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Durham Priory – Prior of Holy Island’s Accounts
(performances are at Durham except where marked HI; HI+D indicates accounts that include performances at both Holy Island and Durham)

Introduction

1339-1537, but there is no relevant material before 1342. Usually one or two membranes, overall length 312-774 mm., width 169-323 mm., but the roll that combines drafts of the accounts for 1342-3 and 1344-5 has five membranes, overall length 2918 mm. Single column, with undivided expenses; most accounts allow a separate line for each item, but there is an isolated case of multiple items in 1390-1. Terminal dates for relevant accounts are:

1342-3 – 25th April

1362-3 – Pope Mark (7th October) to the First Sunday in Lent (19th February)

1390-1 – Ascension Day to the Sunday after the Purification of the Virgin

1393-7 – Ascension Day

From 1430 onwards the usual terminal date is Pentecost, with the following exceptions:

1442-3 – Two accounts, with a change of prior at Martinmas (11th November)

1532-3 – Monday after Ascension.

Holy Island (or Lindisfarne) was historically the most significant of all the Durham cells, and one of the oldest Christian sites in Northumbria. Given by St. Oswald to St. Aidan as the seat of his new bishopric in 634,¹ it had also been the seat of St. Cuthbert, and hence of the Community of St. Cuthbert, from which the Priory, City and Bishopric of Durham were all derived. But although its lands formed part of the original endowment of the Priory, it is not known when monastic life was re-established there after the Community fled from Viking attack in 876. Charters purporting to establish the date 1093 or 1094 are now known to be forgeries, and although there was at least one monk there by 1122, he may only have been an administrator, and the presence of a monastic community cannot be proved before 1172. In the later Middle Ages the cell experienced serious financial and military problems: the number of monks had to be reduced, the King’s purveyors used the island as a base for stores in time of war, and it consequently had to be fortified against potential Scottish attacks. Nonetheless, it continued to contribute towards the Durham Almonry Bishop until its dissolution, and payments to minstrels on Holy Island itself also continue on a small scale until 1490 (but see the account for 1482-3 and End Note; however, it is not clear whether they were providing entertainment for military personnel, pilgrims, the monks themselves, or a combination of all three.²

¹ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History* III, ch. 3 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors 218-221).

² For the first documents that refer explicitly to monks on Holy Island, see Raine, *North Durham*, Appendix p.135, no. 766 (from DUL 3.1.Spec.72); one of the parties to this document died between 1170 and 1172 (Pipe-Roll Soc. vol. 16, p. 75, vol. 18, p. 67); and Reginald of Durham, *Libellus de Admirandis Beati Cuthberti Virtutibus* (Surtees Soc. 1, 117-19), which runs up to 1174. We are grateful to Alan J. Piper for these references. Further, see Dobson, *Durham Priory* 14-26 and 312-14; Butler and Given-Wilson, *Medieval Monasteries of Great Britain* 283-86.

Texts

| | | |
|--|---------------|------------------|
| 1342-3 (25 th April – 25 th April) Prior of Holy Island's Account mb4 | DUL | |
| ... | | |
| Item <i>liberati Clericis sancti Nicholai</i> | | iiij*** |
| ... | | |
| Item, in livery for the Clerks of St. Nicholas | | 3s |
| 1362-3 (7 th October – 19 th February) Prior of Holy Island's Account mb1 | (HI) DUL | |
| Expense: ... | | |
| necessarie In solucione facta ministrallis ex curialitate per tempus compoti | | xviij.d. |
| ... | | |
| In payment to minstrels from the provision at the time of the account | | 18d |
| 1390-1 (12 th May – 5 th February) Prior of Holy Island's Account | (HI+D) DUL | |
| ... | | |
| Item in vino empto & dato conventui in capitulo annuali xiiij s. vj ^{d.} & Episcopo Elemosinarie iiij s. iiij ^{d.} & in factura del koull iiij s. iiij ^{d.} & expensis Prioris ver<sus> dunelmum per quinque vices iiij.li. v.s. x d. | | cvij s. |
| ... | | |
| Item in donis datis diuersis Nuncijs & Ministrallis | | xviij s. vj d. |
| ... | | |
| Item, in wine purchased and given to the convent at the beginning of the year 13s 6d, and for the Almonry Bishop 3s 4d, and for <i>making a cawl</i> [?], 3s 4d, and in the Prior's expenses whilst in! Durham on five occasions, £4 5s 10d | | 112s |
| ... | | |
| Item, in gifts given to various servants and minstrels | | 18s 6d |
| 1393-4 (15 th May – 28 th May) Prior of Holy Island's Account | (HI) DUL | |
| Expense: ... | | |
| Et in minutis expensis cum donis datis ministrallis & alijs | | xxj s. vj d. |
| ... | | |
| And in noted expenses with gifts given to minstrels and others | | 21s 6d |
| 1395-6 (20 th May – 11 th May) Prior of Holy Island's Account | (HI) DUL | |
| Expense: ... | | |
| Et in expensis minutis cum donis datis Ministrallis & alijs | | xiiij s. iiij d. |

| | | |
|--|-------------|--------------------|
| ... | | |
| And in noted expenses with gifts given to minstrels and others | | 13s 4d |
| 1396-7 (11 th May – 31 st May) | (HI) | |
| Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: ... | | |
| Et in <i>expensis minutis cum donis datis ministrallis & alijs</i> | | x s. xj d. |
| ... | | |
| And in noted expenses with gifts given to minstrels and others | | 10s 11d |
| 1397-8 (4 th June – 20 th May) | (HI) | |
| Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: ... | | |
| Et in <i>cerotecis & donis diuersis datis ministrallis</i> | | xvj s. viij d. |
| ... | | |
| And for gloves and various gifts given to minstrels | | 16s 8d |
| 1398-9 (20 th May – 12 th May) | (HI) | |
| Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: ... | | |
| Et in <i>cerotecis & donis diuersis datis ministrallis</i> | | xvjs. viij d. |
| ... | | |
| And for gloves and various gifts given to minstrels | | 16s 8d |
| 1430-1 (4 th June – 20 th May) | | |
| Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: ... | | |
| Item <i>Episcopo puerili Dunelmi</i> | | ij s. |
| ... | | |
| Item, to the boy bishop of Durham | | 2s |
| 1432-3 (?8 th June – ?31 st May) | | |
| Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: ... | | |
| Item <i>Episcopo puerili Elemosinarie</i> | | ij s. ³ |
| ... | | |

³ Sum legible only under ultra-violet light.

| | | |
|--|-----|-------|
| Item, to the boy bishop of the Almerly | | 2s |
| 1433-4 (31 st May – 16 th May) | | |
| Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: . . . | | |
| Item <i>Episcopo puerili Elemosinarie</i> | | ij s. |
| . . . | | |
| Item, to the boy bishop of the Almerly | | 2s |
| 1434-5 (16 th May – 5 th June) | | |
| Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: . . . | | |
| Item <i>Episcopo puerili Elemosinarie</i> | | ij s. |
| . . . | | |
| Item, to the boy bishop of the Almerly | | 2s |
| 1435-6 (5 th June – 27 th May) | | |
| Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: . . . | | |
| Item <i>Episcopo puerili Elemosinarie</i> | | ij s. |
| . . . | | |
| Item, to the boy bishop of the Almerly | | 2s |
| 1436-7 (27 th May – 19 th May) | | |
| Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: . . . | | |
| Item <i>Episcopo puerili Elemosinarie</i> | | ij s. |
| . . . | | |
| Item, to the boy bishop of the Almerly | | 2s |
| 1442-3 (11 th November – 9 th June) | | |
| Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: . . . | | |
| Item <i>*piscopo pue*ili</i> | | xx d. |
| . . . | | |
| Item, to the boy bishop | | 20d |
| 1444-5 (31 st May – 16 th May) | | |
| Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |

Expense: . . .
Item *Episcopo puerili* ij s.

Item, to the boy bishop 2s

1445-6 (16th May – 5th June)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

. . .
Item **piscopo pueri*i Elemosinarie* ij s.

Item, to the boy bishop of the Almerly 2s

1446-7 (5th June – 28th May)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: . . .
Item *Episcopo puerili Elemosinarie* ij s.

. . .

Item, to the boy bishop of the Almerly 2s

1449-50 (1st June – 24th May)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: . . .
Et *Episcopo puerili Elemosinarie* ij s.

. . .

And to the boy bishop of the Almerly 2s

1450-1 (24^h May – 13th June)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: . . .
Et *Episcopo puerili Elemosinarie* ij s.

. . .

And to the boy bishop of the Almerly 2s

1451-2 (13th June – 28th May)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: . . .
Et *Episcopo puerili Elemosinarie* ij s.

. . .

| | | |
|---|-----|-------|
| And to the boy bishop of the Almery | | 2s |
| 1452-3 (28 th May – 20 th May) | | |
| Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: . . . | | |
| Et <i>Episcopo puerili Elemosinarie</i> | | ij s. |
| . . . | | |
| And to the boy bishop of the Almery | | 2s |
| 1453-4 (20 th May – 9 th June) | | |
| Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: . . . | | |
| Et <i>Episcopo puerili Elemosinarie</i> | | ij s. |
| . . . | | |
| And to the boy bishop of the Almery | | 2s |
| 1454-5 (9 th June – 25 th May) | | |
| Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: . . . | | |
| Et <i>Episcopo puerili Elemosinarie</i> | | ij s. |
| . . . | | |
| And to the boy bishop of the Almery | | 2s |
| 1455-6 (25 th May – 16 th May) | | |
| Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: . . . | | |
| Et <i>Episcopo puerili Elemosinarie</i> | | ij s. |
| . . . | | |
| And to the boy bishop of the Almery | | 2s |
| 1456-7 (16 th May – 5 th June) | | |
| Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: . . . | | |
| Et <i>Episcopo puerili Elemosinarie</i> | | ij s. |
| . . . | | |
| And to the boy bishop of the Almery | | 2s |

1457-8 (5th June – 21st May)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: . . .
Et *Episcopo puerili Elemosinarie* ij s.
. . .
And to the boy bishop of the Almery 2s

1459-60 (13th May – 1st June) (HI)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: . . .
d
. . .
Et in donis datis *diuersis Ministrallis diuersorum dominorum* vj.s. viij.d.
. . .
And in gifts given to various minstrels of various lords, 6s 8d!

1460-1 (1st June – 24th May) (HI)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: . . .
d
Et in donis datis *diuersis ministrallis diuersorum dominorum* viij s. viij d.
. . .
And in gifts given to various minstrels of various lords 8s 8d

1461-2 (24th May – 6th June) (HI+D)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: . . .
Et in donis datis *diuersis ministrallis diuersorum dominorum* xijj.s. iiij.d.
. . .
Et *Episcopo puerili Elemosinarie ex Curialitate* .ij.s.
And in gifts given to various minstrels of various lords 8s 4d
. . .
And to the boy bishop of the Almery by custom 2s

1462-3 (6th June – 29th May) (HI)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: . . .
Et in donis datis *diuersis ministrallis diuersorum dominorum* ij.s. iiij.d.

...

And in gifts given to various minstrels of various lords 3s 4d

1463-4 (29th May – 20th May) (HI)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: ...

Et in donis datis diuersis ministrallis diuersorum dominorum xx d.

...

And in gifts given to various minstrels of various lords 20d

1464-5 (20th May – 2nd June) (HI)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: ...

Et in donis datis diuersis ministrallis diuersorum dominorum per tempus compoti
ij.s.iiij.d.

...

And in gifts given to various minstrels of various lords during the time of this account
3s 4d

1466-7 (25th May – 17th May)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: ...

Et Episcopo puerili hoc anno ij s.

And to the boy bishop this year 2s

1467-8 (17th May – 5th June)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: ...

Et Episcopo puerili hoc anno ij s.

...

And to the boy bishop this year 2s

1468-9 (5th June – 21st May)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: ...

Et Episcopo puerili ij s.

And to the boy bishop 2s

| | | |
|--|-----|-------|
| 1469-70 (21 st May – 10 th June) Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: . . . | | |
| Et Episcopo puerili | | ij s. |
| . . . | | |
| And to the boy bishop | | 2s |
| 1471-2 (2 nd June – 17 th May) Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: . . . | | |
| Et Episcopo puerili ex consuetudine | | ij s. |
| . . . | | |
| And to the boy bishop by custom | | 2s |
| 1478-9 (10 th May – 30 th May) Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: . . . | | |
| Et Episcopo puerili ⁴ | | |
| And to the boy bishop | | |
| 1479-80 (30 th May – 21 st May) Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: . . . | | |
| Et Episcopo puerili | | ij s. |
| . . . | | |
| And to the boy bishop | | 2s |
| 1480-1 (21 st May – 10 th June) Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: . . . | | |
| Et Episcopo puerili | | ij s. |
| . . . | | |
| And to the boy bishop | | 2s |

⁴ This item has clearly been added to the end of Expenses as an afterthought, but the sum for it seems never to have been written or included.

1482-3 (26th May – 18th May) (HI+D)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

| | | |
|---|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Expense: . . . | | |
| [Et in donis datis diuersis ministrallis diuersorum dominorum | | iiij s. viij d.] ⁵ |
| . . . | | |
| Et Episcopo puerili | | ij s. |
| . . . | | |
| And in gifts given to various minstrels of various lords | ————— | 3s 8d |
| . . . | | |
| And to the boy bishop | | 2s |

1483-4 (?18th May – ?6th June)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

| | | |
|---------------------------------|--|-------|
| Expense: . . . | | |
| necessarie Et Episcopo puerili | | ij s. |
| . . . | | |
| Necessary . . . | | |
| expenses: And to the boy bishop | | 2s |

1487-8 (3rd June – 25th May)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

| | | |
|--|--|-------|
| . . . | | |
| .ij ^{s.} Et Episcopo puerili ex curialitate | | ij s. |
| 2 ^s And to the boy bishop by custom | | 2s |

1488-9 (25th May – 7th June) (HI+D)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

| | | |
|---|--|------------------------------|
| Expense: . . . | | |
| Et in donis datis ⁶ diuersis ministrallis diuersorum dominorum | | iiij s. iiij d. ⁷ |
| . . . | | |
| Et Episcopo puerili ex curialitate | | ij s. |
| . . . | | |
| And in gifts given to various minstrels of various lords | | 3s 4d |
| . . . | | |
| And to the boy bishop, as is custom | | 2s |

1489-90 (7th June – 30th May) (HI+D)

⁵ This whole item has been cancelled.

⁶ This word is accidentally repeated in C.

⁷ In A, this item is erased, but still legible under ultra-violet light; further, see End Note on the Prior of Holy Island's account for 1482-3.

Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Superplusagia: . . .

Et in donis datis diuersis ministrallis diuersorum dominorum ij s. iiij d.⁸

. . .

Et Episcopo puerili ex curialitate ij s.

. . .

Surplus ...

And in gifts given to various minstrels of various lords 3s 4d

. . .

And to the boy bishop, by custom 2s

1490-1 (30th May – 22nd May)

Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

. . . Et episcopo puerili ex curialitate ij s.

. . .

. . . And to the boy bishop, by custom 2s

1493-4 (26th May – 18th May)

Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: . . .

necessarie Et Episcopo puerili ex curialitate ij s.

. . .

Necessary . . .

expenses: And to the boy bishop, by custom 2s

. . .

1501-2 (30th May – 15th May)

Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: . . .

necessarie Et Episcopo puerili ij s.

. . .

Necessary . . .

expenses: And to the boy bishop 2s

. . .

1502-3 (15th May – 4th June)

Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

⁸ In A, this item has been cancelled; further, see End Note on the Prior of Holy Island's account for 1482-3.

Expense: ...
necessarie Et Episcopo puerili ij s.
...

Necessary ...
expenses: And to the boy bishop 2s
...

1503-4 (4th June – 26th May)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: ...
necessarie Et *episcopo* puerili ij s.
...

Necessary ...
expenses: And to the boy bishop 2s
...

1504-5 (26th May – 11th May)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: ...
necessarie Et *episcopo* puerili ij s.
...

Necessary ...
expenses: And to the boy bishop 2s
...

1505-6 (11th May – 31st May)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense *necessarie*: ...
Et *episcopo* puerili ij s.
...

Necessary expenses: ...
And to the boy bishop 2s
...

1506-7 (31st May – 23rd May)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: ...
necessarie Et Episcopo puerili ij s.
...

Necessary ...
expenses: And to the boy bishop 2s
...

1507-8 (23rd May – 11th June)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: ...
Necessarie Et *episcopo puerili* ij s.
...

Necessary ...
expenses: And to the boy bishop 2s
...

1508-9 (11th June – 27th May)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: ...
Et *Episcopo puerili* ij s.
...

Expenses: ...
And to the boy bishop 2s
...

1514-5 (4th June – 27th May)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: ...
Et *Episcopo puerili* ij s.
...

Expenses: ...
And to the boy bishop 2s
...

1522-3 (8th June – ?24th May)
Prior of Holy Island's Account DUL

Expense: ...
Et *episcopo puerili* ij s.
...

Expenses: ...
And to the boy bishop 2s
...

| | | |
|---|-----|-------|
| 1525-6 (4 th June – 20 th May) Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: ... | | |
| Et <i>Episcopo Puerili</i> | | ij s. |
| ... | | |
| Expenses: ... | | |
| And to the boy bishop | | 2s |
| ... | | |
| 1529-30 (16 th May – 5 th June) Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: ... | | |
| Et <i>Episcopo puerili</i> | | ij s. |
| ... | | |
| Expenses: ... | | |
| And to the boy bishop | | 2s |
| ... | | |
| 1531-2 (28 th May – 19 th May) Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: ... | | |
| Et <i>Episcopo puerili</i> | | ij s. |
| ... | | |
| Expenses: ... | | |
| And to the boy bishop | | 2s |
| ... | | |
| 1532-3 (13 th May – 26 th May) Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |
| Expense: ... | | |
| Et <i>Episcopo puerili</i> | | ij s. |
| ... | | |
| Expenses: ... | | |
| And to the boy bishop | | 2s |
| ... | | |
| 1536-7 (4 th June – 20 th May) Prior of Holy Island's Account | DUL | |

Expense: . . .
Et Episcopo puerili ij s.
. . .

Expenses: ...
And to the boy bishop 2s
...

Textual Notes

- 1342-3: From a roll of five membranes containing drafts of detailed accounts for 1342-3 (face) and 1344-5 (dorse); all other Holy Island accounts until 1362-3 are severely summarised. Headings are illegible on both face and dorse, but totals of subsections match those in the summary accounts for 1342-3 and 1344-5. Further see End Note.
- 1390-1: This account has no subsection headings.
- 1398-9: Text from A; B substantially identical.
- 1432-3: Heading damaged, with only the opening year legible, but this account takes up the balance of the account closed at Pentecost 1432 and leaves that taken up in the account which opens at Pentecost 1433.
- 1433-4: Text from A; B substantially identical.
- 1435-6: Text from A; B substantially identical.
- 1436-7: Text from A; B substantially identical.
- 1442-3: Heading damaged, but opening date is legible as feast of St. Martin 1442; the account is for half a year, and its closing balance is taken up in the account beginning at Pentecost 1443.
- 1445-6: Heading damaged; opening date legible only as 'Pentecost 14*5' and closing date as 'the same feast a year later', but this account takes up the balance of the one closed at Pentecost 1455. The left side has been trimmed, and all subsection headings are lost.
- 1449-50: Text from A; B substantially identical.
- 1450-1: Text from A; B substantially identical.
- 1451-2: Text from A; B substantially identical.
- 1452-3: Text from A; B substantially identical.
- 1453-4: Text from B; A (Prior of Durham's fair copy) substantially identical.
- 1454-5: Text from A; B substantially identical.
- 1455-6: Text from A; B substantially identical.
- 1456-7: Text from A (Prior of Durham's fair copy); B (Sub-Prior's fair copy) substantially identical.
- 1459-60: Text from A; B (Prior of Durham's fair copy) substantially identical.
- 1460-1: Text from C (final draft without balances); A and B (fair copies) have different balances, but are substantially identical for this item.
- 1461-2: Text from B; A (with a different overall balance) omits the word 'Elemosinarie' from the second item.
- 1462-3: Text from A; B substantially identical.
- 1463-4: Text from A; B substantially identical.
- 1464-5: Text from A; B substantially identical.
- 1466-7: Text from A; B substantially identical.
- 1467-8: Text from A; B substantially identical.
- 1468-9: Text from A; B substantially identical.
- 1469-70: Text from A; B substantially identical.

- 1479-80: Text from A; B substantially identical.
- 1480-1: Text from B, without *status*; A (fair copy with *status*) substantially identical.
- 1483-4: Heading lost, but this account takes up the balance of the account closed at Pentecost 1483; as it covers about a year, its closing date is assumed also to be at Pentecost.
- 1487-8: Text from A; B, which is damaged, omits the left-hand figure (on which, see end notes), but is otherwise substantially identical where legible. The left hand margin is damaged in both copies, but neither shows any sign of ever having had subsection headings.
- 1488-9: Text from C (draft on paper), with dittography removed; A and B (fair copies on parchment) have the subsection heading ‘Expense *necessarie*’, and remove the dittography. In A, the minstrels payment has been erased, but can be read under ultra-violet light.
- 1489-90: Text from B (draft on paper); in A (fair copy on parchment) the subsection heading is ‘Expense *necessarie*’, and the minstrels payment has been scored out, either because this expense was disallowed or because it had been copied mechanically from the account for the preceding year.
- 1490-1: The left-hand margin of this account has been trimmed, and it cannot now be seen whether it originally had subsection headings or not.
- 1503-4: Text from A; B is substantially identical, but has lost its subsection headings.
- 1507-8: Heading damaged; terminal dates are legible only as ‘Pentecost ***7 to the same feast, 15**’, but the date must be 1507-8, since the Prior of Holy Island who is the accountant here, Henry Dalton, died between 11th May 1516 and 31st May 1517 (see Commoner’s Account 1516-7).
- 1514-5: Text from A; B substantially identical.
- 1522-3: This account is probably a draft. Its closing date is unspecified, although the heading is undamaged, but is presumably Pentecost, as usual in these accounts.

End Notes

- 1342-3: Raine (*North Durham* 89) translates this entry, with a note asserting that it is an Almonry Bishop payment (though he dates it to 1346-7, the date of the earliest undoubted Boy Bishop of Durham payment – see Lytham Account 1346-7 and End Note). If Raine is correct, the ‘clerks of St. Nicholas’ are probably the boys of the Almonry School, and the Almonry Bishop ceremony was presumably held on St. Nicholas’s day (6th December) when it was first instituted at Durham, as in many other places (see Chambers, *The Medieval Stage* I, 336-71, citing early sixteenth-century Scottish royal payments to the ‘St. Nicholas’ Bishops’ of Cupar and Linlithgow), although it was certainly celebrated between Low Sunday and Ascension Day by 1355, and around Ascensiontide by 1405 (see Hostillar’s accounts for 1355 and 1405-6, and End Notes).

This may be the earliest surviving example of the phrase ‘St. Nicholas’ clerks’, which was in use in English in the sixteenth century; its original sense may have been ‘poor clerics without a benefice’, though it later acquired the comic sense ‘highwaymen’, which is clearly not relevant here. Alternatively, this could be a reference to a performance of the miracle-play *Tres Clerici*, in which St. Nicholas rescues and revives three boys who have been murdered by a greedy innkeeper (see Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church* II, 324-30), a story that was known to the twelfth-century Norman poet Wace, and so probably also in England.

More mundanely, however, this payment may have nothing to do with performance. The Bursar’s accounts from 1278-9 until the late fourteenth century

usually include 'customary alms' to clerics for singing the Psalter on All Souls' Day, and in 1301-2 they are actually referred to as 'poor clerks'. In three years these customary alms are switched to St. Nicholas's Day (see Bursar's accounts for 1337-8, 1338-9 and 1354-5), and as wine for singers on St. Nicholas's day also appears in the account for 1337-8, it is possible that there was also a dramatic musical performance, though this refreshment may have been simply for those who had sung the Psalter. Unfortunately, however, the Bursar's account for 1342-3 does not include the payment for singing the Psalter, and some other payment to poor clerics, such as that made by the Bursar to poor clerks of Norham in 1367-8, may be meant here.

- 1480-1: At first sight there seems to be a discrepancy between the Boy Bishop payment here and the Feretrar's Account for 1480-1 (qv., with End Note), whose list of payments received records payment from the Prior of Holy Island for two years. This is probably to be explained by the overlap of terminal dates: the Feretrar's account runs from 9th May, 1480 to 9th May 1481, and thus covers part of the period of the Holy Island account for 1479-80 (closed at Pentecost, 21st May) as well as most of that for 1480-1 (closed at Pentecost, 10th June); if payments were made in arrears after Ascension week, these would be the sums due for 1480 and 1481.
- 1482-3: The deletion of the minstrels' payment here is repeated in the fair copies of the accounts for 1488-9 (A) and 1489-90 (A). This may suggest either that there was some disagreement within the chapter at Durham as to whether minstrels at Holy Island should be paid or not, or that the almost constant sum of 3s. 4d. or 3s. 8d. represents a quota that was not always used.
- 1487-8: This account is rendered by two priors: John Manby and his successor William Brown (who was appointed on 10th November 1487). The sums in the left-hand margin of the A copy are often smaller than those in the conventional position, and probably represent the expenditure by one of the two priors for the part of the year for which he was responsible; A.J. Piper (in the card catalogue in the DUL search room) suggests that they are Brown's notes of his own expenditure. If this is right, the fact that the Boy Bishop payment appears in both positions shows that it was made in the second half of the accounting year, and hence that it was probably the payment due in Ascension week 1488.