

The histories of the two colleges founded by William of Wykeham, Winchester and New College, are inextricably linked in the early modern period, as at other times. As a consequence, the early modern records of

By divers records that haue ben shewed me of the Reverend Fathers my worthy predecessors, Bp Horne, Bp Cooper and Bp Bilson (the copies wherof I haue willed the Registrar to deliuer to Mr Warden of Winchester) it should seem that heretofore things haue not ben so well carried in the elecions either into the Colledge of Winchester, or from thence to New Colledge in Oxford, as had ben to be wished, but that corrupcion coloured by indirect courses hath formerly borne sway in them, *dominatus pecunia saith Bp Horne, turpis locoque emptio et venditio, Bp Cooper*; frequent buying and selling

businesses recorded in his register.⁶ These put the four electors on the spot as to whether they had heard of a compact for money being made to procure the resignations, and why Barker, U Fci bXYfñg _]bga Ub, k Ug bch Wcgyb. They also reveal the names of New College fellows whose resignations had been purchased by Edmunds, Sadler and Booth: they were, respectively, Edmund Coles, Richard Flemming and Edmund Gray. Unfortunately, only part of the reply of Thomas Meriat is recorded in the register; MeriUh]bg]gYX h\UhDY did refuse [Barker] partly because he thought he was not competent, eruditus in Gramatica and partly because there were 8 founders kinsmen already in Oxford College, which number must not be exceeded as he conceiuYXñ

It appears that the investigation came to nothing, and no consequences ensued for the corrupt members of staff. On 31 July 1621 Lancelot Andrewes wrote another letter to the Wardens and electors of both colleges which began with a statement that

It is not unknowne unto you that there came a complaint unto me of some offense offred at your last Elecion; the occasion of which complaint was (as I thinke) iust. Whereof taking notice it will not stand with my dutie to passe it ouer in silence, but to send you a timely warning to prevent the like, that so it may be but the error of that one yeare, and of that one Elecion and no more.⁸

This kind of language clearly indicates that they got away with it, presumably because those concerned denied everything, and nothing could be proved. In the letter Andrewes fYVd]h `UHX h\Y g\h h\g fYei]f]b[Fci bXYfñg _]b hc VY []j Yb dfYZYfYbW, UbX]bg]gYX h\Uh there was no difference in his eyes between what had happened in 1620 and the former practice of inter-election:

if interelecting were held inconvenient because it carried with it a vehement suspicion and strong savour of corrupcion, preelecting (sure) doth no lesse. I see no difference betweene resigning a place before an interelecion, or after a preelecion. It is all one to make a place void before hand, to be sped by an interelecting; and before hand, to preelect into a place to be made void after.

Andrewes rehearsed the especially pernicious consequences of this corruption for poor scholars: if the selling of d`UWgVY cbW dYfa]hYX, \Y k fchY, the first places shall euer go by purchase, and poore scholars unhable to contract, though of neuer so good desert, shall still be sett lower and lower in thY F c`,

Given that there was no other mechanism for removing fellows of New College in a timely enough fashion to keep up with the annual elections, the sale of resignations was an almost inevitable development, a safety valve for the pressure building up in the system. But it was a far from perfect solution. By making wealth rather than ability the crucial factor, the sale of resignations produced the damaging consequences described by Lancelot Andrewes in his letter cZ1619. The superannuating, and so utter defeating of many of a toward witt of their preferment, and to the sending in their places others, which well might stay a longer time, being nothing so k Y` [fci bXYXN⁹ Despite repeated episcopal condemnations and the efforts of principled staff a Ya VYfg `]_Y FcVYfh D]b_ \ck Yj Yf, Vtffi dhcb Vti `X bch VY YfUX]WHYX. H\Y BVg\ Zcf fYg] bU]cbgNgWbXU k Ujhc V][\hYWM]cbg hc B Yk Cc`Y[Y Zcf mYUfg hc Vta Y.¹⁰

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⁹ *ibid.*, fol. 138.

¹⁰ K]`]Ua g # YZcfa U]cb hc F YZcfa , 1530| 1850]d. 52