**THE NORTHERN WAY**

The Archbishops of York and the North of England, 1304-1405

**Cathedral Churches and Communities in the Province of York**

**Workshop, July 2020**

ARCHBISHOPS AS PATRONS AND BUILDERS

by

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Welcome to my talk ARCHBISHOPS AS PATRONS AND BUILDERS

my name is SMP, I am an historian and medieval archaeologist, one of my specialism is to use the written sources for understanding historic buildings and the built environment.

**SLIDE 2** **Themes**

In this presentation, I will show how the Archbishops’ of York Registers can be used to research three themes concerning buildings project and the built environment.

The first theme is how to identify in the registers

* Activities of archbishops as patrons of major building projects

The second:

* How to gain information on smaller building works ordered by the archbishops and to understand their historic significance.

The third:

* Information on the medieval environment and landscape in relation to sacred space around church buildings.

**SLIDE 3** **Building patronage: York Minster**

For all themes, I will use as an example Register 11, of Archbishop’s John de Thoresby who, was Archbishop of York between 1352-1373.

The part of the Register **most useful** for researching the patronage of the archbishop regarding buildings is the section called **Intrinseca Camere**. This is about the **secular administration** of the Archbishop’s estate and it is more concerned with practical action in the material world, rather than with managing the spiritual lives of people.

* This Entry dating 1 August refers to donation of 100 marks to York Minster (for the new choir and Lady Chapel), following the ceremonial laying of first stone by Archbishop Thoresby.

Some of the information, such as this one, about patronage of building works is already in the public domain. The Registers have been explored for centuries by historians and antiquarians such as James Torre in the 17th century, Francis Drake in the 18thC, and by Browne and Raine in the 19th century. **In the registers, some of the headings on margins written in post-medieval handwriting, are annotations made by these antiquarians showing** their interest in collecting information about major building project in York Minster.

**SLIDE 4** **Building patronage: ‘our manor of Thorp’**

The Register tell also more about Thoresby interest in building project. He did extensive work on the the manor of Thorp, later Bishopsthorpe palace. In 1365 works began for a new chamber within the manor. This could be identified with the 14th C architectural phases in the palace.

**SLIDE 5** **Building patronage: Bishopsthorpe Palace**

Grade I Listed Building, 13th C buildings with 14th C additions and later redevelopment.

The 13th C phase are the first-floor hall in the centre, double chapel at the high end (left), chamber and solar at the lower end of the hall (right). The link with lead you to the site of Historic England with further information.

**SLIDE 6**  **Google Earth**, **Bishopsthorpe Palace from the north-east.**

A new wing was added in the 14th C, this could be identified with Thoresby’s ‘new chamber’ built from 1365.

It is evident from the **place of dating** of all documents in the registers that the archbishop in the last five years of his life was present in Bishopsthorp almost constantly, whilst before he spends most of his time in Cawood castle. **/** This change coincided with the completion of the new chamber in Bishopsthorpe. The archbishop used to spend the Christmas season from mid December to February in Cawood, but in his later years he remained at Bishopsthorpe even for Christmas. This suggest that the new chamber might have made the manor a more comfortable place to live and the ageing archbishop was less incline to travel.

**SLIDE 7**  **Archbishop’s estate: Archbishop’s Prison**

Architectural work and donations to York Minster have attracted the attention of antiquarians, however, some minor building works in the Archbishop’s estate have escaped their attention. Yet these provide significant historical information.

For example the entry in Reg 11 Fol 316 r , of **15 February 1361**

Is an order by the Archbishop to his treasurer to urgently provide for and to personally supervise the repairs of his prison in York, so that the prisoners will not be a danger to the archbishop or be able to escape. He orders to block with a stone wall a doorway opening towards the Archbishop’s Palace.

**SLIDE 8**  **Archbishop’s estate in York Minster Close**

This is the **Archbishop’s estate in York Minster Close,** reconstructed with documents and later cartography.

The position of the prison and the layout of the Archbishop’s Palace is known from 16th and 17th century documents. It was next to the gateway of the Palace and was part of a domestic range. Maurine Miller, who has studied bishop’s palaces in Italy, has found that bishop’s prisons were important symbols of the bishop’s spiritual authority, they were usually placed by the gateways of palaces in a visible location. This seems to be the case also for the Archbishop’s Palace in York and for Bishop’s Palaces in England.

The information in Register 11 about repairs, suggests that in 1361 the prison was used to keep prisoners and that the archbishop either was concerned about safety or wished to affirm the spiritual purpose and meanings of the prison.

Prisoners in the archbishop’s prison were misbehaving clergy or heretics, They were waiting for judgement or were already convicted in the Ecclesiastical Courts for crimes of a spiritual nature.

Note the location of the prison by the gateway into the palace yard and the position of the Ecclesiastical court-houses in York Minster: these were the Consistory and the Chapter House. Prisoners were led from the prison to the court houses through discrete doors opening towards the Palace Yard.

**SLIDE 9 Parish churchyards: Archbishops’ interest in environment and landscape and protection of sacred space**

The third theme is about the medieval environment and landscape in relation to sacred space around church buildings.

This entry Reg. 11, 210 r 5, **3 May 1364**

is in a section of the Register concerning the Spiritual jurisdiction of the Archbishop.

It is an order to the Dean of Ryedale to stop the parishioners of Lastingham cutting trees in the churchyard of the parish church. Under pain of excommunication.

**SLIDE 10 Lastingham, North Yorkshire, churchyard of the Parish Church of St Mary**

This is interesting because it shows that the environment of churchyard was a spiritual concern, because these were considered sacred space. In this case the practical idea of protection from the winds is accompanied with the idea that trees beautify the place.

In the registers, there are several of such entries and there are also ordonnances prohibiting certain disorderly behaviors in churchyards.

You can use Google Street View to locate information from the Registers and to understand the form of the landscape and environment there.

**SLIDE 10 Further reading**

You may wish to explore further some of these themes:

Brown, Sarah. 2003. ‘Our Magnificent Fabrick’. York Minster: An Architectural History c1220-1500.  Swindon: English Heritage. The reference book for the architectural history of York Minster in the 14th C.

Giles, Kate 2016. ‘The Archbishop’s Palace’. In: Garner-Lahire, J, ed., Excavations at the Minster Library, York 1997, vol. 662 BAR, Oxford. An historical introduction and interpretation of excavations in the area of the Archbishop’s Palace.

Gittos, Helen. 2002. ’Resting in Peace: Churchyard Consecration and Sacred Spaces in Anglo-Saxon England’. In: Reynolds, A. and Lucy, S., eds. Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales. Society for Medieval Archaeology, Leeds, pp. 195-208. The next is a book chapter about churchyards in Anglo-Saxon England, but useful for understanding the medieval idea of sacred space in churchyards.

Merlo Perring, Stefania. 2010. The Cathedral Landscape of York: The Minster Close c. 1500-1642. 2 vols. PhD thesis, University of York[. http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/22283](.%20%20http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/22283)

York Minster Close built environment in the late-medieval period, with maps and illustrations and discussion about the use of the written sources for researching buildings, landscapes, and ideas of sacred space.

Miller, Maurine. 2002. The Bishop's Palace: Architecture and Authority in Medieval Italy. Ithaca, NY : Cornell University Press. A great book on episcopal palaces. Italian examples but valid also for medieval episcopal palaces all over Europe.