effort to restore their financial position by investing £400 in purchasing new properties in Hornpotlane⁶ and the water lanes, by building new houses in Petergate, and by making efforts to recover lost rents.⁷ Through all this effort they generated a new income of only approximately £4 per term, which offset

¹ Decayed rents were generally rents reduced in value. Defective rents were those which, for various reasons, had not been paid for a whole, or part of a term.

² YML, VC 6/2/41. 42. Net income from rents was £69. 6s. 8½d. (calculated by deducting the cost of rents owed, decayed and defective rents from nominal rent income).

³ See above, p.25. The rents of St. Edward's Chantry added a nominal value of £7. 7s. 10d. that term.

⁴ YML, VC 6/2/44. Net income from rents was £73. 7s. 5½d.

⁵ YML, VC 6/2/49. Between 1409 and 1415 the accumulated decayed rents were written off, and a new rental established (YML, VC 6/2/45). Net income from rents in 1421-22 was £67. 9s. 5d.

⁶ Gazetteer, *Tenements 37-40*.

⁷ YML, VC *Statute Book*, pp.29-39, 54-57; VC 6/1/7.

about 22% of the decline in their rent income since 1401.¹ However after 1426, income rapidly began to decline again by 33% between 1426 and 1445, and between 1456 and 1464 by another 20.3%.² Their estate, which had reached a maximum of 260 tenants in 1426 following the accessions of St. Edward's Chantry rents in 1409 and the new properties added in 1419-21, also began to decline over the same period. By 1500 the college's rent accounts listed only 179 tenants producing an income of only £33.11s. 6½d. a term compared with £79. 6s. 0½d. in 1399;³ a dramatic, almost calamitous, decline.

The problems of the vicars choral were not unique in the fifteenth century in York, for the estates of other landlords in the city, in particular those of the Minster Fabric Fund and of the Ousebridgemasters of the city, were also declining, the reduction in the value of their income from rents following a a similar pattern. Unfortunately sufficient sources have not survived to compare the fortunes of these other estates before the 1430s. After that decade, however, particularly steep periods of decline occurred between c. 1430 and the mid-

¹ YML, VC 6/2/50. Net income from rents in Pentecost Term 1426 was £71. 6s. 6½d.

² YML, VC 6/2/55, 58, 61. In Pentecost Term 1464 net income from rents was £38. 0s. 8½d.

³ YML, VC 6/2/37,70.

1440s, between the early 1450s and the mid-1460s and again from 1480 until the end of the century.

Not all estates in the city suffered equally badly however. The income from the smaller and more localised estate of the Fossbridgemasters had decayed by less than 8% by 1445-46 compared with a gap of 38% between nominal value and income in the case of the Fabric's estate and 30.8% in the case of the Ousebridgemasters' estate,¹ and by 1486-87 decline on the Fossbridge's estate was still less than 42% compared with nearly 57% on the Fabric's estates and 57.8% on the Ousebridge-masters'.² Although such comparisons cannot be definitive since the Fossbridgemasters did not begin to record decayed and defective rents separately until 1486-87, thus possibly exaggerating the level of rents collected in earlier accounts,³ the general position is apparent and the varying fortunes of different landlords in the same city require explanation. Not only do the level of rents seem to have varied substantially over the city

¹ YCA, C 80.5; C 82.10; YML, E.3/18.

² YCA, C 80.15; C 85.1; YML, E.3/30. The decline on the Ousebridge estate is calculated since 1442, as in between 1442 and 1486 a substantial proportion of decays had been written off.

³ In addition it is not known over what time-scale the initial decay had occurred.

depending on the location and type of property let,¹ but it also appears that the way in which the acquisition of new endowments could vary substantially from institution to institution was equally significant. The vicars choral received a number of new endowments after 1420 but considerably fewer than in the preceding 70 years, and the sums of money involved may also have been smaller.² By contrast the keepers of Fossbridge received substantial endowments for three new chantries in the new chapel of St. Anne on Fossbridge which was completed by 1424.³ The endowments for these chantries benefitted both the Fossbridgemasters' and Ousebridgemasters' estates,⁴ but the estate of the former benefitted most, increasing in value by over £10 a year between 1409 and 1444.⁵ Just as the rebuilding of Ousebridge together with a civic chapel had proved a useful source of new income for the city in the late twelfth to late fourteenth centuries, so the rebuilding of Fossbridge with a chapel proved equally beneficial in

¹ See below, pp.258-270.

² Only 3 original obit agreements survive after 1420 which specify sums of money given; none was greater than 25 marks (YML, VC 3/Vo 43, 45, 75).

³ Dobson, 'The Foundation of Perpetual Chantries', p.29; Raine, *Medieval York*, pp.68-70.

⁴ Some of the property for Alan de Hammerton's chantry in St. Anne's Chapel was administered by the Ousebridgemasters. See 'Hamertonlane' in YCA, C 82.10.

⁵ YCA, C 80.3, 4.

the early fifteenth century, even though other landlords were already experiencing serious financial difficulties. It should therefore be considered whether the declining fortunes of some York landlords in the fifteenth century, like the declining fortunes of monastic landlords in the city in the thirteenth century, reflected changes in the pattern of religious endowment. This question covers the rate at which new endowments were being made, and there is evidence of a considerable slackening in the general pace of chantry endowment in the city after 1400 and especially after 1450,' although this decline was not evenly distributed. However it is also essential to consider the management of the existing estates, and how well the income from rents was meeting the costs of the foundations it was intended to support, if the decline of the estates is to be properly understood.

In the case of the college of the vicars choral, by 1369-70 55% of their total income was derived from the rents of York properties.² The chamberlain, who accounted for this income, also bore the principal responsibility for raising the revenue to support all

¹ Dobson, 'The Foundation of Perpetual Chantries', pp.32-33.

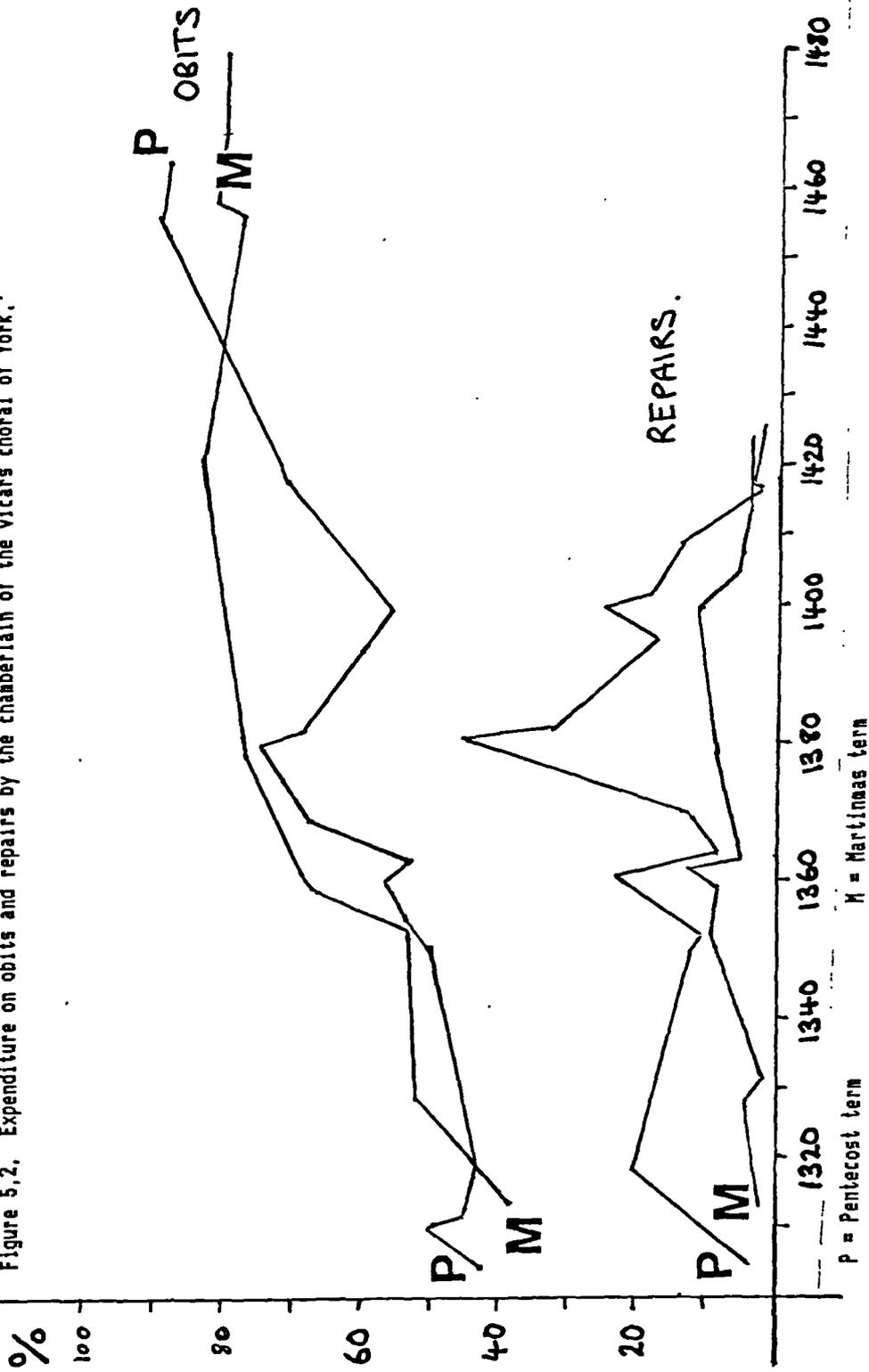
² YML, VC 6/1/1. At any other date it is impossible to estimate the total income of the college, since subsequent successor's accounts do not attempt an overall summary of all the college's official accounts.

the college's obit and chantry foundations, and the overall increase in the college's rent income in the fourteenth century has to be set against an even more rapid rise in the cost of obits and chantries to which the college was committed (Figure 5.2). By 1309 the college had been entrusted with at least 21 foundations costing approximately £37 a year; but during the fourteenth century this number increased steadily, especially during the second half of the century, until by 1421-22 the college was committed to 109 obits and chantries at an annual cost of about £143.¹ Thus the major increases in the value of the vicars' York estate largely reflected the pattern of obit endowments, with the greatest increase in both endowment and income occurring in the second half of the fourteenth century when about one half of all their obit endowments was received.² Such obit payments provided a most important source of each individual vicar's income, but for the college as a whole the increase in the cost of supporting them, when expressed as a percentage of the chamberlain's income from all sources, shows that it was becoming increasingly difficult to sustain. In 1304 such expenditure represented 43% of the chamberlain's real income, by 1359 this had increased to 57-68%, by

¹ YML, VC 4/1/1; VC 6/2/49.

² 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', p.402; YML, VC 6/2/49.

Figure 5.2. Expenditure on obits and repairs by the chamberlain of the vicars choral of York.¹



¹ Derived from YML, VC 6/2/1-. 66.
 Expenditure is expressed as a percentage of the chamberlain's income. The cost of obits is calculated by the deduction of defaulted and unpaid obits from the cost of obits displayed on the expenditure balance. The chamberlain's income is calculated by the deduction of decayed and defective rents and of the nominal income from defaulted and unpaid obits from the total income summarised at the foot of the income balance of the account.

1378 to 77% until by 1421-22 it had reached a peak of 84% of real income (Figure 5.2).

By 1389-90 such a high level of expenditure could no longer be sustained, and the chamberlain began to count among his receipts a sum for obits which were no longer to be observed.¹ At first this sum was simply passed on to the succentor for the vicars, but after c. 1415-16 it was absorbed into the chamberlain's receipts and by 1456-57 defaulted obits accounted for 26% of the chamberlain's nominal income.² This attempt to reduce the chamberlain's expenditure on obits may not initially have been simply a response to a financial crisis. By 1390 the college, like other colleges of vicars choral elsewhere,³ was embarking on a period of internal reform intended to improve the communal life of the college which involved some considerable expense,⁴

¹ YML, VC 6/2/33. Some of these obits had naturally expired after a fixed term, but others included ancient endowments made in perpetuity.

² YML, VC 6/2/59.

³ N. Orme, 'The Medieval Clergy of Exeter Cathedral, 1: The Vicars and Annuellars', *Transactions of the Devonshire Historical Association*, 118, 1981, pp.86-87; W.D. Peckham, *The Chartulary of the High Church of Chichester*, Sussex Record Society, 46, 1946.

⁴ This included adding a second quadrangle, with a new hall, to the existing college precinct (D. Stocker and C. Wilson, 'Bedern Hall - Part 2', *Interim*, vol 7 no 2, pp.30-38), and was also expressed in the passing of a new body of statutes for the college (Harrison, *Life in a Medieval College*, pp.51-60). To help meet these expenses the college successfully petitioned the crown for the advowson of the church of St. Sampson in York (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1392-96*, pp.712-725).

and the reform of the chamberlain's expenditure from c. 1389 should be interpreted in this context. However in the second quarter of the fifteenth century the cost of obits again began to rise, this time as income was declining. By 1474-75 annual expenditure on obits and chantries had been reduced to £80.17s. 2d., a level comparable to that of the 1360s, but whereas in the 1360s this had represented only 55% of the chamberlain's income, by 1474-75 it consumed over 80%.¹ It is not surprising that by 1484 the college was no longer able to maintain its full complement of 36 vicars.²

The long struggle to maintain its establishment shows the college of vicars choral making vigorous efforts to sustain its income so that even though the chamberlain's real income declined by nearly 50% between 1401 and 1474, the amount of money spent on obits and chantries was reduced by only 30% over the same period.³ To some extent this success was facilitated by 'creative accounting'. After 1383 a new officer, the 'reparelor', equipped with an independent income, increasingly took over the cost of repairs on the vicars' estates, thus removing from the chamberlain a duty which by the late

¹ YML, VC 6/2/63, 64

² Harrison, *Life in a Medieval College*, pp.109-112; Dobson, in *York Minster History*, p.93.

³ YML, VC 6/2/41, 64.

1370s could consume up to 25% of his income.¹ The vicars' estates seem to have been 'cost-driven', and the level of rents they set reflected internal as well as external pressures.

In this respect the vicars choral were not unique, although the absence of adequate financial accounts for other York landlords before the fifteenth century makes direct comparison hazardous. The best indication that other institutions experienced similar problems is suggested by the evidence that they shared similar commitments. It has already been suggested that the estates of the city bridgemasters and St. Leonard's Hospital grew particularly rapidly between c. 1330 and 1400 as a result of chantry, obit and corrody endowments.² By 1400 possibly as much as 68.7% of the Ousebridgemasters' income was committed to the salaries of city chaplains,³ although by 1440-41 this had declined dramatically to 15.3%, largely because this expenditure was then being undertaken directly by the city chamberlains at a cost of some £41 a year.⁴ Indeed it is much more difficult to establish the relationship between income and expenditure in the bridgemasters'

¹ YML, VC 6/6/1 et seq.

² See above, pp.186-187.

³ YCA, C 82.1.

⁴ YCA, C 82.10; *York City Chamberlains' Accounts*, p.23.

accounts since, once the costs of maintaining their estates were deducted, the balance was handed over to the chamberlains who controlled all other expenditure.¹ Nevertheless the pressure on the bridgemasters was acute since their contributions were the most valuable single source for the city chamberlains, and the decline in their contributions from £118 in 1433-34 to £39 in 1499 contributed to the substantial financial problems of the city chamberlains in the latter half of the fifteenth century.² By contrast the expenses of the city chamberlains remained fairly stable ranging from no less than £170 to no more than £250 over the same period,³ and as a consequence the chamberlains' accounts show an almost permanent and growing deficit which in 1486-87 reached the alarming sum of £589.⁴

In both the cases of the college of the vicars choral and the city's bridgemasters, declining rent income was a fundamental cause of their financial hardships in the fifteenth century. Moreover the accounts of the vicars choral at least, suggest that even their apparent prosperity in the late fourteenth century was rather precarious and constantly threatened

¹ *YCA, C 82.10; York City Chamberlains' Accounts*, p.xxvii.

² *Ibid.*, p.xxviii.

³ *Ibid.*, p.xxxi.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.191.

by the need to fulfill the demands of new endowments. There is thus strong circumstantial evidence that landlords did not act directly in response to simple economic forces. Landlords whose main function was the provision of spiritual and other services were committed to meet a growing spiritual demand for these services regardless of the state of the local economy, and this often placed them under special financial pressures. These same endowments also meant that institutional landlords at times had quite exceptional capital resources to invest in their estates and thereby increase their value beyond that which could have been achieved through a simple inflation of rental values.

The reaction of these landlords to economic pressures is further complicated by their increasing commitment to the maintenance of farmed property. This came to represent an increasing drain on their resources and meant that, in a period of inflation in the cost of materials and labour, landlords might reduce rents well below the level they might have reached through simple devaluation of rental values in response to weak demand, if this meant that the cost of maintenance could be met directly by the tenant. These sharp reductions at times of particular pressure demonstrate that the level of rent was often set below what would today be considered an 'economic' level. Certainly it appears that the normal endowments provided for chantries, and especially obits, were hardly ever

sufficient to meet the real costs involved in their maintenance over a prolonged period of time. Thus the vicars choral depended in the 1330s, 1360s and again in 1419-22 on quite exceptional gifts of several hundred pounds which were clearly intended to save the entire establishment from severe financial crisis as well as to fund the particular foundations concerned. Other landlords also invested sums of cash provided for endowments in the improvement of their estates. By 1435-36 the Ousebridgemasters had improved the nominal value of the Haxey endowment from a little over £10 a year to nearly £19 to meet a chantry cost of £12 a year, presumably through the investment of the 600 marks provided as part of the original endowment.¹ In a similar manner property in Skeldergate given for Hamerton's chantry on Fossbridge in 1412 was developed as a lane of nineteen tenements and cottages.² Indeed by 1440 a large part of the Ousebridgemasters' estate consisted of terraced rows of small cottages of exactly the same type of speculative development erected by the vicars choral and the parishoners of numerous city churches.

¹ YCA, C 82.6; and see above, p.194.

² YCA, G 70.30; C 82.10.

While it can be demonstrated that such investments were successful in the short term in maintaining or even boosting an institution's rent income, particularly at times of uncertainty in rent values, it is rather more difficult to assess them as long-term economic investments. Both the monies spent by the vicars choral in 1419-21 and by the bridgemasters in developing Haxey's rents between 1428 and 1435 would have taken about fifty years to show a return over the cost of their original purchase,¹ and this is discounting the cost of any repairs. In the fourteenth century investment had provided a better rate of return, but still would have been impossible without large sums of money being made available as gifts. It would have taken the vicars choral about thirty years to recoup the cost of the building of Benetplace and Cambhallgarth in the early 1360s;² and it would have taken the parishoners of St. Martin, Coneystreet about 15-20 years to recoup the 62 marks it cost to erect a row of cottages next to their church in 1335, if the rents were set at a comparable level to those of the vicars choral.³ Earlier rows built for the vicars seem to have

¹ For the vicars choral, see above, pp.216-217.

² YML, VC 6/10; VC 6/2/23-26.

³ L.F. Salzman, *Building in England down to 1540* (Oxford, 1967), pp.430-2.

been erected by the donors at their own cost.¹ The purchase of property was an equally long-term investment. One house in Thurslane, purchased in 1363-64 with the remainder of a building fund, cost about £60 including all legal charges, or about 22½ times its annual rental value.² Nearly sixty years later the cost of the purchase of three houses in Hornpotlane of £80.13s. 4d. would have taken over 13 years to recoup.³ While apparently a better investment, the cost of buying a property might nevertheless represent only part of the total cost involved, since such properties were often rebuilt.⁴ To a significant extent the prosperity of the largest institutional landlords in the city depended on the ready availability of large sums of capital made available by their patrons.

While exceptionally large donations of cash could therefore enable landlords to undertake major building projects in order to maintain and boost their income, the cost of normal repair and maintenance became an increasing problem from the later fourteenth century. One consequence of the redevelopment and building of so

¹ 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', no 135. Another row had been built for the vicars by Master John de Stamford Bridge (*Pontebellum*), a canon, before 1309 (YML, VC 6/2/3).

² YML, VC 6/10.

³ YML, VC 6/2/49, 6/1/7.

⁴ See above, p.213.'

many properties was that the landlords' financial commitment to repairs tended to increase. Just as the initial cost of new building was high, so too the cost of repairs tended to increase. On the estate of the vicars choral the proportion of the chamberlains' income from rents spent on building stores and repairs in the Pentecost term (when most repair work was carried out), increased from under 5% to over 10% during the first half of the fourteenth century, and then in the decades after the first epidemic of the Black Death increased steadily to nearer 20% by c. 1400 (Figure 5.2). By the late 1420s the establishment of an independent 'Reparelor's' account enabled the college to sustain an even higher level of expenditure on repairs, generally represented in excess of 35% of the chamberlain's income from rents in the latter half of the fifteenth century. Other landlords, while spending large sums on maintenance, were not so heavily committed. By 1440 the Ousebridgemasters were spending 26%¹ and by 1441 the keeper of the Fabric was spending the equivalent of 27% of their income from York rents on repairs in York,² while by 1444-45 the Fossbridgemasters were spending less than 6% of their rent income on maintenance.³

¹ YCA, C 82.10.

² YML, E.3/16.

³ YCA, C 80.5. In Oxford, between 1452 and 1481, Oseney Abbey was spending about 14.5% of the nominal value of its urban rents in Oxford on repairs (Butcher, *Rent and the Urban Economy*, p.37).

One reason for this apparent disparity of expenditure on repairs between landlords may have been due to the higher level of rents attained in some areas of the city's estates compared with those of the vicars choral;² but it seems likely that it may also reflect different policies in leasing land. While few original leases of property belonging to the vicars choral have survived before the sixteenth century, the terms of their leases suggest that they virtually always maintained the college's obligation to maintain and repair their tenants' property.⁴ By contrast, the mayor and commonalty were by the early fifteenth century, increasingly passing this responsibility to the tenant in return for a substantially lower rent. Thus of twenty-eight leases of city premises made between 1417 and 1424, in only twelve cases did the city reserve the obligation of maintenance to its own officials.³ Most of the properties let for rebuilding were often described as waste, yet the difference in rent was striking. One tenement was let in Northstreet for rebuilding by the tenant in 1418 for 13s. 4d. a year, and another in the same street was let the same year but

¹ See below, p.262.

² YML, VC 3/Vi 141, 166, 172, 174. These are leases of Goodramgate premises dating between 1402-19. On only one much earlier occasion in 1367, did the vicars explicitly put the burden of rebuilding the property on the tenant (VC 3/Vi 168).

³ YMB, 3, pp.56, 59, 60, 61, 63-67.

maintained by the city for 46s. 8d. a year.¹ Such reductions in rent, passing on the high costs of rebuilding decayed property to the tenant, undoubtedly alleviated a burden on the city's purse. However it was only achieved at the cost of substantially reducing the city's income from rents to an even lower level than that which it would have reached from simple devaluation.

Overall there were many ways in which the management of institutional estates in York reflected internal pressures on those institutions. The great building boom and the apparent expansion of some corporate estates, especially in the later fourteenth century, was achieved largely through the continued redevelopment of the ancient fees of those institutions and was financed largely by the exceptionally generous gifts of a few patrons who, whether merchants or canons, owed their wealth and standing to more than purely local activities. The most heartening image to emerge from this study was just how much of the city's real estate was applied to the care of the souls and bodies of the citizens and residents of York. Between 1300 and 1485 there were relatively few absentee landlords in York; nearly every tenant would have been well acquainted with their landlord. Less heartening is the realisation that

¹ *YMB.*, 3, pp.55, 56.

property in the city was hardly ever a good investment in modern terms, and the motives for investing in property sprang, not from a desire to maximise income in the short term, but to secure the maintenance of an establishment 'in perpetuity'.

TABLE 5.1: Expenditure by the vicars' officials on repairs and building work on their York estate. (YML, VC 6/2, 6/6, 6/10)

	CHAMBERLAINS' ROLLS				REPAIRERS' ROLLS				BUILDING ACCOUNTS						
	£	s	d	% ²	£	s	d	% ²	£	s	d	% ² p.a.			
1304		15	5	3.34											
1310	1	4	9½	4.19											
1312	1	10	5½	3.93											
1312-13		10	9	1.61											
1319	8	16	7½	24.09											
1328-29	1	17	10	4.95											
1331-32		17	4½	2.57											
1350	3	9	8	11.85											
1352	3	7	7½	12.50											
1352-53	3	7	7½	9.83											
1358-59	3	14	5½	10.63											
1360	10	10	6	25.42											
1361-62	5	4	11	14.36											
									1360-62	£111	3s	5d			
													£75	12s	0½d
									1362-64	£230	10s	6½d			
1362-63	2	3	4	5.47											
1363	3	18	3½	8.95											
1369	8	6	4½	12.57											
1378-79	6	19	1	9.54											
1380	35	6	1	49.92											
1382	25	8	10	35.54											
1383(p.a.)					(26	3	8	18.67)							
1389-90	9	10	11½	12.74											
1394										17	4	5½	11.46		
1395	20	6	4½ ^a	27.06					(15	11	2½ ^a	10.36)			
1398	10	0	7½	12.87											

	CHAMBERLAINS' ROLLS				REPAIRERS' ROLLS				BUILDING ACCOUNTS			
	£	s	d	% ²	£	s	d	% ²	£	s	d	% ²
												p.a.
1399	22	10	2½	27,05								
1401	17	13	0½	21,23								
1403-04	4	18	11½	6,54								
1407									62	13	1½	
1409	12	12	0½	16,04								
1415-16	3	17	8	5,05								
1416	2	1	7½	2,58								
1417	3	16	11	4,97								
1427-28					5	19	7½	3,72				
c. 1460					47	15	4½	50,26				
1471-72					33	18	4	35,68				
1496-97					22	7	10½	31,04				
1510-11					26	4	6½	33,58				
1520-21					31	3	11	48,67				

¹ The accounting terms began at Pentecost and Martinmas each year.

² Percentages are expressed as a proportion of the actual income from rents due (i.e. nominal income less decayed and defective rents).

³ The building account is also summarised within the chamberlain's account and included in that total.

⁴ Annual income.

CHAPTER SIX: RENTS AND THE PROSPERITY OF LATER-MEDIEVAL YORK

The preceding study of the fortunes of the estates of corporate landlords in the city suggests that there are several technical problems to be overcome before the evidence of urban rent accounts can be used in the assessment of urban size and prosperity. The estates of the city grew in size and value in almost equal proportion between 1377 and 1440, and the expansion of most corporate urban estates in this period seems to have been achieved by attracting large numbers of endowments, and by the judicious employment of resources in the improvement of estates.¹ Such techniques of property investment were not restricted to the large landowning corporations. Both founders of chantries in parish churches and private landlords developed their urban estates in a similar manner. Apart from the examples already cited,² in 1396 licence was granted for the erection of a row of houses in the cemetery of St. Peter-le-Willows in Walmgate, while the Clervaux family had four *domos rentales* in the same street.³ In 1384 John de Esshton's York rents included eleven cottage-

¹ See also Camsell, 'The City of Durham', Chapter 5; Mate' Property Investment by Canterbury Cathedral Priory', pp.20-21; Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, pp.196, 207-209; Keene, 'A new study of London before the Great Fire', p.16.

² See above, pp.209-210.

³ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1392-96*, p.692; NYCRO, Clervaux Cartulary, fo 79.

type properties in Micklegate and Davygate,¹ and in 1419 Miles Stapilton had fourteen cottages in Bishophill and four outside Micklegate Bar.²

Once the influence of such endowment and investment is identified, certain trends in the value of rents do seem to emerge which may shed some light on the complex problem of the nature of prosperity in the late-medieval town. In order to clarify these trends, it is necessary to assess not just the total income derived from urban estates, but to compare the movement of individual rents within those estates. From such a study it appears that York had not one, but several distinct economies, and not surprisingly, that the movement of rental values varied significantly depending on the type and location of the property let.³

¹ *YMB*, 1, p.47. Such rows were variously described as *domos rentales*, *shoppa* (or *domus*) *cum solar* (or *camera*), or *cottagis*. (Compare Winchester, Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, pp.162-165; Gazetteer, *Tenements 11, 20, 26, 32.*)

² *YMB*, 2, p.84.

³ The following survey only considers the rents of properties which were let at will from year to year, or demised for a limited period of years. (In York such rents, by the late fourteenth century were commonly described as *firma* in rent accounts .) By the early fourteenth century *redditus assisae* from freely held properties were stabilised, and new enfeoffments made on this basis were extremely rare (compare Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, p.237).

For the fourteenth century, the historian of York has again to rely largely on the rent accounts of the college of the vicars choral. On their estate in the early fourteenth century it was the largest houses which were most difficult to let; and indeed fluctuations in the college's rent income in the 1320s to 1340s were almost entirely due to problems in letting a row of substantial stone houses opposite the Bedern in Goodramgate.¹ These properties had been among the college's earliest endowments, and had originally been built as the residences of the prebendary of Wistow and of John le Romeyn Senior.² By 1300 they were generally still let to canons or to officials of the courts of York.³ During the period of the residence in York of the royal household, and the courts of Exchequer and Chancery (which often met in buildings in the Minster Close), the value of these houses was considerably increased,⁴ but after the withdrawal of the royal court in 1338 they proved increasingly difficult to let: by

¹ In Oxford it may also have been the larger holdings which were declining in value most (Butcher, 'Rent and the Urban Economy', p.22).

² 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', nos 58, 99-101; YML, L2/1 pt iv, fo 44v; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1281-92*, p.136, *1292-1301*, p.352.

³ YML, VC 6/2/3.

⁴ The Exchequer was resident in York in 1298-1305, 1319-20, 1322-23, 1327, 1333-38 and in 1392 (D.M. Broome, 'Exchequer migrations to York in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries', in *Essays in Medieval History presented to T.F. Tout* (Manchester, 1925), pp.291-292). On the same topic see Bartlett, 'The expansion and decline of York', p.20; and Prestwich, 'York Civic Ordinances, 1301', pp.1-3.

1342 the decline of the value of the vicars' rents in Goodramgate of over £3 per term was entirely accounted for by the reduction in the rents of these three properties. Such large properties were a great asset to the college's income when fully let, but could all too rapidly become a major liability. By the mid-1340s the largest property 'Cambhall',¹ was vacant, and despite significant sums spent on its repair,² it remained unlet until in 1360 it was demolished, and redeveloped as a court of eight timber-framed houses.³

TABLE 6.1: Rents recorded for a group of three stone 'halls' opposite the Bedern owned by the vicars choral⁴

					Total
Pentecost 1311	20s.	30s.	20s.	per term	70s.
Pentecost 1321	20s.	21s.	12s.	per term	53s.
Pentecost 1325	20s.	20s.	20s.	per term	60s.
Martinmas 1328-29	15s	20s	33s. 4d.	per term	68s. 4d.
Martinmas 1336-37	23s. 4d.	40s.	67s. 10d.	per term	131s. 2d
Pentecost 1342	20s.	26s. 8d.	20s.	per term	66s. 8d.
Martinmas 1344-45	20s.	20s.	(Cambhall vacant)		40s.
Pentecost 1347	15s.	26s. 8d.	(Cambhall vacant)		41s. 8d.

¹ Cambhall may have acquired its name from John de Caen, prebendary of Driffield, to whom Romeyn's house was leased from 1298-1311 (YML, VC 3/Vi 130; VC 4/1/1; VC 6/2/3).

² In Pentecost terms 1352, nearly £1 was spent on repairs to Cambhall (YML, VC 6/2/15).

³ YML, VC 6/10, and see p.211 above and p.270 below.

⁴ Derived from YML, VC 6/2/3, 9, 12; VC 4/1/3, 4, 7, 8, 9.

By contrast smaller and medium-sized properties on the vicars' estate in York largely preserved or even increased their value over the same period. Even the cellar of Cambhall, which was subdivided into four shops appropriately called the 'Dingges', maintained their value considerably better than the more salubrious property above (Table 6.2).

TABLE 6.2: Rents recorded for the 'Dingges' in Goodramgate¹

					Total
Pentecost 1311	4s.	4s.	3s,6d.	3s,6d. per term	15s.
Pentecost 1321	3s.	6s. (for two)		3s.	12s.
Pentecost 1325	3s.	3s.	3s.	3s.	12s.
Martinmas 1328-29	2s,6d.	3s.	2s,6d.	3s.	11s.
Martinmas 1336-37	3s.	3s.	3s,4d.	3s,4d, ²	12s,8d.
Pentecost 1342	3s,4d.	3s,4d.	3s,4d.	3s,4d.	13s,4d.
Martinmas 1344-45	3s,4d.	3s,4d.	(blank) ³	3s,4d.	10s.
Pentecost 1347	3s,4d.	3s,4d.	3s,4d.	(missing)	10s.

¹ As Table 6.1 above. A row of shops in Hull was also known as the 'Dings' (Horrox, *The Changing Plan of Hull*, p.75).

² Last included in rent of Cambhall.

³ 'de quadam selda sub aula ex altera parte gradus /-----/' (YML, VC 4/1/6).

Properties in Micklegate enjoyed a particularly pronounced prosperity in the first half of the fourteenth century. One larger property's farm increased by 18.6% in value between 1309 and 1342,¹ another's by 41.2%,² while the seven cottages called 'Mountsorrell' in St. Martin's Lane off Micklegate increased by nearer 60% on average.³ Although these rents then declined slightly between 1342 and 1347 they were still substantially higher than in 1309. Even in Goodramgate and Petergate, the heart of the vicars' York estate, smaller properties maintained their value better than larger ones. While there was not such a noticeable increase in the level of rents in these streets as in Micklegate, except in the particularly good season of 1336-37, all properties let for between 3s. and 11s. per term maintained their value over the period and did not decline in the 1340s.

Overall it seems undeniable that the population of tenants on the vicars' estate in York was increasing over the first half of the fourteenth century. However the increase was mostly in property at the cheaper end of the market, and in particular resulted in an

¹ From 7s. per term to 8s. 4d.

² From 12s. 3d. per term to 17s. 6d.

³ In 1309 the cottages were let at 1s. 6d., 1s. 9d., 2s. and four at 2s. 6d. each per term, a total of 15s. 3d. (YML, VC 4/1/1). By 1342 these rents had increased to 4s. 6d., 3s., 2s. 6d. and four let at 4s. each per term, a total of 26s. (YML, VC 4/1/7).

increase in demand for houses in the less central areas of their estate, in Micklegate, but also in the suburbs of Monkgate and Layerthorpe where the vicars were able to build and let new rows of cottages in the 1330s.¹ The continued prosperity of the vicars choral thus depended upon an influx of poorer tenants into their estates, and it was this on which the vicars capitalised. Indeed so poor were the inhabitants of such properties that it is difficult to identify them in any other written source. When occupations are given, infrequently, many of the tenants seem to have been employed in the building industry, in various types of service (as porters or cleaners), as well as in various aspects of the leather and clothing industries (tailors, glovers, quiltmakers, a weaver), but between a third and a half of the occupants, especially of the cheapest cottages in Aldwark, Layerthorpe and Micklegate, were women.²

The immediate consequence of the first epidemic of the Black Death in York was a general reduction in the value of rents on the vicars estates (Figure 5.1), although by 1352 thirty-one rents, out of a total of 149, were not collected at all, twenty-two being owed

¹ See above, p.208.

² For a discussion of the role of women in urban society, see P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Female Labour, Service and Marriage in the Late Medieval Urban North', *Northern History*, xxii (1986), pp.18-38.

from properties described as vacant and the rest being in arrears.¹ It was the cheapest properties which were affected most badly. Two of the vicars' rows in Aldwark were completely empty and a number of others had vacancies. Of the rents in arrears, over half were rents of assize, and in York as in Winchester, the disruption caused by the plague seems to have particularly affected the collection of rents of assize of nominal value.² Too many variables prevent the use of rentals as an accurate measure of the mortality involved in the first epidemic of the Black Death; and although the number of vacancies in 1352 on the vicars' estate would suggest a decline in the population of tenants of 13.4%, this is almost certainly an underestimate. The names recorded in the rent accounts for 1351-52 suggest that in many cases the vicars were returning to the use of a conventional list of tenants, rather than listing current occupants,³ so that the final level of unpaid rents was probably higher than that recorded. The vicars' estates, especially the cheaper properties, always had a high turn-over of tenants,⁴ but the rate of

¹ YML, VC 6/2/14, 15. For the vicars own assessment of the loss of rents resulting from the plague, see 'Vicars Choral Cartulary', pp.317-323; Gazetteer, *Tenements 15-17* (h), 21 (e), 22 (e).

² Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, pp.210, 244.

³ YML, VC 4/1/6; VC 6/2/14. (The first of these accounts has been wrongly labelled by the archivist as 1341, it is for Pentecost term 1351.)

⁴ This was also the case in Winchester (Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, p.236).

mobility appears to have increased significantly after the plague. Between 1342 and 1347 forty-seven tenants can be identified, tentatively, as having remained in occupation of their tenancy for the whole five year period; but between 1347 and 1352 only twenty-one such tenants can be identified and even this figure may include some conventional names in 1352.¹ Again mobility was highest in the case of the cheapest properties. With only four exceptions the entire population of all the vicars' rows in Micklegate, Petergate, Goodramgate, Aldwark and Layerthorpe changed between 1347 and 1352, whereas in the preceding five years about one quarter of these tenancies had remained unchanged. Although this might be taken as evidence that the plague affected the poorer classes more severely, it would be safer to assume that it was the meanest properties which were abandoned first. As in admissions to the freedom of the city, there may have been a backlog of people waiting to improve their position.² Certainly the vicars' accounts confirm the opinion that the severest mortality was caused by the 'pneumonic' or winter variety of the plague, for during the 1350s it was the cost of obits celebrated in the

¹ YML, VC 4/1/9; VC 6/2/14, 15.

² R.B. Dobson, 'Admissions to the Freedom of the City of York in the Later Middle Ages', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., xxvi (1973), p.17.

Martinmas term which increased most steeply (Figure 5.2).¹

The second major epidemic of the plague in 1361-62 clearly had a significant impact on the city, and is possibly reflected in the rather high level of decayed and defective rents recorded in Pentecost 1363.² The payment of obits in the 1360s increased particularly sharply in the Pentecost term suggesting that this epidemic may have been worst in the summer months, and therefore have had a slightly lower mortality rate.³

However, by 1364, despite the impact of the pestilence of 1361-62, rents on the vicars' estate were generally back to their pre-plague levels.⁴ By 1366 some rents had begun to rise, in particular those of the smaller cottages and shops in the more peripheral areas of the college's estates such as Mountsorrell in Micklegate, Stonegate and Petergate, Benetrent in Patrickpool, St. Andrewgate and Layerthorpe.⁵ In the

¹ J.L. Bolton, *Medieval English Economy* (1980), p.60.

² Dobson, 'Admissions to the Freedom of the City of York', p.17; A. Hamilton Thompson, 'The Pestilences of the Fourteenth Century in the Diocese of York', *Archaeological Journal*, 71 (1914), 97-154. Before 1362 decayed and defective rents had usually amounted to less than 5s. In 1363 they accounted for £1.11s. 2d. (YML, VC 6/2/23).

³ Bolton, *Medieval English Economy*, p.62; Figure 5.2.

⁴ YML, VC 4/1/13.

⁵ YML, VC 4/1/14.

central area of the estate in Goodramgate and Aldwark and the rows and closes off Goodramgate they did not begin to rise until after 1366, but by 1374 rents in this area had also risen.¹ By 1389-90 areas of growth were becoming more restricted. Between 1374 and 1389 rents only appear to have risen to a limited extent at the junction of Stonegate and Petergate and in Aldwark and Layerthorpe,² while between 1389 and 1399 there was little significant change in the value of individual rents on the estate.³ The whole period of growth was limited to the period 1364 to 1389 but within that 25 years the rise of rents had been uneven. The cottages in Mountsorrell in Micklegate had increased their value by 12.5%, while the rents of cottages in Aldwark, St. Andrewgate and Goodramgate and of some shops in Stonegate and Petergate had increased by between 40% and 53% in value. As in the first half of the century it was the rents of the smallest properties which showed the greatest sensitivity to change.⁴

¹ YML, VC 6/1/6.

² YML, VC 6/2/33.

³ YML, VC 6/2/38.

⁴ Ciffhouse, a row of five cottages in Aldwark, doubled in value. See Table 6.3.

TABLE 6.3: Examples of individual rent levels on the vicars choral's York estate¹

<u>Shops and Cottages</u> (per term)	1352	1364	1366	1373-74	1389-90	1399
'Mountsorrell' in Micklegate	3s.	4s.	4s,6d.	4s,6d.	4s,6d.	4s,6d.
Stonegate	7s.	8s.	10s.	10s.	10s.	50s, ²
Petergate (for 3 houses)	vacant	16s.	20s.	26s,8d.	23s,4d.	26s,8d.
Benetplace in Patrickpool	-	5s.	6s.	6s.	6s.	6s.
Goodranga						
Cambhallgarth ²	-	5s.	5s.	6s.	5s.	5s.
Hugaterent ²	4s.	5s.	5s.	6s,8d.	6s,8d.	6s,8d.
Aldwark						
Ludham	1s,6d.	2s,6d.	2s,6d.	3s.	3s,6d.	3s,6d.
Cliffhouse	vacant	1s.	1s.	1s,6d.	2s.	2s.
Monkgate	1s,8d.	2s,6d.	3s.	3s,6d.	3s,6d.	3s.
Layerthorpe	1s,6d.	2s.	2s,6d.	2s.	2s,6d.	2s,6d.

¹ Derived from YML, VC 6/2/15, 33, 38; VC 4/1/13, 14; VC 6/1/6.

² Individual rents in Cambhallgarth and Hugaterent varied by up to 4s.

³ For four tenements (on the site of Gazetteer, *Tenement 17*).

The movement of rents over the fourteenth century certainly suggests a degree of buoyancy in the city's economy. In particular the tendency of rents to rise, even after major epidemics of plague, suggests that such prosperity was sustained through substantial immigration, particularly of women, labourers and servants,¹ and this is further indicated by the demand for cheap housing and the high rate of turn-over of tenants of shops and cottages. If surnames can be used as a reliable guide, the toponyms recorded in the vicars' rent account for Pentecost 1371 suggests that about two-thirds of their tenants originated from within a radius of 40 miles from the city, a figure similar to that obtained from an analysis of the 1381 poll-tax return and admissions to the freedom of the city.² As in Tudor York there was a notable absence of toponyms from the West Riding beyond the Ainsty, but the occurrence of names like Ravenserodd, Wharram, Cave, Pocklington, Blaktoft, Belby, Housum, Kelk and Cliffe may suggest that immigration from the East Riding was more pronounced at

¹ In the shops and cottages of Mountsorrell, Benetplace, Goodramgate, Aldwark and Layerthorpe, about one third of the tenants were women. Where occupations of the tenants of cottages and shops are given, they include numbers of men in the building industry, tailors, a waterleder, two goldsmiths, a cook, miller, salter and women as a servant, a girdler and candle-maker (YML, VC 4/1/16).

² YML, VC 4/1/16; P. McClure, 'Patterns of Migration in the Later Middle Ages: The Evidence of English Place-Name Surnames', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, xxxii (1979), p.178; for some of the pit-falls of using toponyms as simple evidence of migration, see Goldberg, 'Female Labour, Service and Marriage', p.20.

this period than it either became later, or had been earlier.¹ This suggests that there may be some relationship between this recovery in the city's population and the declining population of some villages, such as Wharram Percy, in the East Riding.² However, such a relationship, if it existed, is still not properly understood and any discussion of this problem would need to examine it at a regional level taking into consideration the fortunes of Beverley and Hull as well as York. Elsewhere however it has become clear that urban renewal after the Black Death especially in cloth-towns like Colchester, and administrative centres like Canterbury, might have serious consequences for the depopulation of the surrounding countryside.³

Whether these movements in rent levels can be used as indicators of real population growth is more doubtful. A comparison of York rents with those of other

¹ Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp.128-129; Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.40-141; *PNERV*, *passim*.

² J.G. Hurst, 'The Wharram Research Project: Results to 1983', *Medieval Archaeology*, 28 (1984), p.102.

³ R.H. Britnell, *Growth and Decline in Colchester, 1300-1525* (Cambridge, 1986), p.160; A.F. Butcher, 'English Urban Society and the Revolt of 1381', in R.H. Hilton and T.H. Aston (eds.), *The English Rising of 1381* (Cambridge, 1984), pp.93-111; W.H. Beveridge, 'Westminster Wages in the Manorial Era', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, viii (1955), p.28; W.M. Bowsky, 'The Impact of the Black Death upon Sienese Government and Society', *Speculum*, xxxix (1964), p.26, 31-32; Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, pp.375-379.

towns suggests that York's experience was not untypical and that more than local factors may lie behind the level of rents achieved, especially in the period 1365-1385. In London, Oxford, Canterbury and Winchester rent levels were severely affected by the first epidemic of the Black Death, but by 1370 had recovered and were even increasing in value.¹ At Winchester the rents of small cottages, in particular, were buoyant and achieved similar levels to cottages in York,² while in all three of the other provincial cities the upward movement of individual rents had reached a natural ceiling by the 1390s.³

Indeed the pattern of rental values revealed on the York estate of the vicars choral bears a marked resemblance not only to the fortunes of other cities, but to the experience of large numbers of landlords throughout the country.⁴ In York, rents were perhaps sustained at a high level slightly longer into the 1390s

¹ Mate, 'Property Investment by Canterbury Cathedral Priory', p.19; Butcher, 'Rent and the Urban Economy', pp.30, 38, 42; Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, pp.237-238, 243-244.

² The mean rental value of four cottages in Tanner Row increased from 2s. 2½d. per annum in 1355-56, to 4s. in 1395-96 (Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, p.771).

³ Butcher, 'Rent and the Urban Economy', p.31; Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, p.243.

⁴ Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy*, pp.209-215; Britnell, *Growth and Decline in Colchester*, pp.150-152; J. Hatcher, *Plague, Population and the English Economy*, p.32.

than in some other areas, but even this late period of buoyancy in York rents compares with a brief period of recovery noticed elsewhere.¹

Quite certainly the increase in the level of rents in later fourteenth-century York must be set in the national context of a period of inflation of prices and wages as well as rents.² More persuasively, this inflation can be illustrated in a local context too. The rents of properties for which landlords bore the responsibility for maintenance, and which coincidentally were often occupied by builders, were most likely to reflect changes in building wage rates. Between the 1360s and 1536 the wage rates of building workers in York displayed a quite remarkable stability.³ The daily rate for master craftsmen was commonly fixed at 6d. in the summer and 5d. in the winter, while that for labourers was 4d. in the summer and 3d. to 3½d. in the winter.⁴ Although the evidence for wage rates before the first plague is not so extensive, nevertheless it appears that such high levels were never achieved between 1304 and 1331 when daily rates were commonly

¹ Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy*, p.218.

² Hatcher, *Plague, Population and the English Economy*, pp.47-54.

³ H. Swanson, *Building Craftsmen in Late Medieval York* (Borthwick Paper No 63, 1983, p.27).

½d. to 1d. lower than in the later period.¹ Similarly the prices of building materials were subject to some degree of inflation, although a comparison of such prices is difficult to assess accurately, since the earlier accounts do not itemise purchases of stores in a manner which can be easily compared with later accounts.² It accordingly seems extremely unlikely that rising rents in later fourteenth-century York were achieved as a result of increasing population pressure. This conclusion is to some extent reinforced by the evidence that by contrast with the rents of shops and cottages, the rent of two grain-mills in Layerthorpe, never, in the later fourteenth century, achieved the same high level which they had reached in the 1340s,³

¹ YML, VC 6/2/1-11 (*Expense minute; Emendatio domorum, pavimenti, and edificiorum*).

² YML, VC 6/2, VC 6/6, VC 6/10. The cost of some materials fluctuated more than others. Tubs of lime seemed to have consistently cost from 10d. to 1s. plus carriage throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Tiles and nails however seem to have risen substantially in price between the early fourteenth and fifteenth century, although costs could vary very significantly depending on the quantity and place of purchase. Thorold Rogers detected an increase in the cost of building materials of at least 50% in the second half of the fourteenth century, with a continuing rise after 1400 (J.E. Thorold Rogers, *A History of Agriculture and Prices in England*, vol I (Oxford, 1866), pp.515-521, vol IV (Oxford, 1882), pp.468-473).

³ Of the many wind, water and horse mills in York, records of the level of farms negotiated only survive for the two mills in Layerthorpe owned by the vicars choral. For other mills in York, see Raine, *Medieval York*, p.283-284; K.J. Allison, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.506-508; YCA, C.82.10 'Castlegate'; York Merchant Adventurers' Cartulary, fo 99v-110.

perhaps suggesting a decline in the profits from and demand for grain production.¹

Table 6.4:

Farm of Spitelcroft wind-mills in Layerthorpe²

1321-29	1342	1344-47	1351-59
33s. 4d.	50s.	46s. 8d.	33s. 4d.
1364	1366-88	1388-95	1397
20s. 8d.	33s. 4d.	35s.	26s. 8d.

After 1401 the vicars' rent income began to decline as the level of decayed and defective rents increased. An attempt was made to write-off the accumulated level of decays between 1409 and 1415 but the level of unpaid rents continued to rise. Much the commonest reason for the decline in rent income was the inability to find tenants. Of the reasons given for uncollected rents in 1421-22, twenty-two were described as being vacant, twelve were in decay or had been

¹ Hatcher, *Plague, Population and the English Economy*, p.50.

² Derived from YML, VC 4/1/3-16, VC 6/2/9-36.

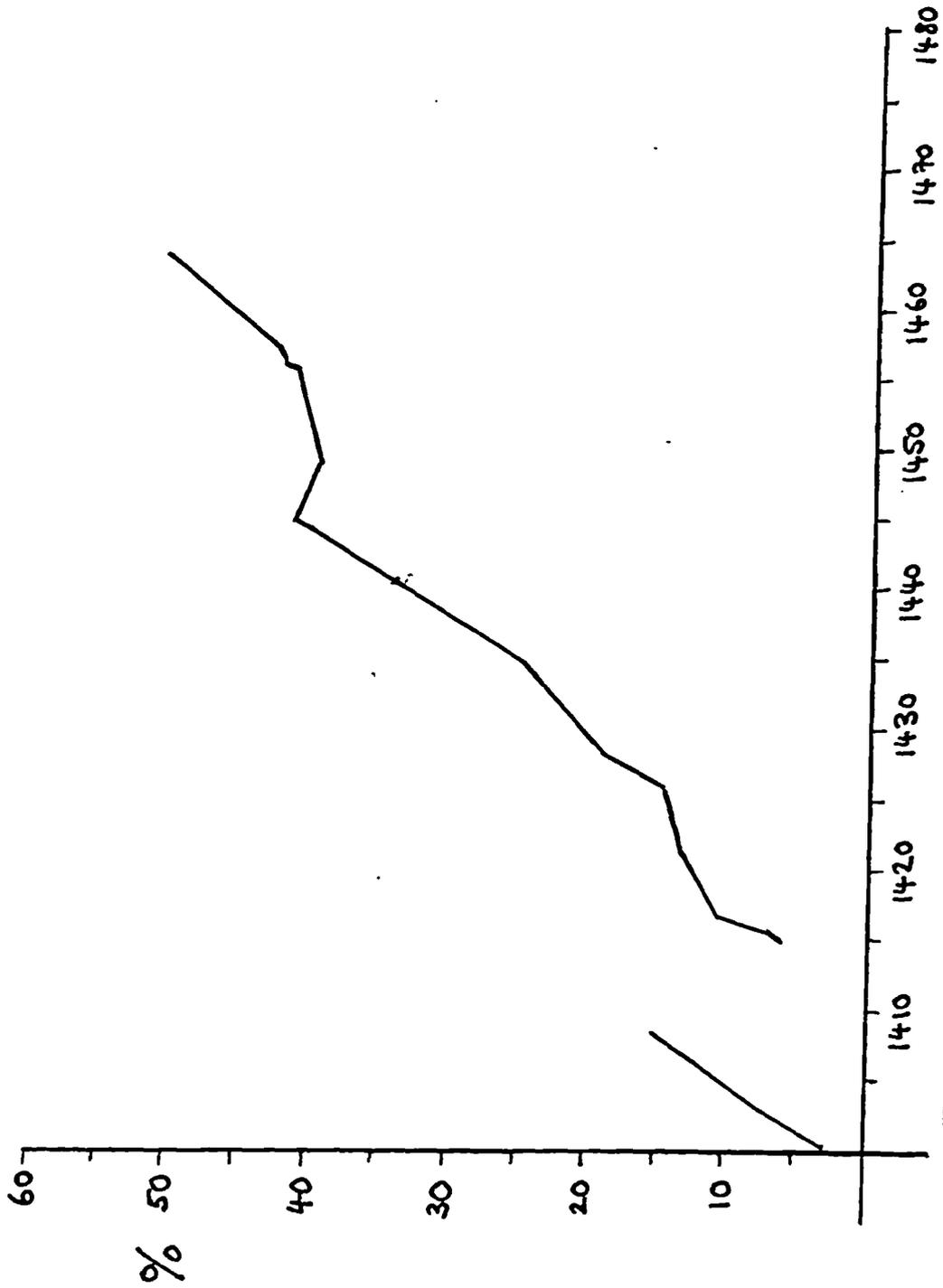


Figure 6.1. Decayed and defective rents on the vicars' estate, expressed as a percentage of their nominal income from York rents.

reduced in value and nine small rents of assize were not collected because they were included in a farm paid for the same property.¹ Only two rents were not collected because the tenant *furtive recessit*, and four uncollected rents were old debts from previous terms. This impression that the major problem facing landlords was a lack of tenants is also suggested by the continued reduction in the size of the vicars' rent account as certain properties ceased to be accounted for altogether.² As in 1352 and 1363 decayed and defective rents tended to rise most steeply in the years following authenticated outbreaks of epidemic disease.³ In 1391 'eleven thousand' people were said to have been buried in York following an outbreak of the plague and further epidemics were noted or in the north in 1399, 1407, 1413 and 1421, while throughout the 1420s and 1430s there were a number of major epidemics.⁴ The 1440s may have brought some respite in the north, but in 1462-63 a 'pox' was reported in the north country and in 1464 there was a renewed national epidemic of plague.⁵

¹ YML, VC 6/2/49.

² See above, p.217.

³ Figure 6.1.

⁴ C. Creighton, *A History of Epidemics in Britain*, 1 (2nd ed., 1965), pp.220-221; R.S. Gottfried, *Epidemic Disease in Fifteenth Century England* (Leicester, 1978), pp.47-48; Dobson, 'Admissions to the Freedom of the City of York', p.17.

⁵ Creighton, *A History of Epidemics*, 1, p.230; Gottfried, *Epidemic Disease in Fifteenth Century England*, p.49.

Professor Dobson has already suggested that entry rates recorded in admissions to the freedom were especially high in the years following these epidemics.¹ It also appears that the sharpest increase in the recorded levels of unpaid and devalued rents followed a notably similar pattern. Although rent values did not apparently fall after 1391, that epidemic may have contributed to a general levelling off in rent values bringing to a close the previous period of inflation.² After 1400, however, particularly sharp increases in the level of decayed and defective rents occurred in 1409, between 1415³ and 1422, and between 1426 and 1444.⁴ Thereafter there was a period of stability, perhaps coinciding with the respite from serious epidemics, until the early 1460s when both decayed and defective rents had begun to rise again.

Whereas York's population had at least succeeded in renewing itself after earlier epidemics in the fifteenth century, it appears that such high levels of immigration could no longer be sustained. Bartlett's suggestion that the population of York increased in the latter half of the fourteenth century and remained

¹ Dobson, 'Admissions to the Freedom of the City of York', p.17.

² The presence of the court in York in 1392 may also have helped maintain rent levels.

³ Although all decayed rents were written off between 1409 and 1415, new defective rents in 1415-16 amounted to nearly £5 (YML, VC 6/2/45).

⁴ Figure 6.1.

static until after 1420, only then beginning to decline, does not seem to be sustained by a closer scrutiny of the vicars' accounts.¹ Much of the vicars' prosperity in the latter part of the fourteenth century was due to an exceptionally high level of endowment coupled with some degree of inflation which was by no means peculiar to York. Checks on this prosperity were already evident by the 1390s and after 1401 their continued inability to attract tenants to fill vacancies on their estate suggests that the city's population was already being seriously eroded. Unlike the period of inflation in rents in the later fourteenth century, this new period of declining rental values cannot be explained in the context of a general deflation in wages and prices, for as has already been noted, local building wages and material costs remained fairly stable throughout the fifteenth century.² This disparity may explain, together with administrative changes, why the vicars sustained such a relatively high level of expenditure on repairs and building in the fifteenth century.³

The decline of rents in York was again not untypical of a decline in other towns. In Winchester, Oxford, Canterbury, Durham and Newcastle the level of

¹ Bartlett, 'The Expansion and Decline of York', pp.25, 28.

² See above, p.251.

³ See above, p.235.

unpaid rents accumulated in the first half of the fifteenth century, although it would appear that the rate of decline was more pronounced in the northern towns than, for example, in Winchester and Oxford.¹ York's experience was undoubtedly again part of a much broader trend, reflecting a regional shift in wealth which in turn reflected a national decline in population.²

It has already been suggested that at least part of the decline in the income of York's landlords from urban rents was due not just to changes in the overall demand for property, although this was clearly important, but also in administrative changes in the running of their estate. The granting of building leases by the city corporation for example, was doubtless partly a response to the problems of dilapidations in vacant tenements, but it did also result in the negotiation of lower levels of rents.³

¹ Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, p.210; Butcher, 'Rent and the Urban Economy', p.31; Camsell, 'The City of Durham', p.149; Butcher, 'Rent and Population in Late Medieval Newcastle', pp.67-77.

² C. Phythian-Adams, 'Urban Decay in Late Medieval England', in Abrams and Wrigley (eds.), *Towns in Societies*, pp.163-166; Hatcher, *Plague, Population and the English Economy*, pp.36-47.

³ See above, p.232.

The increase in the income of the Fossbridgemasters between 1409 and 1444 also suggests that part of some landlords' problems stemmed from lack of capital from new endowments.¹ This point should not be over-emphasised, especially since the new investments made by the vicars in 1419-1422 brought such a poor rate of return.² Yet a more detailed study of rent levels does suggest that despite declining population, several areas of the city remained prosperous into the second half of the fifteenth century.

¹ See above, p.219.

² See above, p.228.

Table 6.5: Decayed and defective rents on the Ousebridgemasters' estate in 1440-41, expressed as a percentage of nominal rent income.¹

	% Nominal Rent Income	Numbers of Properties
Skeldergate/ Clementhorpe	50%	29
The Water Lanes/ Castlegate/Coppergate	47%	25
Micklegate	(27%)	9
Thursdaymarket	29%	16
Blossom Street/Tofts	26%	49
Coneystreet	19%	20
Walmgate and Fishergate	19%	18
Ousegate/Colliergate	16%	33
Bootham Bar Ward	11%	44
Ousebridge, south side	6%	25
Ousebridge, north side	5%	19
Northstreet	2%	16

¹ Derived from YCA, C 82.10.

As in the fourteenth century it was the smallest and cheapest properties whose rental values were most responsive to change after 1400, and which declined most sharply in value. On the estate of the Ousebridgemasters by 1440-41 decayed and defective rents amounted to 26% of their nominal income from rents but three districts, in particular in Toft Green, Skeldergate and the Water Lanes off Castlegate, were particularly badly affected. In both Skeldergate and Toft Green there were large numbers of cottages built in rows and closes off the main street and mostly let at a rent of between 2s. and 8s. a year. Of 30 properties in Skeldergate no less than 14 were described as vacant, including the whole of a chantry close known as Hamerton Lane, except for a few of the cheapest cottages. *Ratonraw* in Toft Green was largely empty, with only one of ten houses there fully occupied all year.¹ Similarly in the Water Lanes, another area with a high proportion of cheap properties let for between 3s. and 6s. 8d. a year, several were described as vacant, although two substantial houses, in Castlegate, nominally let for about £3 a year, were also both empty. By contrast the shops on Ousebridge, many of them let for £1 and more, and the moderately prosperous houses in Northstreet let for between 13s. 4d. and £2.10s. had scarcely declined in value at all. A similar picture is found on the

¹ YCA, C 82.10; Table 6.5.

estates of the vicars choral. Above all it was the districts of cheaper cottages, shops and houses in the rows erected in Aldwark and in the closes of small houses off Goodramgate, in Patrickpool and the Water Lanes, which both by 1421-22 and in 1449 had declined most sharply in value.¹

Table 6.6: Decayed and defective rents on the vicars choral estate in 1449²

(major concentrations of property only)

	% Nominal Rent Income	Numbers of Tenants
Benetrent in Patrickpool	73%	9
Camhallgarth/Hugaterent and Aldwark	66%	37
Water Lanes	54%	6
Petergate/Stonegate	45%	24
Goodramgate	44%	33
Minster Close	33%	6
Skeldergate/Micklegate	32%	13
Eastern suburbs	25%	19

¹ YML, VC 6/2/49; Table 6.6.

² Derived from YML, VC 6/2/54.

Thus the vicars choral, who drew a larger proportion of their income from such properties than did the city's bridgemasters or the keeper of the Fabric, suffered a much more serious decline in their income. To some extent the bridgemasters could still depend on the shops on the two bridges bringing in fairly high rents which compensated for the decline in income from their cheaper properties, while the estate of the Fabric in any case had relatively few properties let for less than 10s. a year, and a more even distribution across the central area of the city.¹ What is most apparent however is that all these landlords who had invested heavily in the construction of rows of small cottages suffered most severely from a decline particularly in this sector of the population.

Most importantly this marked disparity in the fortunes of different localities and different types of property within York in both the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries raises important questions about the nature of prosperity in the later medieval city. A.R. Bridbury has suggested that despite a substantial

¹ In 1444-45 the Fabric had 13 tenants in the Close, 32 in Petergate, 15 in Loplane, 8 in the Mercery and Jubbergate and 22 in Pavement, Coppergate and the Shambles. The level of decay in all these areas was between 14 and 29% (YML, E 3/17).

decline in population, individual merchants and craftsmen may have been more prosperous than their predecessors before the pestilences, and certainly one way of understanding the nature of urban prosperity would be an examination of individual standards of living.¹ Housing is one important element in the standard of living and the York evidence suggests that standards of accommodation were improving in the fifteenth century. Not only were landlords spending more on repairs but there is some evidence to suggest that they may have been building to a higher standard in order to attract and retain tenants. In 1399 and 1401 the vicars were adding tile and plaster chimneys to some of their houses,² and a century later they were still prepared to invest heavy sums in order to secure a tenant, and promised Thomas Rawson, a baker, as a condition of his farm of a house in Goodramgate, that they would build a chimney, cast two chamber floors in plaster and have an oven made at their own cost.³ More significantly the decline in population in the fifteenth century probably allowed more space for the remaining occupants. Excavation in Hornpotlane suggested that

¹ A.R. Bridbury, 'English Provincial Towns in the Later Middle Ages', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, xxxiv (1981), pp.3-4.

² YML, VC 6/2/38, 44. In Winchester such ordinary houses did not acquire brick chimneys until the sixteenth century (Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, p.178).

³ YML, VC 3/Vi 172.

some of the smaller premises which had spread back along the lane in the thirteenth century were abandoned during the fifteenth century,¹ and this confirms the impression from the rent accounts that it was especially the small cottages built in crowded courtyards and down narrow side lanes which were most likely to decline in value and fall vacant. This may have allowed some tenants the opportunity to amalgamate two houses into one. Thus in 1449 only eight properties were listed in Benetrent although originally twelve houses had been built there and this reduction was partly due to at least two tenants renting more than one house.² Similar amalgamations can be found in Goodramgate and Hugaterent. By 1474 the reduction in the size of the vicars' rows and closes was even more pronounced. Only five tenants were listed in Benetrents, the cottages in St. Andrewgate and Aldwark were held by only 15, instead of 25, tenants; Hugaterent was reduced to 4 out of an original 10 tenancies and similarly Camhallgarth had only 4 instead of 8 occupants.³ While some of this reduction in numbers of dwellings and premises resulted in tenements becoming vacant altogether (and complaints about the dereliction of urban tenements are now famous), it also seems possible that some of the

¹ Gazetteer, *Tenements* 41-43.

² YML, VC 6/2/54.

³ YML, VC 6/2/63.

reduction in numbers of dwellings was achieved because it became possible for tenants to rent at least two houses for the price of one or even less.¹

It is certainly quite a striking contrast that the Ousebridgemasters by 1440-41 were unable to let cottages in Skeldergate costing only 6s. or less a year but were easily able to find tenants for shops on the adjoining Ousebridge which might cost well in excess of £1. A similar disparity existed in fifteenth century Cheapside where some small shops were abandoned or amalgamated while others in more desirable locations actually increased in value.² Such variations clearly not only reflected rising expectations of standards of accommodation, but also reflected the differing fortunes of various sectors of the city's economy. Unfortunately rent accounts rarely give a precise indication of the occupations of tenants, but where their occupations can be identified they tend to confirm the occupational topography of the city already described by Dr. Heather Swanson.³ Petergate was one of the wealthiest districts. The parishes of Holy Trinity, King's Court

¹ Gazetteer, *Tenements* 32, 41-43; Dobson, 'Urban Decline in Late Medieval England', pp.11-12; Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, pp.176-177; Palliser, *Tudor York*, p.214.

² Keene, 'A New Survey of London before the Great Fire', p.18.

³ Swanson, 'Crafts and Craftsmen in Late Medieval York', pp.453-461.

and St. Michael-le-Belfrey were quite consistently ranked among the wealthiest parishes in the city in local subsidy assessments and mercers, goldsmiths and members of the civic élite were particularly prominent residents.¹ Another almost equally prosperous area was the district around Ousebridge and in Northstreet where prominent merchants, such as Nicholas Blackburn and John Aldstanemore, lived while John Gisburne, mayor of York in 1371 and 1381-82, lived nearby in Micklegate.² Among the city's 45 tenants on Ousebridge in 1440-41 there were four barbers, five glovers, two cutlers, two fletchers, one furbisher, two card-makers, four mercers or chapmen and one scribe and a chaplain. These were the sort of tenants who could afford the markedly high rents of the mid-fifteenth century and certainly gives an impression of Ousebridge as the Bond Street of medieval York where the well-equipped gentleman, or merchant, could acquire the necessary luxuries of life.³

By contrast the areas which were declining most may have been those which were closely associated with the city's ailing cloth industry. The parishes of Skeldergate were perhaps characterised by the relatively

¹ *YMB*, 1, pp.178-179; *YMB*, 111, pp.184-185; *York city Chamberlains' Rolls*, pp.49-53; Palliser, *Tudor York*, p.139; *Gazetteer*, *passim*; and see below, p.283.

² *YMB*, 3, pp.56, 72-73, 201.

³ *YCA*, C 82.10.

poor homes of textile workers who tended to live in parishes dispersed around the fringes of the city such as those of Bishophill Senior and Junior.¹ Within the Old Baile in Bishophill there were tenements with tenting frames by the 1250s,² but by the fifteenth century properties to the west of Skeldergate were frequently described as gardens, and the ease with which both merchant and later gentleman landowners were able to buy up and amalgamate quite large groups of tenements suggests that the industrial use of the area was waning.³ In 1492 Bishophill Senior was one of only four city parishes which had its contribution to the subsidy reduced because of the increased poverty of the parish.⁴

Across the river from Skeldergate the district of the Water Lanes was also declining particularly rapidly, and the joint decay of these two river-side districts surely indicates a decline in shipping and associated industries. It is notable that Dr. Swanson found very few craftsmen's wills associated with the parish of St. Mary, Castlegate, and it is certainly possible that this

¹ Swanson, 'Crafts and Craftsmen of Late Medieval York', p.461. Of twenty wills belonging to craftsmen within the parish of Bishophill Senior between c. 1320 and 1534, nine belonged to members of the poorer textile crafts, such as weaver, dyer, fuller or tapiter.

² BL, Cotton MS Nero D iii, fo 81.

³ *YMB*, 3, p.84; *YMB*, 2, pp.129-131; Chatsworth House, Hardwick MS 20, fos 107-113v; and see below, pp.272-275.

⁴ *YCR*, 2, pp.84-85.

was a district in which many poorer craftsmen such as porters lived, since so much of their work was associated with the carriage of goods from the staithes by Ousebridge.¹ Two porters, one glover and one cordwainer are the only occupations given for tenants in this district, and the ship-repairing industry was based near here beneath the Castle walls.²

It would be wrong however to emphasise this occupational zoning too strongly. Above all it seems to have been the poorer type of accommodation which was declining fastest, wherever it was located in the city. It has already been suggested that these cheaper cottages were likely to be occupied by labourers, servants, builders, weavers, tailors, and especially significant numbers of women.³ Indeed it was just these kind of occupations which showed less obvious concentrations of residence in the small numbers of wills they left, but were widely dispersed through the city.⁴ As in early sixteenth-century Coventry, although there were distinct and recognisable areas of working-

¹ *YMB*, 1, p.42; *YMB*, 2, p.41; *YCR*, 2, p.122; Palliser, *Tudor York*, p.161.

² *YCA*, C 82.10; *YMB*, 2, p.71. In 1428 the parish of St. Mary, Castlegate ranked sixteenth, or about half-way down, the subsidy assessments (*YMB*, 3, pp.184-185).

³ See above, p.242.

⁴ Swanson, 'Crafts and Craftsmen in Late Medieval York', p.454.

class housing behind the major streets and tucked down alley-ways, as well as areas of prosperous merchants' houses around the main market places and crucial crossing points in the city, nevertheless rich and poor could also live in close proximity.¹ Thus the solid merchant houses of King's Court were only a street away from the cottages of Aldwark, and a similar contrast was apparent between the proximity of the most expensive shops in the city on Ousebridge to some of the cheaper cottages in alleys off Skeldergate.

The disproportionate decline in these two types of accommodation in the fifteenth century, suggests a strong latent demand for the better properties. Between 1399 and 1474 the ratio between the rent of a poor cottage and a good shop might change from about 1:5.5 to 1:7.5² and all the evidence suggests that the luxury and professional crafts remained relatively buoyant in the later fifteenth century.³ The corporations, who had invested so heavily in cheap housing at a time when York's industry was sustained by a constant flow of poor labourers from the countryside, found it increasingly

¹ C. Pythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City* (Cambridge, 1979), pp.164-166.

² YML, VC 6/2/38, 63. The average annual rent of a shop in Stonegate in 1399 was 31s. and in 1474, 20s. The average annual rent of a cottage in St. Andrewgate was 5s. 8d. in 1399 and 2s. 8d. in 1474.

³ Swanson, 'Crafts and Craftsmen in Late Medieval York', Conclusion.

difficult to make ends meet. The vicars choral had radically changed the appearance and character of Goodramgate and Aldwark in the fourteenth century, by the demolition of old stone houses which by then may have been up to two hundred years old, and their replacement with rows of timber-framed cottages.¹ In the fifteenth century they were clearly attempting to modernise their housing stock but a lack of tenants coupled with a lack of significant capital made it an almost impossible task. However not all residents of York shared the special problems of the corporate landlord and their plight should not be interpreted as indicative of the city's fortunes as a whole.

¹ The cottages erected in the 1360s were certainly timber-framed. Earlier rows may have been less substantially built (YML, VC 6/10).

CHAPTER SEVEN; CITIZENS, TENANTS AND LANDLORDS

So far this study has concentrated on the estates of the larger institutional landlords in York between the Norman Conquest and the beginning of the Tudor regime. This attention is justified both by the preponderance of documentary sources preserved from their archives, and by the size of their estates and their influence as landlords within the city. Their influence over their tenants was felt not just in the increasing economic interest they took in the administration of their estates but also in their rights of jurisdiction over their tenants. The interests of institutional lords were thus fundamental to the development of the city, in particular to the development of civic government, but also influenced the development of the fabric of city housing and streets. However it is proper to redress the balance by considering the wealth and status of private landlords and tenants and their influence upon the city.

Like the ecclesiastical corporations the property-owning interests of private landlords were almost never restricted to property in the city, although it is only their urban estates which will be considered here.¹ Among such landlords were prominent members of the court and local aristocracy. Some, like Hugh the Despenser

¹ For a discussion of rural property belonging to townsmen see Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.45-46, 112-113.

the younger, seem to have acquired property in the city which was of little value or use to them,¹ but others, like the monasteries of Yorkshire, deliberately acquired a York estate in order to have a hospice in the city. The Percy and Neville Inns first recorded in 1352 and 1406 were almost opposite each other in Walmgate near Fossbridge and are the best known examples of such aristocratic residences in the city.² Other Yorkshire families such as the Scropes of Bolton and Masham maintained houses in the city,³ and in 1334 John Clervaux of Croft reserved a right of lodging and stabling in his house in Goodramgate.⁴ Other visitors to the city might make use of monastic hospices. In 1481 William Thwing lodged with the Prior of Bridlington in Aldwark, while some of the dean and chapter's houses in the Minster Close and in Petergate may have been used for similar purposes.⁵

Just as the houses of merchants and some craftsmen tended to be concentrated in particular areas of the city,⁶ so it is possible that the town houses of the

¹ *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous*, 3, p.210.

² Raine, *Medieval York*, pp.108-109; PRO, E.326/9425; *YMB*, 2, p.130.

³ *YMB*, 2, pp.29, 97; *Yorks. Deeds*, 6, pp.170-171, and see below, p.273.

⁴ NYCRO, Clervaux Cartulary, fo 89v.

⁵ YCR, 2, p.41; *Gazetteer, Tenements 12, 13*.

⁶ Swanson, 'Crafts and Craftsmen in Late Medieval York', pp.443-454; and see below, p.283.

gentry tended to be located in the less densely developed areas of the city away from the major thoroughfares and industrial areas. In Bishophill, for example, there seems to have been a particular concentration of gentry-owned properties, at least some of which can be certainly identified as their permanent or temporary residences. In 1314 the Scropes of Bolton held a tenement of Bolton Priory in Bishophill, three years before beginning their acquisition of a site for their new town residence next to St. Martin's church in Micklegate.¹ In Littlegate John de Walkingham, knight, the Mowbrays of Easby in Cleveland and Ranulph de Whitchurch had tenements, while Sir Thomas Ughtred owned some property in Bishophill Senior by 1353.² In 1392 Sir William Plumpton and his wife Alice, daughter of John de Gisburn, a former mayor of York, inherited her father's property in Skeldergate and Bishophill as well as a lodging chamber and a share in the garden of Gisburn's capital messuage in Micklegate.³ Lord Roos also had some gardens on Bishophill, and Ralph earl of Westmorland had a garden with a dovecot on the south-east side of (modern) Carr's Lane.⁴ In 1431 John

¹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1313-17*, p.166; *Yorks. Deeds*, 7, p.188.

² PRO, E.210/6446, C.143/229/20; *YMB*, 3, pp.3, 8-9, 37-38; Chatsworth House, Hardwick MS 20, fos 107-109.

³ *YMB*, 3, pp.72-73.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.84; *YMB*, 2, pp.129-131.

Thwaites of Denton, who was retained by the city as a lawyer from at least 1433 to 1469, bought a block of six tenements which extended from Skeldergate to Bishophill Senior and maintained there a residence which was later to be inherited by the Fairfaxes of Denton and was rebuilt in the seventeenth century as one of the most imposing residences in the city.' Next to Thwaites' property in Skeldergate another group of seven tenements belonged to the family of Alexander Neville of Thornton Bridge between at least 1404 and 1478.² At least two generations of the family lived there for both Alexander and his son William were buried in the neighbouring church of St. Mary, Bishophill Senior.³ Finally Elizabeth Sewerby, widow of William Sewerby and daughter of Sir Henry Vavasour of Haslewood also seems to have been living in Bishophill at the time of her death in 1468.⁴

By contrast with the main street of Micklegate and Skeldergate, where merchant landowners were much more

¹ Chatsworth House, Hardwick MS 20, fo 113r-v; *YMB*, 2, p.133; *York City Chamberlains' Accounts*, pp.12-125, *passim*; Drake, *Eboracum*, p.269.

² *Yorks. Deeds*, 1, p.217. Remains of a substantial house of late medieval date were found in excavations there.

³ *Testamenta Eboracensia*, ii, pp.207-209.

⁴ *Testamenta Eboracensia*, iii, pp.161-168. This inventory describes a particular well-appointed house with a hall, chamber and outbuildings as well as a well-equipped chapel, but, although the inventory was drawn up by three citizens of York, it is not clear where this house was.

prominent by the fifteenth century, Bishophill thus seems to have been increasingly dominated by gentry households at a time when it was perhaps declining in commercial importance. Other areas close to the city perimeter may have been similarly occupied. The Bigod's house was in Peaseholme Green and property nearby in Aldwark described as 'Pertrehall' and belonging to Godfrey de Meaux in 1311 may also have been a town residence for a gentry family.' The inescapable conclusion seems to be that the gentry were prepared to acquire land in declining industrial, or relatively unpopulated areas of the city which were less attractive to merchant landowners and not dominated by ecclesiastical estates.

Apart from town houses and lodgings, landowners from outside the city often acquired property in York through marriage or inheritance. The *mansiones* in York given to Norman knights before 1086 rarely formed the basis of later medieval estates since they were largely alienated to the church in the early twelfth century.² However, the church of St. Martin in Micklegate, which belonged to Erneis de Burun in 1086 still belonged to his descendants, the Trussebut family, in the early

¹ *Leland's Itinerary of England and Wales*, vol 1, L. Toulmin-Smith (ed.) (1907), p.55; PRO, C.134/20/17.

² See above, pp.144-149, 151, 157-159, 161.

fourteenth century.¹ However such continuity was unusual and for the most part estates acquired by gentry families were either inherited from earlier generations of the family who had been citizens of York, or by marriage.

Both the estates of the Fairfax family of Walton, and of the Clervaux family of Croft were inherited from the families of William Fairfax, one of the last reeves of York in King John's reign, and of his son-in-law Robert Clervaux, citizen of York.² The two families were related by marriage again in the later thirteenth century, and in both cases they had acquired a significant proportion of their York estates by marriage to other prominent families of York's civic elite.³ However by the mid-fourteenth century neither family resided permanently in the city, and although the *redditus assisae* owed from their urban property became increasingly worthless, some part of their York

¹ Tillott, in *VCHY City of York*, p.388.

² BL, Add. MS Egerton 2147, fos 3v *et seq.*; NYCRO, Clervaux Cartulary, fos 76-110; *Yorks. Deeds*, 6, p.180; Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.45-47.

³ The Fairfaxes were related to the families of Adam Flur, Nicholas de Bugthorpe, Henry de Sexdecimvallibus and John de Camera by marriage. The Clervaux were also related by marriage to Henry de Sexdecimvallibus, Adam le Cerf, and Thomas de Stodley. Both families' estates had significant holdings in Blossomgate, around Ousebridge and in the area between Castlegate, Jubbergate and the Shambles. In addition the Clervaux had significant holdings east of York in Monkgate and Jewbury, largely acquired by William Clervaux by his marriage to a daughter of Thomas de Stodley around c. 1300.

inheritances still retained some value in the early fifteenth century. In 1402 Richard Fairfax of Walton still had a rent of 26s. 8d. from a messuage in Nessgate,¹ and in the early fifteenth century John Clervaux of Croft used his inherited lands in Monkgate as a dowry for his daughter, Elisabeth, on her marriage to William de Levesham, a citizen and merchant of York.²

This last example neatly illustrates the point that at the highest levels of the civic elite it is virtually impossible to draw an exact distinction between gentry and citizens in their interest in the ownership and exploitation of York estates, as both were likely to use the acquisition of property to secure marriages and provide an income, as well as for the endowment of religious institutions and the provision of a city residence.

No estate of a private citizen in York was ever comparable to those of some of the citizens of London who were able to amass rent rolls of city properties worth in excess of £50, or even £100, a year, and indeed, at every level the accumulation of capital by York citizens was considerably more modest than that

¹ BL, Add. MS Egerton 2147, fo 74.

² NYCRO, Clervaux Cartulary, fo 95.

possible in London.¹ Yet even in London such valuable private estates were rare, for in 1412 the great majority of citizen landowners (87%) had urban estates worth less than £10 a year.² Similarly in later medieval Winchester and Oxford, the property interests of most individuals did not extend beyond the house in which they lived. Less than thirty out of 8,500 property holders in Winchester had more than ten properties, and an even smaller number accumulated city estates worth more than £15 a year.³ In Oxford also less than 3% of the property owners taxed in 1312 had more than £15 a year in rents.⁴ In a group of west midland towns Professor Rodney Hilton found so little evidence of a concentration of urban properties in the hands of private individuals between the later thirteenth and fifteenth centuries that he concluded that "it would not seem that the net incomes from property would be very important to the individuals concerned."⁵

It is perhaps not surprising that the estates accumulated by York citizens in the later middle ages

¹ S. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300-1500* (Michigan, 1948), p.120; Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.109-110.

² Thrupp, *Merchant Class of Medieval London*, p.125.

³ Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, pp.218, 225.

⁴ Butcher, 'Rent and the Urban Economy', p.14.

⁵ Hilton, 'Some Problems of Urban Real Property', pp.334-336.

fell roughly in between the values of those of the citizens of London, and Winchester or Oxford. Within the city the estates of private landowners could not rival, in size or value, those of the wealthier landowning institutions such as St. Mary's Abbey, St. Leonard's Hospital or the vicars choral, but they might compare very favourably in value with those of the lesser city landowning institutions such as the more distant religious houses and the estates of parish chantries and the smaller local hospitals. In York, as in Winchester and London, the vast majority of inhabitants, whether tenants or freeholders, only enjoyed any title to the property in which they lived. However some indication of the size of the urban estates of the wealthier citizen landlords is given by the results of inquisitions *ad quod dampnum* conducted in the city between 1304 and 1413 into the value of lands remaining to the donor after land had been alienated in mortmain.¹ The suspiciously rounded values given in these assessments mean that they can only be used as a rough estimate of private property holdings,² and, naturally, since they largely describe the estates of

¹ PRO, C.143; Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, p.231.

² Valuations of land alienated in mortmain usually represented the net value after all obligations had been met. While corporations acquiring land might seek to have it under-valued, there is some evidence, especially in the reign of Richard II, that the crown might have been trying to raise its income from fines, and possibly land might have been over-valued (Raban, *Mortmain Legislation and the English Church*, pp.64, 68-71).

those able to endow chantries, they only refer to the holdings of wealthier individuals. Nevertheless, even at this level of society, only 28% (19) of all the citizens examined whose estates were valued, held property in York worth more than £10 a year, and in four cases this is almost certainly an exaggeration of individual wealth since the estates of executors may have been included as well.

The wealthiest property-owning individuals were all mayors of York. Professor Miller has suggested that the fourteenth century witnessed something of a change in the character of the mayoralty as *viri hereditarii*, or men of property, like the Selbys and Langtons were replaced by merchants as the normal occupants of the office after 1363.¹ However if anything the mayors of York in the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, while clearly engaged in trade, seem to have drawn even more income from property than did their predecessors. In 1383 Thomas de Hewom's York estate was worth £20. 1s.² By 1395 Robert de Holme's urban estate had grown from £11 assessed value in 1361 to £21. 6s. 8d.,³ and the widow of Ralph Horneby's York property was worth £25.13s. 4d. in 1379.⁴ The wealthiest urban estate of

¹ Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, p.711.

² PRO, C.143/402/31. Hewom was mayor in 1374.

³ PRO, C.143/341/15, 424/5. Holme was mayor in 1368.

⁴ PRO. C.143/394/33. Horneby was mayor in 1376.

all belonged to Isolde the widow of John de Acastre and was valued at £32.13s. 4d. in 1383.¹ All these estates were thus larger than those of Nicholas de Langton senior (assessed at £14 in 1308),² Nicholas de Langton junior (assessed at £9 in 1327),³ John son of John de Langton (assessed at £13.10s. in 1413),⁴ William son of Nicholas de Selby (assessed at £8.19s. in 1339),⁵ or Roger Basy (assessed at £14 in 1310).⁶ Like their predecessors the later mayors also invested in county properties,⁷ and their successors in office invested equally heavily in town and country property in the fifteenth century. William de Selby's will proved in 1427, left an estate in the city consisting of over 14 tenements, various shops and two crofts as well as £5.14s. in rents in seventeen different streets in the city.⁸ William Ormseved's and William Holbek's estates were of similar size, while by the Tudor period urban rents formed a normal part of councillors' private

¹ PRO, C.143/401/20. Acastre was mayor in 1364.

² PRO, C.143/75/8; mayor in 1297 and 1306.

³ PRO, C.143/194/4; mayor in 1322-33, 1338, 1340-42.

⁴ PRO, C.143/445/14. John de Langton senior was mayor 1353-61 and 1363. In 1378 his estate together with that of his executors was assessed at £46.13s. 4d. (PRO, C.143/393/5).

⁵ PRO, C.143/250/17. Nicholas de Selby was mayor in 1286-88.

⁶ PRO, C.143/81/9. Basy was mayor in 1290.

⁷ Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.112-113.

⁸ YML, L2/4f, fo 227. Selby was mayor in 1385, 1387-88.

income and again an estate of about twenty properties was common.¹ Thus an urban estate was an important acquisition for some of the most prominent inhabitants of the city. The increase in value over the earlier fourteenth century cannot be entirely explained by inflation in rental values which had risen by no more than about one third, on average, between 1360 and 1390.² but it certainly suggests that, as in Colchester, urban property was becoming more attractive.³ Of the earlier mayors, possibly only the estates of Nicholas de Langton senior and Roger Basy were comparable in value to those of some of their later fourteenth century successors in office. Nor were the estates accumulated simply as a short-term expedient to endow a chantry, for the value of property retained was always considerably greater, especially in the late fourteenth century, than the value of that alienated, and William Selby, for example, left all his property in York to his family.

From their urban property holdings it is thus difficult to detect any major shift in the character of men holding the mayoral office in the fourteenth century, and the suspicion that they would not have recognised much difference between themselves is further

¹ Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, p.112; Palliser, *Tudor York*, p.105. Ormsheved was mayor in 1425, 1433. Holbeck was mayhor in 1449, 1458, 1470-72.

² See above, p.246.

³ Britnell, *Growth and Decline in Colchester*, p.112.

suggested by the very close proximity in which they lived. The Scorebys, Langtons, Holmes, Ormseveds and Boltons lived next door to each other at the end of Petergate.¹ Indeed William Ormseved inhabited the same house as John Langton.²

Apart from providing a residence, the chief motive for owning property on such a scale was surely that it provided an income.³ Like corporate landlords, private landlords almost certainly kept rent accounts,⁴ appointed agents to administer their property,⁵ and developed their property with *domos rentales*.⁶ There is no doubt that in the case of at least some citizens the owning of property was closely associated with their other business interests. Thus William de Huntington, apothecary, was aided in the consolidation of the title he enjoyed in his tenement in Petergate by a fellow apothecary John de Neuby.⁷ Similarly, the estate of

¹ Gazetteer, *Tenements 31-40*. Henry de Scoreby was mayor 1348-52; John de Bolton senior was mayor in 1410 and John Bolton junior in 1431.

² Gazetteer, *Tenement 35*.

³ Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, p.219; Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London*, p.122.

⁴ *YMB*, 1, p.47; the form of conveyances often suggests they might have been based on rentals (BL, Add. MS 2147, fos 11, 15, 27v, 34).

⁵ *YMB*, 2, pp.9, 219, 269.

⁶ NYCRO, Clervaux Cartulary, fo 99, and see above, pp.236-237.

⁷ Gazetteer, *Tenement 23*.

Alan de Alnewik, goldsmith, was centred around Stonegate and Petergate where goldsmiths were especially numerous,¹ further down Petergate a significant number of girdlers held property in addition to that which they inhabited in the vicinity of Girdlergate,² and Richard de Barneby, a wealthy butcher, owned at least six messuages in the Shambles and in Colliergate.³

There must however remain the suspicion that some of these business interests extended to the offering of mortgages and securing of debts on property, and that some citizens enlarged their estates through defaulted loans. Thus in 1333 John Brown, rector of Elvington, granted a shop and solar in Petergate to John Escrick, nailer, on the understanding that John Escrick would keep the tenancy only until he was repaid the sum of 10 marks, and in 1342 Thomas Brown, having retrieved the property, again granted it free of rent to Robert del Wald, a potter who had several other properties in Petergate, for a term of twenty years after which Robert was to pay 100s. a year.⁴ Both transactions appear to have been intended to raise capital, but more clear-cut are those conveyances which were made often by the late

¹ Gazetteer, *Tenement 23*; PRO, C.143/390/8.

² Gazetteer, *Tenements 23-32*.

³ PRO, C.143/393/20.

⁴ Gazetteer, *Tenement 32* (h, i).

fourteenth century to a creditor and trustees on the specific grounds that the conveyance would be cancelled when a debt was repaid. Thus William Fyssh, merchant, advanced Simon de Quixley, merchant, £40 on the security of land granted to himself, a clerk and a chaplain, and similar agreements were made by William Clervaux of Croft in the 1320s.¹ A more complicated agreement shows Robert de Feriby and Thomas de Leverton jointly buying rents and tenements from William de Strensall, chaplain, for £100, on the strength of an advance of £40 followed by the remaining £60 on agreed days and terms, until the fulfilment of which William would retain seisin.²

The link between property owning and credit has not been sufficiently well established to suggest that the expansion in mercantile estates in the later fourteenth century was in any sense related to an expansion in credit. Inheritance probably remained the chief means by which a landed urban estate was accumulated, and despite the free alienability of burgage lands in York, families still displayed a tendency to attempt to retain the unity of family holdings. The wife's right to a life interest in one third of her husband's estate was almost universally

¹ BI, Y/ASP F3/2. Quixley was mayor in 1381-83; NYCRO, Clervaux Cartulary, fos 99, 109.

² PRO, C1.11/36.

respected,¹ and land was frequently endowed on girls at their marriage.² The strength of a wife's claim to dower is one reason for the many quitclaims from widows,³ and their rights extended over leasehold as well as freehold properties.⁴ Indeed in the fourteenth century the wife's rights were to some extent strengthened, by the use of a conveyance through trustees to ensure that a wife and husband shared a full title to his estate. So in 1392 William de Strynsall ensured that his wife, Mathilda, was jointly enfeoffed with him in a tenement in Stonegate with a shop and upper storeys, as well as a tenement on the corner of Micklegate and Northstreet.⁵ On this occasion inheritance was reserved to William's heirs which was a common safeguard against a widow's remarriage. However use of trustees might be made to ensure succession to a whole variety of inheritors, including, for example, provision made by William Vescy for his niece and her children with property in Coneystreet in 1465⁶ as well

¹ Pollock and Maitland, *A History of English Law*, 2, pp.420-426; Gazetteer, *Tenements* 7-9, 13 (g), 23 (g), 24 (f), 25 (a), 29 (e), 29 (g), 32 (k), 43 (b).

² Gazetteer, *Tenement* 11, 26, 27 (a), 29 (b).

³ Gazetteer, *Tenements* 2-5, 2 (f), 17 (b), 22 (g), 24 (g), 26 (c), 28 (d), 57 (f).

⁴ Gazetteer, *Tenements* 12, 18.

⁵ *YNB*, 3, p.25; compare Gazetteer, *Tenement* 9 (i,j).

⁶ *YNB*, 2, p.231.

as to aid the transfer of property to a religious endowment.¹ The development of trustees, and the creation of entails ought thus to have limited some of the freedom attached to burgage tenure. However it seems that in general lands bequeathed either in wills or through the use of trustees sought first and foremost to provide for the family. Thus in 1330 Richard Tunnock left his dwelling house in Stonegate to his wife for life, with reversion to her son John, a second tenement to his son John, and divided the remainder of his estate between another son, Nicholas, and his daughter Katherine. Almost a century later William de Selby made an exactly similar provision for his wife, sister and niece, but leaving the major proportion of his estate to George Mowbray, his only male heir, in the absence of a son.² The strength of a family claim to land is perhaps best demonstrated by the manner in which Roger Swanne was able to re-unite the estate of Richard de Craven nearly fifty years after it had been divided between Richard's daughters in marriage.³

¹ For example, see Gazetteer, *Tenement 24*, for feoffees of St. Mary's Abbey and St. Leonard's Hospital.

² YML, L2/4f, fos 8, 227. Gazetteer, *Tenements 19, 46, 53*.

³ Gazetteer, *Tenements 29, 32, 43*.

The majority of people living in York never had the opportunity to acquire much land, and since even freely-held properties were nearly always held from at least one and often several other foreign lords, the changing conditions of land tenure which resulted from changing policies towards the administration of estates were important influences on the lives of all York's citizens and residents.¹ Doubtless there had always been a very large number of tenants-at-will, although they only begin to appear in the rent accounts of corporate landlords in large numbers in the fourteenth century. In 1271 William son of Thomas Aurifaber confirmed that neither he nor his father had ever had any right of inheritance in a messuage next to the deanery, nor had his father ever had a charter of enfeoffment because they had held it at-will without any writing.² Clearly tracing the origins of tenancies-at-will is likely to prove a thankless task for the historian.³ For the more prosperous or secure tenant, however, the change from enfeoffment to various forms of contractual tenure over the period between the twelfth

¹ Private estates may have been more heavily burdened with *redditus assisae* than corporate estates. In 1384 John Essheton owed rents totalling £6.16s. 8d. from an estate only worth £10.18s. 8d., while the vicars choral owed only £4. 8s. 1½d. from an estate worth over £150 (YMB, 1, pp.47-48; YML, VC 6/2/33).

² Gazetteer, *Tenement* 50; BL, Cotton MS Claudius B iii, fo 42.

³ Pollock and Maitland, *A History of English Law*, 1, pp.357, 370.

and fifteenth century brought about marked changes in conditions of tenure.

The use of demises at farm dated back to the beginning of the thirteenth century.¹ Some private landlords continued to use leases for terms of years throughout the fourteenth century,² but on the estates of the larger corporate landlords less use was made of such leases as more housing was let directly to tenants-at-will.³ In the changed conditions of the fifteenth century leases appear to have become more common, especially on the estate of the city corporation.⁴ Where the tenant took responsibility for repairs, or where the property leased was open land, the terms of these leases were much longer than appears to have been the practice a century before, so that terms of 80 to 120 years were common. In 1421 John Preston, ironmonger, was leased a piece of waste land called *Kalombhall* on the bank of the Ouse for 90 years for 5s. a year, and in 1418 Roger Burton took a lease for 120

¹ See above, pp.176-177.

² NYCRO, Clervaux Cartulary, fos 89-90, 95, 103v, 109.

³ See above, pp.202-203. Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, p.192, suggests a rather different chronology in Winchester with leases becoming more common in the latter half of the fourteenth century, and less common in the first three decades of the fifteenth century. In both cities the generally poor survival rate of leases before the sixteenth century makes the establishment of an exact chronology difficult.

⁴ However the leases of city property are, perhaps, exceptionally well-preserved.

years of a piece of land for building near the fish-landing under Ousebridge.¹ Where the land leased was already developed and the corporation retained responsibility for repairs, the terms of the leases were always much shorter. Thus John Aldstanmore, merchant, leased a tenement in Northstreet with rooms and other houses for 15 years in 1418 at a rent of 46s. 8d. a year, and in 1424 John Mylner and his wife leased two houses with two rooms above on Ousebridge and another room over the stallage of the bridge called the *Salmonhole* for the remainder of a term of 20 years which they had from Margaret Skyres, plus an additional 8 years, for 40s. a year.²

Over the course of the fifteenth century there was no noticeable tendency for leases to get any longer overall, although by 1476 leases for less than 30 years may have been rare. In December 1476 the city let a shop on Ousebridge to a glover for 8s. a year for 7 years, but all the other leases recorded that year were considerably longer and included the lease of the Bull Inn in Coneystreet to a merchant for a term of 77 years at 46s. 8d. rent.³ The combination of such a high rent over a long term would have been much less common at the

¹ *YNB*, 3, pp.57, 58.

² *Ibid.*, pp.56, 63.

³ *YCA*, B1, fos 27v, 40v.

beginning of the century.¹

The response to declining rental values in the fifteenth century was thus not to retreat from direct management altogether. The use of leases left open the possibility of improving income, especially since not all leases ran their full term.² Indeed symptomatic of the proprietary attitude which continued to govern the attitudes of landlords to their estates was the terminology increasingly adopted in the description of property. By the late fifteenth century any form of real estate was increasingly known as a landlord's *lyvelod*, the concept of the fee and the lordship which pertained to it had been almost entirely lost.³

The changing practices of corporate landlords in the administration of their estates had important consequences not only for their tenants as individuals but also for the citizens as a body. By the fourteenth century the most productive parts of many estates in

¹The lease of Bull Inn was also marked by the payment of a fine of 6s. 8d. on entry to the lease, and this is among the first recorded examples of the use of entry fines on a York estate.

² The lease of the shop on Ousebridge was returned to the city after less than eighteen months. A similar limited withdrawal from direct management was also apparent in late fifteenth century cheapside (Keene, 'A New Study of London before the Great Fire', p.16).

³ *YNB*, 2, p.246; *YCR*, 2, p.174.

York were considerably more centralised within a particular locality of the city than they had been in the twelfth century. The reclamation of such large areas of the city into corporately-owned demesne, especially during the fourteenth century when even opportunities for tenure by perpetual farm declined, meant that opportunities for holding land by free tenure by the average citizen must have been substantially reduced. In Petergate, for example, conveyances of land by enfeoffment became increasingly rare in the latter half of the fourteenth century, and virtually ceased altogether in the fifteenth century. Petergate was perhaps more dominated by corporate landlords than some other streets, nevertheless it's condition is indicative of a quite common state of affairs throughout the city.

One important consequence of declining opportunities of free tenure throughout the city was that it must have made the concept of a city franchise conditional upon the holding or inheritance of land by burgage tenure increasingly redundant. In the late twelfth century the most prominent burgesses involved in the administration of courts and offices in the city and represented as leaders of the city community, were all men with substantial holdings of *haimald*, or burgage, land in York.¹ However by 1272 the practice of

¹ Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, pp.31-32, 45; and see above, pp.68, 72, 276-277.

admitting freemen to the city by purchase and apprenticeship was already well-established.¹ Professor Dobson has suggested that the growth of entry to the freedom by purchase and apprenticeship may have arisen because right of entry to the freedom by patrimony was restricted to eldest sons, or sons born in wedlock after their father became a freeman, thus compelling other sons to enter the franchise by other means.² Such a redefinition was, of course, not unique to York. In London new legislation in 1275 reaffirmed the qualifications for entry to citizenship by patrimony, by apprenticeship and by purchase and enforced registration of the last two categories.³ At Wallingford both residents and foreigners to the town can be found buying joint freedom of the borough and of the guild merchant in the early thirteenth century,⁴ and Dr. Susan Reynolds has suggested that it was this conflation of the activities of the borough court and the guild merchant which led to the adoption of the practice of entry to the freedom by apprenticeship and purchase.⁴ Once adopted such a practice may also have allowed certain interest groups, such as cloth merchants, to exclude

¹ *Register of the Freemen of the City of York 1272-1558*, 1, F. Collins (ed.) (SS, xcvi, 1897), p.1.

² Dobson, 'Admissions to the Freedom of the City of York', p.9 n.3.

³ Williams, *Medieval London*, p.45.

⁴ Reynolds, *English Medieval Towns*, p.124.

others, notably weavers and fullers, from the full enjoyment of the trading privileges of burgesses.'

At least in York it also seems probable that the practice of admitting men to the freedom by apprenticeship and purchase had the additional dual advantage of allowing men who had no burgage holding to enter the freedom of the city, and of allowing men living within the ecclesiastical jurisdictions, which had so triumphantly confirmed their privileges in 1276, to enter into the community of the mayor and commonalty. Such advantages would have been equally apparent in other towns which contained powerful private franchises such as Norwich or Coventry,² but less necessary in smaller market towns or ecclesiastical boroughs where the jurisdiction was more homogeneous. Westminster, for example, thrived under its single lord, and did not formally achieve the status of a borough until 1585.³

Thus by the fourteenth century it is quite apparent that significant numbers of property owners and residents within the jurisdiction of St. Peter's fee in

¹ Reynolds, *English Medieval Towns*, pp.125-126; Dobson, 'Admissions to the Freedom', p.14.

² Campbell, 'Norwich', p.13; J.C. Lancaster, 'Coventry', in M.D. Lobel (ed.), *Atlas of Historic towns*, 2, p.7.

³ A.G. Rosser, 'The Essence of Medieval Urban Communities: the Vill of Westminster 1200-1540', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 34 (1984), pp.91-112.

Petergate were freemen of the city. Among those possibly living in tenements belonging to St. Peter's liberty while also holding civic office were Robert de Skipwith, merchant, and chamberlain of York in 1353,¹ Thomas de Siggeston, mercer, and chamberlain in 1338,² and John de Hathelsay, chamberlain of the city in 1317.³ At least two mayors of the city, William de Selby and John Stockdale also lived in the Minster's fee.⁴ Other freemen included Richard de Wreshill, mercer,⁵ Thomas de Flaxton,⁶ Robert del Gare, mercer,⁷ John Gaycenby and Roger Swanne,⁸ Robert de Crayke,⁹ Roger de Burton, mercer,¹⁰ John de Crome, mercer,¹¹ and possibly John Saxton, saddler.¹²

¹ Gazetteer, *Tenements* 7-9. (All identifications of freemen and officials are from the *Freemen's Register*.)

² Gazetteer, *Tenement* 12.

³ Gazetteer, *Tenement* 27.

⁴ Gazetteer, *Tenements* 19, 46, 53 and 47.

⁵ Gazetteer, *Tenement* 21.

⁶ Gazetteer, *Tenement* 27.

⁷ Gazetteer, *Tenement* 27.

⁸ Gazetteer, *Tenement* 29.

⁹ Gazetteer, *Tenement* 46.

¹⁰ Gazetteer, *Tenement* 46.

¹¹ Gazetteer, *Tenement* 47.

¹² Gazetteer, *Tenement* 50.

A more systematic study of the whole area of the liberty would doubtless reveal many more. Thus although the mayor and commonalty had technically lost their battle with the dean and chapter's liberty in 1276, the effectiveness of the Minster's franchise was steadily eroded by the numbers of freemen living and organising their business within it. In 1290 a jury of citizens was still concerned that the tenants of a tenement in Petergate to be alienated to the church, should recognise that they would still be subject to tallage outside their tenements.¹ The development of regulation through the craft guilds and the extension of freedom to apprentices and by purchase effectively rendered fears about the economic competition of inhabitants of the franchises redundant. Residents of the franchise may not have taken out the freedom for other reasons, but they were not prevented from doing so as tenants of the dean and chapter or of St. Leonard's, as has been suggested.²

The dean and chapter did not lose its right to hear pleas at common law concerning its tenants in the city, but since most of its property was held by lease or tenants-at-will, such jurisdiction became increasingly redundant and Peter Court was primarily

¹ PRO, C.143/14/12.

² Dobson, 'Admissions to the Freedom of the City of York', p.12.

occupied with pleas of nuisance and petty crime.¹ So effective was this practical erosion of the liberty by the organisation of the crafts affiliated to the civic courts that by the beginning of the fifteenth century the definition of the liberties, for the purposes of trade and economic regulation, had been essentially redrawn. Thus when the dean and chapter protested that their liberty was likely to be infringed by the new powers of the mayor of the city as justice of the peace and of labourers, Richard II confirmed the liberty of the dean and chapter as 'the Close or cemetery of the said Church or the bedern of the vicars, or the dwelling houses, inns or houses without the Close and cemetery belonging to the dignities, canonries and prebends, and being in the hands of their owners or occupied by the officers or ministers of the Church by the lease or licence of their owners.'²

This was a much narrower definition of the liberty, since it excluded virtually all free and leasehold secular inhabitants of the dean and chapter's property except those in their direct employment. The only entirely exempt parts of the liberty were the precincts of the Close and the Bedern. When the ordinances of the cappers decreed in 1482 that no work

¹ See above, p.14.

² *YMB*, 3, p.165.

should be given to persons 'dwelling in Seynt Mary gate, ne in St. Leonardes, ne odyr places ne santuaries within this cite, wher we have no power to correk tham' it would seem that it was the central precincts plus the special area of St. Marygate belonging to St. Mary's Abbey which were meant.¹ Other ordinances, such as those of the plasterers and tilers made in 1475, seem to describe the liberties in a similar manner. They asserted that they would discipline any member of their craft breaking the ordinances within this said 'citie, suburbs and precincts of the same'.²

It has to be admitted that the definition of the liberty in Richard II's charter was ambiguous. Houses in 'the hands of' dignitaries might be interpreted by the chapter as houses in their seisin, while for the city it would be claimed that it meant only houses occupied by officials of the chapter.³ Nevertheless the development of new forms of franchise and guild organisation meant that the complete fiscal independence claimed by the ecclesiastical liberties in 1276 was gradually eroded. The major sanctuaries remained the religious precincts, but even within those the numbers

¹ Dobson, 'Admissions to the Freedom', p.13.

² *YMB*, 3, p.183.

³ Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp.89-91.

of secular tenants was limited.¹ The liberties did survive and remained a potent source of irritation. That of the dean and chapter continued to function until the Municipal Reforms of the nineteenth century, but the liberties no longer threatened to become fully-fledged parallel systems of government within the city as they had in the thirteenth century. Conflicts with ecclesiastical landlords continued too, but they revolved around more immediate issues, like the enclosure of common land, the erecting of fishgarths in the river and the dignity accorded to the place of mayor in the Minster.²

Changing forms of tenure and changing forms of government were closely related. As landlords lost jurisdictional authority over their tenants, and for other reasons were forced into adopting a more rigorous financial attitude to the management of their estates, so this process encouraged the acceptance of new qualifications for citizenship, which further undermined the traditional relationship between lordship and jurisdiction.

¹ See above, pp.61-62.

² Miller, in *VCHY City of York*, p.69; C. Cross, 'From Reformation to Restoration', in *York Minster History*, pp.211-212..

CONCLUSION

Landlords are important figures in most tenants' lives and certainly this was also the case in medieval York. Urban landlords, like rural landlords, exploited their estate to suit their needs, and while affected by market forces, could be slower in responding to these than in their response to the immediate fiscal requirements of the institutions the property had been acquired to support.¹ The study of urban estates in York between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries suggests that, broadly, town and country landowners pursued strikingly similar policies. The period between the late twelfth and mid-fourteenth century was characterised by a gradual movement away from enfeoffment, via the reclamation of land in demesne and especially of the land nearest the heart of the estate, towards a period of direct management.² By the mid-fourteenth century the landlord accounted for increasing numbers of contractual tenants and took complete responsibility for the maintenance of most buildings on their estate. Before the end of the fourteenth century, however, a decline in population was beginning to create

¹ Harvey, *Westminster Abbey*, p.331.

² Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy*, pp.87-88; Harvey, *Westminster Abbey*, pp.120-122, 164-169; King, *Peterborough Abbey 1086-1310*, pp.66-69, 126, 145; Du Boulay, *The Lordship of Canterbury*, pp.204-206; Miller, *Abbey and Bishopric of Ely*, pp.93-112.

financial difficulties for some landlords and the fifteenth century was characterised by increased use of leases for terms of years which often passed the responsibility for maintenance back to the tenant. Urban landlords were 'rentiers' too.'

Urban conditions thus differed less from those of the country than might be expected, despite the special privileges of burgage tenure. To some extent the freedom of burgage tenure was, in any case, restricted for as long as landlords held private courts for their tenants in fee they had ample opportunity to object, or more commonly, confirm alienations within their fee to the new tenant within the customary period of a year and a day.² Once the authority of the burgesses court over all transactions of land in the city was confirmed, however, this restricted the jurisdiction of all but the most powerful landlords' courts.

The movement away from enfeoffment to direct management is usually characterised as a response to inflation and rising population, but was clearly also a response to increasing hostility to alienation of land in frankalmoign, which caused especial problems in the

¹ Harvey, *Westminster Abbey*, pp.292-293, 331-332; Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy*, pp.220 ff.

² Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, pp.70-75, 185; *Chartulary of Fountains Abbey*, p.269.

boroughs. Most importantly it was also a response to a new pattern of religious endowment in the purchase of obits and corrodies which committed the recipient to increased future expenditure. These joint forces may have encouraged church landlords to be more concerned about the level of profit from their estates¹ and certainly on the almost entirely urban estate of the vicars choral the dominant force in the management of their estate was the number of endowments for obits and chantries which they received. This both provided them with the capital to enlarge their estate and became a major commitment to which the maintenance of that estate was directed. Twentieth-century historians perhaps inevitably look to estate accounts to indicate the broader state of the economy, but it is only by comparing the differing fortunes of individual rent levels across the city that any impression of the demand for housing can be gained. For the overall trend in the value of rents was likely to reflect administrative policies as much as economic trends.

What were the consequences of such administrative changes for the topography of York? The most marked consequence was that by the second quarter of the fourteenth century landlords found the demand for the cheapest housing the most reliable (if not always the

¹ Raban, *Mortmain Legislation and the English Church*, pp.135-137.

most profitable). Thus rows of cottages appeared where none had been before. Not only were they built in churchyards and on previously waste land, but whole tenements were redeveloped as closes and lanes, even at the expense of demolishing substantial stone halls. If the twelfth and thirteenth centuries had been characterised by the building of stone houses,¹ the fourteenth century was the century of timber-framing.² However, it is by no means apparent that such building activity reflected an increase in population. Some peripheral areas such as Fishergate and Bishophill may have been experiencing a decline in population before the impact of epidemic disease was felt elsewhere in the city, while the appearance of cottages in rent accounts in the fourteenth century often simply reflected more direct contact between corporate landlords and occupants.

¹ Stone houses were not only built for Jews and canons, for most prosperous burgesses inhabited stone houses too [Gazetteer, *Tenements 11, 35*; the Fairfaxes had a stone house on Ousebridge (BL, Egerton 2147, fo 46; YCA, C 82.10 'Ousebridge'), Robert Verdinel occupied a stone hall called 'Wyndisovir' in St. Saviourgate (BL, Cotton MS Nero D iii, fo 206), and Hugh and Gerard, sons of Lewin had a stone house in in Coneystreet (EYC, i, p.198); indeed, references to stone housing in the thirteenth century are ubiquitous].

² YML, VC 6/10. Within the walls the cottages built by the vicars choral seem to have been predominantly timber-framed. For example, in the eleventh week of building in Camhallgarth in 1360 a special payment was made to all the workmen on *elevatione meremii*, or *elevatione dicte domus*.

During the fifteenth century falling rent income really does seem to reflect a decline in population, and it is surely significant that it was the cheapest properties which were abandoned first. York's status as a county town ensured that certain sectors of its economy, notably the professional and luxury trades and crafts, remained prosperous. By the latter half of the fifteenth century, the wealthiest merchants in York did not amass the fortunes or achieve the national prominence of their predecessors at the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth century. Nevertheless York's industrial decline also meant it had lost large numbers of the relatively poor. For the average inhabitant of York standards of living, and certainly of accommodation, may well have been higher in the 1470s than they had been a century earlier.

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