

Work and wages at Durham Priory and its estates, 1494–1519

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ABSTRACT. This article explores aspects of employment on the Durham Priory estates in the years 1494–1519. From a perspective of prices and wages, this period belongs at the tail end of a Golden Age for labour. Employment opportunities for the priory workforce should, therefore, have been relatively plentiful and remuneratively rewarding. However, as an analysis of the priory's accounts reveals, whilst wage rates remained stable, the waged employment offered was irregular and piecemeal for all but a small, predominantly skilled elite, with the majority of the workforce enjoying little in the way of fixed employment patterns or identifiable career structures.

Despite the abiding interest of historians in the nature of employment in the late medieval and early modern periods, attention has been focused chiefly on changing levels of wages and standards of living.¹ More recently, differences in the remuneration of male and female labour have come to the fore, as a result of exploring in particular the effects of the prolonged scarcity of labour that followed the Black Death.² In this perspective of prices and wages, the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries belong at the tail end of a Golden Age for labour. Although in particular contexts, such as that of York, conditions of employment were deteriorating in the later fifteenth century as a result of industrial competition, and though the economy of northern England in general showed little sign of economic growth through the period,³ the years

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1494–1519 nevertheless belong within the high-wage period inaugurated by the labour scarcities of the later fourteenth century. Not until prices started to rise significantly in the third and fourth decades of the sixteenth century was there any appreciable fall away from the gains made by wage-earners in the late Middle Ages.

Beside the work that has been done on movements of prices and wages, other aspects of the late-medieval labour market are under-explored. Whilst various broader studies of communities have touched on the availability, seasonality, regularity or security of work, few projects have had sufficient information to enter into detailed discussion. In recent years Penn and Dyer's analysis of fourteenth-century evidence relating to the enforcement of the Statute of Labourers, together with the studies of Poos on wages and labour in medieval Essex and of Hassell-Smith on Norfolk labourers in the latter part of the sixteenth century, have all partly redressed the balance.⁴ Woodward's study of northern building labourers, similarly, is a mine of relevant analysis and information.⁵ The subject, however, remains starved of analysis that comes close to an understanding of the characteristic work experience of employees, chiefly because of the scarcity of detailed information about workers in particular market contexts.⁶ Evidence drawn from the records of Durham Priory goes some way to filling this gap since it provides a wealth of detailed information regarding the nature of employment on the estates of a great ecclesiastical landlord. This evidence permits the comparison of numerous wage series over the period and allows an analysis of the structure of employment across a wide range of tasks. In addition, the identification in the records of a considerable number of named employees facilitates the exploration of individual working practices. This permits the investigation of a number of basic questions pertaining to the characteristics of employment on the priory estates.

It has long been acknowledged that the period under consideration was one of wage stability, with predictably stratified levels of remuneration for different tasks. What is not so clear is the extent to which individual employees remained within the bounds of this stratification. To what extent were employees, for instance, prepared to accept variable levels of remuneration in order to obtain employment? It is well known, too, that different employment structures were used for different tasks; the employment of individuals, the employment of individual artisans with assistants and the hiring of teams of associates were all regular types of employment contract. However, there has been little discussion of the extent to which these forms of labour organization varied between jobs and to what extent individuals moved between one type of structure and another. It would also be interesting to identify the extent to which

employees had regular expectations about their place in such structures. Was a man hired as a principal worker in one job prepared to act in a subordinate capacity in others? These doubts are all related to the larger question whether the degree of occupational flexibility undermines the notion of a career structure for priory employees. Knowledge of some of these characteristics of the labour market, complementing the evidence of high wage rates, is necessary to understand just how close the Golden Age was to the experiences and aspirations of wage-earners in more recent times.

The importance of this topic for social historians can hardly be doubted. It has been shown that even wealthier villagers and local craftsmen sometimes undertook waged work when the opportunity arose.⁷ For those with little property, meanwhile, employment was essential to survival, and the character of employment inevitably shaped their everyday experience. Despite the problems of evidence, a number of studies have already raised some relevant questions and suggested hypotheses worth further examination. Historians have, for instance, long acknowledged the irregular and diverse nature of such work. It has been suggested, too, that ‘occupational flexibility’ was often a feature of such employment.⁸ If it proves to be the case that waged employment was, indeed, irregular and unreliable, with dependent employees being obliged to turn their hands to a number of different occupations as circumstance demanded, this surely must compromise any very rosy interpretation of the working man’s lot.

The records of the Cathedral Priory of Durham, upon which this study is based, are particularly suited to an exploration of this kind.⁹ The accounts of the bursar, from which the greatest quantity of information is derived, are available for 22 out of 25 years during the period 1494–1519 (when Thomas Castell was prior).¹⁰ These provide an exceptional opportunity to examine wage rates and working practices. In addition, the identification, in the accounts, of a considerable number of employees by name creates a rare opportunity to plot the employment record of individuals from year to year. Complementary evidence, although not so prolific, survives in the accounts of several other obedientiaries, namely the almoner (available for 15 years in this period),¹¹ the hostillar (4 years)¹² and the commoner (4 years).¹³ Details of all recorded jobs have been entered into a database and analysed in order to investigate the questions raised earlier relating to the characteristics of the employment made available by the priory. The priory employed female labour so rarely in this period that no comparison of the wage rates or working conditions between men and women is possible. However, the accounts do allow an extended comparison of male wage rates across a wide range of

differentials. The large number and variety of jobs included in the database must to some extent circumvent the problem of rigidity that has been identified as the main problem with data from institutional accounts.¹⁴

The city of Durham resembled many a smaller market town.¹⁵ Whilst it acted as a service centre for the priory and the episcopal administration, it also provided marketing facilities for the rural hinterland. There was no significant export industry to suffer from native or foreign competition, so to that extent the city was spared one of the problems most likely to affect urban economies adversely in the later fifteenth century. Rusticity encroached upon the urban settlement to the extent that agrarian concerns remained an important feature of urban life.¹⁶ Because of this, townsmen were sometimes employed in agricultural occupations as well as in the more usual urban crafts and trades.¹⁷ The scope of this diversity is clearly shown in the type of work undertaken by these individuals for the priory. Away from the town, the priory had jurisdiction over a considerable number of rural vills and townships, both within the county of Durham and beyond. Because much of the administration of demesne lands 'in hand' was centralized at the priory, there are numerous entries in the bursars' accounts relating to employees engaged upon agricultural tasks, although building and repair work to rural properties also accounted for a considerable number of job entries.

Within the bursars' accounts, the bulk of the evidence concerning the employees of the priory is found amongst the *expense necessarie* and the *reparaciones* sections. The *expense necessarie* section details a considerable body of widely disparate items of expenditure, including general expenses, purchases of various commodities and payments for routine tasks, mostly pertaining to general maintenance and agriculture, undertaken by a cross-section of employees and officials. The *reparaciones* deal with specific payments made for repairs and improvements to property, both within the confines of the priory and outside in the various vills and townships. Information concerning particular jobs is more detailed in this section of the accounts, since these were not matters of routine, as were those itemised in the *expense necessarie*. Information concerning the priory's lay officials, some of whom also undertook waged work, is to be found in the *pensiones et stipendia* section of the bursars' accounts. The accounts of the almoner, hostillar and commoner, although much briefer, follow the same format and provide further comparative evidence. There is much information regarding the names of employees, methods of remuneration, work structures and frequency and types of employment to be drawn from these various sources. From them, it has been possible to build up a detailed picture not only of the nature of employment within the priory

estates but also of the impact of the priory as an employer within the local economy. Almost 2,500 separate job entries have been identified across the accounts analysed, for the period 1494–1519, of which 2,048 provide details of named employees. The majority of these jobs – 1,650 in all – appeared in the accounts of the bursar. Of these 1,419 involved the performance of waged manual work and the remaining 231 relate to those employees who received expenses for tasks undertaken during the course of their duties. Many of the latter, some of whom were priory officials in receipt of a pension or stipend, were engaged upon supervisory or non-manual administrative tasks.

Those officials who received pensions and stipends stood at the higher end of the social scale. The names of the majority of them appeared in the accounts of the bursar. Whilst precise numbers varied from account to account, the names of around 60 lay individuals usually appeared, each year, in the *pensiones et stipendia* section of the bursars' accounts during the period 1494–1519.¹⁸ These included the prior's steward, the clerk of the prior's exchequer and a number of legal advisors, most of whom were drawn from the ranks of the local or regional gentry. The highest annual fee was that of the clerk of the exchequer, at £6 13s 4d. The steward received £5 a year. Both of these posts were, characteristically, occupied by members of the Durham gentry. The income from them was, therefore, supplementary to the recipients' principal source of livelihood, but the sums were both higher and more secure than most wage-earners could hope for over the course of a year. John Rakett was the clerk of the exchequer for much of the period under consideration, and he was succeeded, by 1515, by Thomas Tempest, who had previously been one of the prior's legal advisors.¹⁹ Sir William Bulmer, a leading member of Durham gentry society, was named in the accounts as steward of the priory from 1509 through to his death in 1531. Two men, Richard Wren and his successor Peter Barnard, held the office of the bursar's 'exchequer courier' (*cursor scaccarii*) during the period in question. This official, whose duties included the collection of the bursar's revenues, received more modest annual stipends of £1 6s 8d.²⁰ The legal representatives of the prior all received retainers of £1 per annum. Some offices within the prior's household, such as those of marshal, cupbearer and carver, were also held by members of the gentry.²¹ Lower down the scale came other members of the prior's household, such as valets, grooms and cooks, together with a number of estate officials and one or two local craftsmen. The stipends of these lower employees ranged from £1 (the normal annual stipend for the priory's carters) down to 3s 4d, except for the plumber who received £2 a year.²² From 1511 the *pensiones et stipendia* in the bursars' accounts were augmented by a further section designated *stipendia ex novo*,

detailing what appeared to be fee increases for various officials, mostly valets, grooms and other members of the prior's household. These apart, the bulk of the pensions and stipends, particularly those of the leading officials and craftsmen, remained unchanged throughout the period. At the lower end of the scale these annual stipends of £1 6s 8d and below were hardly sufficient to provide an adequate livelihood, and so must also be regarded as supplementary to other sources of income.²³ Even the highest of annual stipends paid to craftsmen, those of the plumbers, would not have constituted an appropriate annual income for a skilled man, and in other cases they can have contributed only a minor part of the recipients' total annual earnings. For carters and plumbers, as for lawyers, annual stipends are best regarded as retaining fees to ensure adequate service when it was required.

Some of the additional sources of income earned by these priory servants can be identified. Amongst the employees who undertook the 231 administrative tasks identified in the bursars' accounts there were some who, in addition to annual stipends, received expenses. These included the cursitor of the priory who annually supervised the collection of the lamb tithes in Northumberland and several carters who oversaw the collection of the grain tithes in the various Durham villis. Some of these expenses may disguise sources of income. More transparently, some officials in receipt of stipends, both craftsmen and estate officials, received wages as well. Their favoured position within the employment hierarchy enabled them to undertake waged work in addition to their contractual duties, confirming that their stipends did not represent a full-time contract of service, and they were often among the priory's highest-paid wage-earners. This is most conspicuous in the case of the plumbers Christopher More, John Snaw and Thomas Risley, who featured prominently amongst the bursar's most regular employees over a number of years. Christopher More was coming to the end of his career by the start of our period, having worked for the priory since at least the early 1480s. His successor, Thomas Risley, was in office by 1497 and was followed in 1505 by John Snaw, who appears in the accounts up to 1515. By 1519, one William Snaw, presumably a relative, had taken over the official role. Another beneficiary of regular additional work was the smith, William Randson, who was retained almost across the period, from 1494 to 1515.²⁴ Several priory estate officials also undertook waged work. Thomas Falderley, the palliser (park-keeper) of Bearpark during the period in question, often received payments for agricultural tasks such as mowing, and general estate maintenance in addition to his annual stipend of 13s 4d. Richard Consett and his successor George Davison, the bailiffs of Billingham during the period, both received wages for repair work and agricultural tasks in

addition to their annual stipend of £1 17s 4d (the 17s 4d being in lieu of 3 quarters 2 bushels of wheat).²⁵ Few employees of Durham priory, in the period under consideration, could expect to earn anything approaching a living wage from the priory. Nevertheless, the availability of regular work for this small elite enabled these men to figure prominently amongst the few employees who were able to push their earnings above subsistence level.²⁶

Some apparent employees not in receipt of annual payments were, nevertheless, paid expenses for minor managerial responsibilities. Entries in this category concerned a variety of tasks. These included the supervision of transporting commodities, such as wine and soap, from the port of Newcastle upon Tyne and the making of journeys to various destinations to acquire foodstuffs such as fish and fowl. Since precise breakdowns of expenditure do not appear in the accounts, it is impossible to judge the extent to which such men were receiving remuneration under cover of reimbursement of expenses, or just what their form of remuneration might be. Meanwhile, most priory employees were wage-earners, though modes of payment varied. Many tasks were simply paid by the job, with a breakdown of payments being given in the accounts. In others, payment was made to an individual or a group of workmen *in grosso*, presumably in accordance with some agreement based upon a costing for the job as a whole and possibly inclusive of materials costs. In 1505, for instance, John Hight and Robert Forman received together £1 4s 10d in gross of the bursar for walling and daubing gables and clay chimneys, together with thatching and cutting timber for a cottage in Wolviston. In 1508, Thomas Wylly, John Hadok and William Bromidon were similarly paid £5 6s 8d in gross for making fosses (ditches) at Heworth with ‘stakes and ricez [rushes]’, together with cutting of the same and all carriage.²⁷ Unfortunately, since the records do not elaborate upon the procedure for the making of such agreements, it is not clear with whom in the priory administration the workmen had agreed their terms.²⁸ Other employees, often craftsmen, were paid piece rates. In 1500, for instance, John Anderson was paid £2 2s for making 13 rods of new stone roofing at 4s per rod. The actual job payment did not include materials since Anderson received a further payment of £3 13s 9d for 59 waggon loads of tiles at 1s 3d a load.²⁹ Other jobs were paid by weekly or daily rates, and only in these cases is it possible to compare rates of remuneration between different occupations, though the other references are valuable for other aspects of the analysis. Diversity of forms of payment was neither new nor unique to Durham.³⁰

In the bursars’ accounts for the period 1494–1519, only 41 jobs were paid at a weekly rate, and most of the instances related to carpentry work.

Payment by the day was much more common. In the bursars' accounts, entries relating to 370 jobs give details of daily wage rates. More evidence can be found in the accounts of the almoner, the hostillar and the commoner which, together, provide details of a further 143 jobs in this category. The bulk of the tasks paid by the day (300 out of the 370 in the bursars' accounts and almost all those in the accounts of other obedientiaries) involved construction and repair work upon the numerous properties that were held by the obedientiaries. Masonry work, wall construction and repair, daubing and plastering, pointing, carpentry, glazing, plumbing, roof-tiling, thatching and general labouring tasks all featured, together with a number of allied tasks. These included the quarrying and transportation of stone, the gathering of ling (heather) and drawing of straw for thatching purposes and the preparation of the wattles and spars used in wall construction. The remainder of the day work pertained to agricultural tasks such as mowing, haymaking and ploughing and to general estate maintenance, which included jobs such as ditching, fencing repairs and the clearing out of wells, springs and mill ponds.

Payments for all of these tasks were generally enumerated in the accounts in cash terms although evidence from the bursars' rent books suggests that, in the cases of a number of employees, part of their remuneration was paid over as allowances against rent dues owed. This was an administration in which payments in kind for rents owed still featured, although an analysis of the rent book of 1495–1496 has shown that cash transactions predominated. In 1495–1496 some 61 tenants, out of an approximate total of around 500, paid some, or part, of their rent dues in labour, although numbers seem to have declined as the period progressed.³¹ Fee payments to a number of the bursar's officials were, similarly, allocated in this fashion. However, since the majority of those employees identified as tenants of the bursar appear to have paid their rents in cash, it seems likely that most were paid in monetary form.

It is clear, from the evidence shown in Table 1, that, in common with wages generally in this period, those of the Durham Priory employees remained stable during the period in question. Northern wage rates barely altered from the 1460s through to the 1540s.³² The Statute of Labourers laid down separate lower rates of pay for those employees receiving 'meat and drink' as part of their remuneration. Occasionally some evidence of 'board and lodge' payments emerges. In the Bursar's Rent Book of 1495–1496, there are a few instances of carriers being provided with board, presumably at harvest time. Similarly, ale was provided at ploughing time in the priory vill of Billingham, in south-east Durham. A further entry gives details of a one-off rent rebate of 6s 8d, made to a

TABLE 1
Average daily wage for employees of Durham Priory in different categories, 1495–1519 (pence)^a

	1495–1499	1500–1504	1505–1509	1510–1514	1515–1519	Range
<i>Craftsmen</i>						
Plumber	6 (7)	6 (4)	6 (5)	5 (6)	5 (2)	5–6
Mason	6 (1)	5 (1)	— ^b	—	—	5–6
Carpenter	5.1 (11)	5 (4)	5.3 (18)	5 (16)	5 (8)	4–6
Tiler	5 (1)	5 (1)	4 (1)	—	5 (1)	4–5
Rough mason & other construction	4.7 (19)	4.4 (20)	4.3 (10)	4.1 (13)	—	4–5
Plasterer	4.5 (4)	—	5 (2)	—	—	4–5
Pointer	4.5 (2)	—	—	—	5 (4)	3.5–6
Waller	4.5 (20)	4.4 (11)	4.4 (15)	4.1 (18)	4.5 (4)	3–6
Dauber	4 (6)	3.8 (3)	3.9 (9)	—	4.3 (6)	3–5
Thatcher	4.2 (14)	3.6 (9)	3.5 (12)	3.8 (8)	4.1 (2)	3–5
<i>Craftsmen's assistants</i>						
Plumber	4 (7)	4 (3)	4 (5)	3 (6)	3 (2)	3–4
Mason	4 (1)	4 (1)	—	—	—	4
Carpenter	3.5 (2)	—	3.8 (5)	4 (4)	3 (1)	3–4
Tiler	4 (1)	4 (1)	3.7 (2)	4 (1)	3 (1)	3–4
Rough mason & other construction	3 (14)	3 (14)	3 (14)	3 (12)	3 (1)	3
Plasterer	3 (1)	—	3 (1)	—	—	3
Pointer	3 (1)	—	—	—	3.5 (3)	3–3.5
Waller	3 (15)	3.2 (7)	3 (13)	3 (15)	3 (3)	2–4
Dauber	3 (4)	3 (1)	3 (2)	—	3 (3)	3
Thatcher	3.2 (12)	3 (6)	3 (5)	3 (6)	3 (2)	3–4
<i>Agricultural workers</i>						
Mower	6 (3)	6 (3)	6 (3)	6 (8)	6 (3)	6
Haymaker	3 (1)	3 (1)	—	—	—	3
Filler of dung waggon	—	—	2.5 (2)	2 (1)	—	2–3
Remover of molehills	3 (2)	3 (1)	—	—	—	3
Clearer of well, millpond or conduit	3 (2)	—	3 (3)	—	—	3
Road repairer	—	3 (1)	—	—	—	3

^a Numbers of jobs are averaged in brackets.

^b — indicates no data available.

tenant of the nearby manor of Bewley, for the board (*mensa*) of John Anderson.³³ Anderson, a tiler, was a leading priory employee at this time and it is likely that he was provided with board on the occasions he was called upon to travel away from Durham to undertake work. In the main,

however, such evidence is rare and seems to represent an unusual arrangement. The wages stipulated in the Act of 1495 were lower than those usually received by the Durham Priory employees, which again suggests that provision of meat, drink and board was not, generally, included.³⁴ This is in keeping with the findings for other northern towns.³⁵

Table 1 illustrates the hierarchy of wage rates across the period under discussion as far as it can be illustrated from daily wage rates stated or implied in the priory accounts. The number of job entries represents a larger number of actual hirings, since each job more often than not involved several men. The top category notes activities that were paid 5d or 6d a day. In Durham, as elsewhere, plumbing headed the wage schedule.³⁶ In most years, plumbers could command 6d for themselves and 4d for their *famuli* (a term which, in the Durham context, seems to have referred to subordinates who possessed a greater degree of experience or skill than mere servants). In the years 1513–1515 the wages of the plumber, John Snaw, dropped to 5d, with 3d for his *famuli* for reasons which are not explained, but which may have had something to do with the performance of Snaw himself. This dip did not, however, remove plumbers from the top echelon of wage-earners. Skilled masons could sometimes command these top rates, although few are mentioned in the accounts. In 1498, for instance, Robert Galon and Robert Thomson, both described as masons, were paid 6d each, and their *famuli* 4d, for repairing the mill warren of Shields Mill.³⁷ Slightly lower wages were more usual since major building works in the priory had been scaled down after the mid-fifteenth century.³⁸ Thus the stoneworkers who appeared in the records were mostly roughmasons responsible for maintenance and repairs.³⁹ Masons were nevertheless frequently paid 5d a day. Carpenters, who were paid by both weekly and daily rates, also belong in this top category. In most medieval towns they formed the largest occupational group in the building industry since their work impinged upon most aspects of construction and repair work.⁴⁰ Principal craftsmen, such as John Champnay and Robert Davison, the leading carpenters for the bursar and almoner, respectively, between 1495 and 1516, could expect to receive 5d or 6d. Some entries make note of such variations. In 1515, for instance, Thomas Middleton and Thomas Knagg, also leading employees of the bursar, were paid for 40 days work at 6d each and 16 days at 5d.⁴¹ Since their wages fluctuated between the two figures it is likely that the variation was seasonal, the lower rate being paid during the shorter working days of the winter months.⁴² The wages of the servants or *famuli* of such men were usually 3d or 4d; the fluctuation was usually in line with that of their masters' wages, and probably also reflected seasonal trends.

A second category of crafts generally received lower rates of

remuneration, of 4d or 4½d a day. A distinction was made here too between craftsmen and their *famuli* or servants, the latter generally receiving only 3d. These lower-paid activities included rough masonry, walling, pointing, plastering, daubing, and thatching, which were evidently regarded as semi-skilled or lower-skilled occupations. Whilst the average daily rate for thatching and daubing was 4d per day, rates could on occasion fall to 3d. Stone-walling, which commanded 5d or 6d a day, was better paid than walling in wattle-and-daub and the making of internal (interclose) walls, which usually realized only 4d per day for the main employees and 3d for their servants. As Table 1 shows, there was little difference between the wages of these lower-paid craftsmen and those of servants in higher-paid work.

In the building and craft trades it was unusual to find labourers earning less than 3d per day. In general maintenance and agricultural labouring, however, wages rarely rose above this level and could go lower. Mowing was exceptional; it was paid at the top rate of 6d a day because it was so physically demanding. Other routine farm work did not command more than 3d. The lowest-skilled employees, however, were occasionally paid only 2d. During the 'great frost' of 1495, for instance, 18 men were paid only 2d each for a day's work helping the priory's plumber to thaw the great conduit of the monastery. Labourers hired to fill waggons with dung for removal were paid the same rate. The bursar's account for 1497 noted that John Scott was paid 2d a day for 13 days' ploughing at Whinneyclose, near Bearpark. Ploughing rates depended upon a number of different circumstances, however, and 2d a day perhaps implies an assistant's role.⁴³

Though the existence of a durable wage structure is well demonstrated in the Durham evidence, there needed to be within it some room for negotiation and in some types of work the division between 'skilled' and 'semi-skilled' was sometimes crossed. Towards the later part of the period the average wage rates of those working in stonemasonry dropped to 4d. Since the records often do not make clear the precise nature of the tasks undertaken, it may be that rough work, repair and refurbishment, rather than full-scale rebuilding, were in progress and that such work was lower-paid. Similarly the daily wages of carpenters, though generally a craftsman could often obtain 5d, could at times drop to 4d for rougher work. Differentials in pay of this kind are also found when carpenters were paid by the week. Regularly employed craftsmen such as John Champnay and Robert Thomson, who were often paid for 51 or 52 weeks of the year, could expect to earn 1s 8d a week, but those lower down the scale often received only 1s 4d.⁴⁴

In addition to structures of pay, the priory records also illustrate the different structures of working relationships to be met with in everyday

TABLE 2
*Organizational structure of work by job category at Durham Priory,
 1494–1519*

<i>Occupational category</i>	<i>One craftsman and assistant(s)</i>			<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Team</i>	<i>Unknown</i>		
Administrative	57	0	175	3	235
Agricultural	105	0	98	170	373
Building & general repairs	53	41	75	25	194
Carpentry	30	17	72	0	119
Carriage	118	1	291	17	427
Daubing	4	7	21	0	32
Ditching	7	0	20	0	27
Glazing	28	0	1	1	30
Maintenance	71	1	35	55	162
Paving	1	3	1	0	5
Plastering	2	3	3	0	8
Plumbing	65	27	1	0	93
Pointing	46	6	10	1	63
Quarrying	5	3	7	0	15
Sawing	37	1	19	0	57
Smith work	51	0	5	3	59
Stock-care and shearing	12	0	11	45	68
Tanning	22	0	0	0	22
Thatching	6	33	23	0	62
Tiling	55	5	11	1	72
Timber-splitting	18	0	5	0	23
Walling	21	26	59	0	106
Wattle-making, drawing straw and ling	11	0	10	0	21
Wheelwright work	20	0	1	0	21
Miscellaneous	162	0	13	10	185
Unspecified	0	3	2	0	5
Total	1,007	177	969	331	2,484
% of total	40.5	7.1	39.0	13.3	(100)
% of jobs whose organizational structure is known	46.8	8.2	45.0	0	100

employment. In Table 2 the 2,484 jobs entries detailed in the accounts analysed are broken down into occupational categories to indicate how tasks were organized in terms of employee numbers and skills. A distinction is made between jobs for which men were paid for working alone, those where they were employed with subordinate assistants (whether servants or *famuli*), and those allocated to teams. Two different

forms of teamwork are recognized in the table. In one type, characteristic of construction work, two or more craftsmen were employed on equal terms, generally with subordinates. In the other type, commonest in agricultural work, a contractor was employed to recruit labour for some heavy seasonal task.

Table 2 suggests that solitary work was not uncommon. It accounts for 46.8 per cent of the jobs whose characteristics are recorded. Plumbers, smiths, wheelwrights, glaziers and tilers often worked alone, and so did many employees engaged in minor repairs. In 1495, for instance, Robert Wilkinson was paid 4s for 'rakyng and pynnyng' (clearing out and replacing mortar in walls) in the choir of East Merrington church for 8 days, taking 6d a day, and in 1499 Robert Robynson received 1s 8d for setting the gutter on the door of a kiln, for 4 days at 5d a day.⁴⁵ Even in agriculture (taking 'agriculture' together with 'stock care and shearing' from Table 2), 51.8 per cent of all jobs whose form is known were allocated to individuals. The employment of a single craftsman and an assistant or assistants was, by contrast, uncharacteristic of the sort of employment offered by the priory. This type of contract is represented in only 8.2 per cent of cases where the structure is known. It did not occur at all in agricultural work.

Teamwork accounts for 39.0 per cent of such jobs in Table 2, which may understate its importance since over half the 'Unknown' category of jobs was in agriculture, where teamwork was common. Given the number of employees in these work teams, this was clearly the normal work experience for an employee of the priory. Building and construction work characteristically needed more than one pair of hands on a job, and was commonly carried out by two or more craftsmen with subordinate assistants.⁴⁶ A lot of the need for co-operation resulted from the need to shift building materials; roughmasons, for instance, needed servants and labourers working alongside them in order to carry the stones and mortar.⁴⁷ Over half of all walling jobs (of both stone and wattle-and-daub) were contracted to a team. In 1495, for instance, John Robynson and Roland Robynson worked, together with 4 *famuli*, walling the mill dam next to the monastery for 6 days, taking between them 1s 10d a day – perhaps 5d each for the principals and 3d each for the *famuli*.⁴⁸ Carpenters, too, more often than not worked together in teams of two or more upon specific tasks. The structure of these groups can often be reconstructed from pay differentials. In 1501, for example, three carpenters, Thomas Kirkman, Thomas Ness and John Biddick, were paid 1s a day between them for 78 days, working upon various repairs alongside the bursar's principal carpenters, John Champnay and Robert Thomson, who were each contracted to work for 50 weeks of the year at

1s 8d a week.⁴⁹ Less-skilled building workers, such as thatchers and daubers, also worked in teams. In 1500, the bursar employed John Stevynson of Billingham and John Saunderson of Wolviston, together with three *famuli*, in newly thatching a tenement in Hartlepool. In 1517 George Rand and John Gubion, together with two servants, daubed walls and chimneys in diverse tenements belonging to the commoner in Claypath for 8 days, taking between them 1s 4d.⁵⁰ Certain types of agricultural work, general estate maintenance and large-scale carrying work also involved teamwork, sometimes co-ordinated by the priory tenants in accordance with known and recurrent practices. The bursar's account of 1496–1497, for example, records that the tenants of Westoe and Harton undertook the carriage of 319 waggonloads of stone from the quarry of Westoe to Shields.⁵¹ The tenants of Shincliffe regularly undertook such large-scale carrying operations for both the priory and bishopric administrations. Agricultural tasks like haymaking and mowing sometimes mentioned one or two named employees together with various 'others', suggesting that the principal workmen recruited further labour of their own accord. On other occasions, a regular employee, acting in the capacity of contractor for the priory, recruited casual labourers as and when necessary. This was not unusual, as research by Penn and Dyer has shown.⁵² As already noted, tithe-collectors in the various priory villis were usually regular officials who were paid expenses for the extra seasonal work. Many entries, again, noted unnamed 'others' who assisted in tithe-collecting; these would be professional carters or local villagers, who were recruited, supervised and paid by the named officials.⁵³ Thomas Falderley, the palliser of Bearpark, was one of these 'middlemen'. In some job descriptions, his name was mentioned in isolation and on other occasions he featured with one or two other named individuals. Generally, however, his name appeared together with unspecified 'others' or 'associates', whose recruitment was presumably entrusted to him as the local official.⁵⁴ Another example is that of Richard Consett, bailiff of Billingham, who between 1494 and 1501 was paid annually for threshing the tithes of his vill, though he undoubtedly recruited others to undertake the work. In 1503, following Consett's death, his widow was paid for overseeing the same operation.⁵⁵ Consett's successor in the office of bailiff was George Davison who also received payment for threshing the tithes and for other repair and maintenance tasks in his locality. Given the scope and diversity of these tasks, Davison, like Consett before him, is likely to have subcontracted the work to local tenants.⁵⁶

Not only officials and higher-placed employees were used in this way, however, for there are references to the more lowly labourers or semi-skilled workmen being charged by the priory with similar responsibility.

A long-serving and regular employee, John Gubion, who worked on a variety of labouring and semi-skilled tasks between 1497 and 1519, also acted, on occasion, as a middleman contractor. In several job entries he was named as the principal employee along with unspecified ‘associates’ in undertaking chimney repairs, gathering straw and doing road and bridge repairs. Presumably, Gubion, as a known and reliable servant of the priory, was sufficiently well regarded to be entrusted with the task of hiring others.⁵⁷ The example of Robert Hepton, who in 1505–1506 was paid along with diverse unnamed women for drawing straw, is probably another case in point.⁵⁸

The career of John Gubion serves also to illustrate the piecemeal nature of much of the employment offered by the priory to the local populace. Gubion’s career with the priory spanned almost the entire period of this study; his first appearance in the accounts was in 1497 and he was still there in 1519. Most of his work was undertaken for the bursar although, occasionally, the almoner and commoner also employed him.⁵⁹ Altogether, 79 of his jobs can be identified. They included a variety of labouring tasks such as hedging, ditching, molehill disposal and drawing straw at 3d per day as well as the more skilled jobs of thatching, walling, daubing and general repair and construction work at 4d. In some cases, he even employed his own servants. Indeed Gubion’s precise ‘occupation’ is impossible to categorize since he was willing to turn his hand to whatever came his way. Gubion often worked with other regular employees, the majority of whose diverse careers mirrored his own. Most of these colleagues remained as lower-paid general labourers. They included William Crowe, James Crowe and William Greveson, all of whom undertook a variety of agricultural and construction tasks for the priory.⁶⁰

Gubion and his colleagues were uncharacteristic of the priory’s employees to the extent that they were employed so many times. The priory offered regular or frequent employment to very few.⁶¹ Even for many of its most skilled workforce, employment was neither regular nor guaranteed, which means that most of those named in the accounts have no continuous work record. Out of 562 priory employees identified as receiving wages or expenses, across the departments between 1494 and 1515, only 138 had any sort of association with the priory in five or more different years, and some of these were employed for a particular job only once a year. These 138 men were, by definition, the most stable part of the priory workforce, yet even among this group diversity of employment was common. Table 3 shows that 11 were concerned with administrative tasks for which they were usually paid expenses, whilst another 33 were craftsmen associated with only a single craft. A further 19 were employed

TABLE 3
*Occupations of employees of Durham Priory employed in five or more
different years*

	No.	%
Administration	11	8
Craft or trade	33	24
Miscellaneous tasks	19	14
Carrying	23	17
Two occupations	13	9
Three or more occupations	39	28
Total	138	100

upon miscellaneous tasks such as lock-mending, torch-making, knife-sharpening and repairing the priory's silverware, all of which were required only on an irregular basis. Another 23 were carriers, whose employment was similarly infrequent. However, the remainder of these 138 employees, over a third of the total, were paid for more than one type of work, often at differing levels of skill and differing wage rates.

Of the remaining 424 employees, whose association with the priory spanned less than five years, it is difficult to identify any specific career patterns within their employment records. Those from the rural villis and townships would, undoubtedly, have led largely agricultural lifestyles. Earnings from any employment offered by the priory would thus have contributed only a limited amount towards their overall household incomes.⁶² For many of the priory's casual employees who were resident in Durham itself, mixed household economies were probably also the order of the day. Evidence from the bursar's rent book of 1495–1496, provides some evidence of the lifestyles of Durham residents. As pointed out above, a number of tenants met some or all of their rent obligations in kind. Whilst most city rents were paid in cash, some tenants did make payments in kind. Low-grade cloth was the most usual commodity rendered, indicating that cloth-making was probably a common by-product of urban households.⁶³ One or two tenants made part payments in the form of small quantities of livestock, such as calves, piglets and chickens, again reinforcing the theory that town and country pursuits were closely linked in late medieval Durham.⁶⁴ A few others were, as previously discussed, allowed rebates for labour. James Spicer, whose name appeared amongst the priory's employees on two occasions in 1495–1496, paid his rent of 9s, for a tenement in the Durham Bailey, in a combination of cash, cloth and labour allowances. Another short-term

casual employee who was granted a rebate for work performed was John Woodmouse, who was allowed 1s 7d off his annual rent of 4s, for his holding in St Giles Borough.⁶⁵ Woodmouse undertook five jobs for the priory between 1494 and 1497. These were diverse and generally unskilled, involving tasks such as molehill disposal, hedge-clearing, daubing and general labouring on a building site.⁶⁶ Thereafter his name disappeared from the Gilesgate rental and from the priory employment records. He may well, however, have been the same John Woodmouse who later appeared in the records of the Durham Borough of Crossgate. Woodmouse's full-time occupation, as detailed in the Crossgate Borough court records of the early 1500s, was that of a tailor. He also went on to sit regularly as a juror in chief sessions of the borough court, suggesting that he may have become a tenant of some status within his community.⁶⁷ If this were the same man then it is interesting that the five jobs he had undertaken, previously, for the priory were unskilled and poorly paid, suggesting that he had been prepared to undertake whatever work was available in times of need, without apparent regard for career or status. Such work, which must only have contributed a small amount towards his overall income, was surely regarded as purely supplementary. No evidence remains of the lifestyles of most of the priory's employees but the majority, who appeared in the records only briefly, must, like Woodmouse, have been motivated rather by financial concerns than those of status or career. This would explain the difficulty encountered in seeking to impose career structures upon the majority of priory employees since, for the main part, such structures were never in place.

Even the priory's highest-paid craftsmen were prepared to move around to some extent within the pay structure in order to acquire work, though they seem never to have settled for less than 4d. Those who on occasion earned top wages for skilled work would at other times accept a lower rate of pay for a task requiring less skill. This is most apparent in masonry work. William Bryan, a regular employee not only of the bursar but also of the almoner, hostillar and commoner, appears frequently in the accounts in connection with a variety of stone-working tasks.⁶⁸ In 1494, for instance, he was employed for 16 days upon tasks that included making new steps and working upon a buttress in the priory's great barn. In the following year, he undertook repairs to the common oven in Framwellgate, within the city of Durham, and in 1497 he was employed upon walling the dam of Pittington mill. He often engaged in the making and repair of walls. His colleague, William Watson, generally performed similar tasks.⁶⁹ As a rule, he occurs in the top category of wage-earners, taking 5d or 6d a day. In 1505, however, Bryan and Watson individually undertook walling work (seemingly of wattle-and-daub) for the hostillar

for a daily rate of 4d, taking 3d for their *famuli*.⁷⁰ In 1513, Bryan and Watson together undertook walling and gutter-making for the hostillar, again working at 4d for themselves and 3d each for their three servants. They could also be found undertaking work in company with employees such as John Gubion and George Skeloss, who were little more than general labourers. In 1507, Watson and Skeloss were engaged for 30 days upon work which included walling, daubing and ‘le pargenyng’ of the walls at Bearpark at 4d per day.⁷¹ The lower rates of pay recorded for these men may simply represent a decline in their abilities in later life, but since other masons were generally taking the same lower rates of pay in the early sixteenth century this is not the most likely interpretation; it seems rather that the work available was less skilled.

As this latter example suggests, priory employees were also uncommitted to particular structures of work, or to any particular position within structures. A job entry in the commoner’s account of 1517 records differing pay rates for five employees working at Hett Mill. Heading the list was the master carpenter, John Champnay, who probably supervised operations and took 6d a day. Working alongside him were three craftsmen taking 5d a day and another named individual, taking 4d, who was possibly an apprentice or journeyman. The three craftsmen in this contract, John Barnard, Thomas Hunter and Thomas Knagg, were at other times employed as principal employees with subordinates below them.⁷² Within the lower wage bands, it is possible to identify servants or general labourers who nevertheless also contracted for construction work. In 1501, for example, John Gubion, John Atkinson and William Craue jointly undertook a thatching job in addition to performing agricultural tasks such as hedge-making and foss-clearing. In the same year, Gubion and Craue, working as a team, also undertook some daubing.⁷³

From the evidence it seems that the employment offered by Durham Priory was irregular and piecemeal for the majority of its employees. It also drew men into varieties of tasks under differing conditions of pay and organization. Rates of pay – and to some extent working arrangements – were structured in accordance with different types of work, but individual careers were much more unpredictable. In this respect, the priory’s records illustrate a feature of the late medieval labour market and work experience that has probably not received as much attention as it deserves. Wages, in real terms, were undoubtedly higher in comparison to later sixteenth-century standards, and it is in that respect that the later fifteenth century and the early sixteenth may be reckoned a Golden Age of labour. Yet this was not a labour market characterized for most people by fixed employment, settled patterns of work or predictable career prospects. Durham Priory workers may have had their individual limits as to what

they were prepared to do, but much of the time they were taking what they could get.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Notably H. Phelps Brown and S. V. Hopkins, 'Seven centuries of the price of consumables compared with builders' wage-rates', reprinted in H. Phelps Brown and S. V. Hopkins, *A perspective of wages and prices* (London and New York, 1981), 13–59; D. L. Farmer, 'Prices and wages, 1350–1500', in E. Miller ed., *The agrarian history of England and Wales, vol. 3: 1348–1500* (Cambridge, 1991), 467–94, 516–24.
- 2 See P. J. P. Goldberg, *Women, work, and life cycle in a medieval economy: women in York and Yorkshire, c. 1300–1520* (Oxford, 1992).
- 3 A. F. Butcher, 'Rent, population and economic change in late medieval Newcastle', *Northern History* 14 (1978), pp. 67–77; C. M. Newman, *Late medieval Northallerton: a small market town and its hinterland, 1470–1540* (Stamford, 1999), 80–92; D. Palliser, *Tudor York* (Oxford, 1979), 201–11; A. J. Pollard, *North-eastern England during the Wars of the Roses* (Oxford, 1990), 53–80.
- 4 S. A. C. Penn and C. Dyer, 'Wages and earnings in late medieval England: evidence from the enforcement of the labour laws', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 43, 3 (1990), p. 373; L. R. Poos, *A rural society after the Black Death: Essex 1350–1525* (Cambridge, 1991), 207–28; A. Hassell Smith, 'Labourers in late sixteenth-century England: a case study from north Norfolk (Part 1)', *Continuity and Change* 4, 1 (1989), 11–52.
- 5 D. Woodward, *Men at work: labourers and building craftsmen in the towns of northern England, 1450–1750* (Cambridge, 1995).
- 6 See, for example, the comments in C. Dyer, *Standards of living in the later middle ages: social change in England, c. 1200–1520* (Cambridge, 1989), 222–33.
- 7 Poos, *A rural society*, 218. For similar evidence pertaining to Essex in the early modern period see K. Wrightson and D. Levine, *Poverty and piety in an English village: Terling 1525–1700* (London, 1979), 22–3.
- 8 Penn and Dyer, 'Wages and earnings', 356, 361–2; Poos, *A rural society*, 212–20; M. M. Postan, 'Medieval England in its prime: England', in M. M. Postan ed., *The Cambridge economic history of Europe, vol. I: The agrarian life of the middle ages* (Cambridge, 1966), 622–4.
- 9 The manuscript sources for this study are all in Durham University Library, Archives and Special Collections, Durham Cathedral Dean and Chapter Muniments.
- 10 They are missing for 1502–1503, 1516–1517 and 1517–1518.
- 11 1494–1495 to 1498–1499, 1504–1505, 1506–1507 to 1509–1510, 1511–1512, 1513–1514, 1515–1516, 1516–1517, 1518–1519.
- 12 1505–1506, 1510–1511, 1512–1513, 1513–1514. (The hostillar was responsible for the accommodation and hospitality offered to guests of the priory.)
- 13 1495–1496, 1505–1506, 1510–1511, 1517–1518. (The commoner was responsible for the running of the monks' common-house.)

- 14 See J. Hatcher, 'The great slump of the mid-fifteenth century', in R. H. Britnell and J. Hatcher eds., *Progress and problems in medieval England: essays in honour of Edward Miller* (Cambridge, 1996), 262.
- 15 M. Bonney, *Lordship and the urban community: Durham and its overlords, 1250–1540* (Cambridge, 1990), 145. For comparisons see, for example, A. Everitt, 'The marketing of agricultural produce', in J. Thirsk ed., *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, vol. 4: *1500–1640* (Cambridge, 1967), 467–592; R. H. Hilton, 'Towns in English medieval society', in R. Holt and G. Rosser eds., *The medieval town: a reader in English urban history, 1200–1540* (London, 1990), 19–28; Newman, *Northallerton*, xi–xii, 94, 104.
- 16 Bonney, *Lordship*, 145.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 116.
- 18 In 1500–1501 and 1505–1506, for instance, 40 and 41 names, respectively, appeared in the accounts, whilst in 1503–1504, the number was 52. Especially towards the end of the period, however, numbers of 60 or slightly more were most usual; see Bursar's accounts, 1500–1501, 1503–1502, 1505–1506, *pensiones et stipendia*.
- 19 Tempest subsequently became steward of the bishopric of Durham and a leading member of the Council in the North after its re-establishment by Cardinal Wolsey in 1525; see R. Reid, *The King's Council in the North* (London, 1921), 103, 490. His career is outlined in S. T. Bindoff, *The House of Commons, 1509–1558*, (3 vols, London, 1982), vol. 3, 431–3.
- 20 R. Lomas, 'A priory and its tenants', in R. Britnell ed., 'Daily life in the late middle ages' (Stroud, 1998), 115.
- 21 *Rites of Durham*, ed. J. T. Fowler (Surtees Society, 107, no. 2 (1902)), 144.
- 22 Plumbers were the highest paid of the craftsmen, a trend which persisted into the early modern period; see Woodward, *Men at work*, 41–2.
- 23 An analysis of the costs of feeding craftsmen and labourers and their families in Hull and Lincoln in the mid-sixteenth century has suggested that in 1540–1549 the sum of £1 1s 11d was necessary to feed a single man for a year whilst £4 13s 1d was required to feed a couple with four children; see Woodward, *Men at work*, 282. For the period under consideration, these amounts need to be adjusted downwards, to bring them in line with early-sixteenth-century price levels, before the onset of inflation. In terms of prices for the decade 1500–1509, the equivalent of the Hull and Lincoln subsistence rates would be 12s per annum to feed a single man and £2 10s 7d to feed a family with four children. Such figures do not, however, take account of other living costs such as rents and fuel. (These calculations are based upon the Phelps Brown and Hopkins index of the price of consumables, which suggests that prices increased by 84 per cent between the first decade of the sixteenth century and that of 1540–1549; see Phelps Brown and Hopkins, *A perspective of wages*, 29.) See also my further discussion of this subject in Christine M. Newman, 'Employment on the Priory of Durham estates 1494–1519: the priory as an employer', *Northern History* 36 (2000), 49–51.
- 24 Bursars' accounts, 1494–1495 to 1496–1497 (More); Bursars' accounts, 1498–1499 to 1505–1506 (Risley); Bursars' accounts, 1506–1507 to 1515–1516 (Snaw), in each case under *reparaciones, pensiones et stipendia*; Bursars' accounts, 1494 to 1515–1516 (Randson), under *marascalca* (farriery) and *pensiones et stipendia*.
- 25 Bursars' accounts, 1494–1495 to 1501–1502 (Consett); Bursars' accounts, 1503–1504 to 1519–1520 (Davison). While the bailiff's stipend was entered under *pensiones et stipendia* section of each account, the further maintenance payment appeared amongst the *allocaciones*.
- 26 Newman, 'Employment', 51–3.

- 27 Bursars' accounts, 1505–1506, 1508–1509, *reparaciones*.
- 28 The *reparaciones* section of the bursars' accounts noted annual payments of £1 3s 4d to the wheelwright, William Middleton, for his work in the abbey, making waggon and cartwheels and other necessities within the time of the account. By the 1530s, however, the arrangement seems to have been more formal. The payments to Middleton's successor, Thomas Hunter, were itemised in the same section of the accounts as an annual stipend. See Bursars' accounts, 1494–1495 to 1519–1520, *reparaciones*. See also *The Durham household book: or the accounts of the bursar of the monastery of Durham, from Pentecost 1530 to Pentecost 1534*, ed. J. Raine (Surtees Society, 18) (London, 1844), 80, 173, 270. (This is a printed transcript of Durham Cathedral Dean and Chapter Muniments, Bursar's Book K.)
- 29 In another entry, however, the provision of materials was accounted for in the job payment. In 1509 Hugh Bust, glazier (sometimes also designated 'Frenchman'), was paid £1 1s for new glazing containing $35\frac{1}{2}$ feet at 4d per foot at Aycliffe, Heighington, Billingham, Hesledon and in the chapel of the lord prior and elsewhere, this year. The account noted that Bust himself had provided all the materials, together with that from old work, to a combined value of 9s 4d; Bursars' accounts, 1500–1501, 1509–1510, *reparaciones*.
- 30 See Penn and Dyer, 'Wages and earnings', 370.
- 31 Lomas, 'A priory and its tenants', 118–21. A shortage of coinage in the region seems the most likely explanation for this, although local preferences for traditional modes of exchange may also have played some part. *Ibid.*, 123–4; Pollard, *North-eastern England*, 77–8.
- 32 Woodward, *Men at work*, 171–2.
- 33 *Durham Cathedral Priory rentals*, vol. 1: *Bursars' rentals*, ed. R. A. Lomas and A. J. Piper (Surtees Society, 198) (Durham, 1989), 161, 164, 166–7, 171, 178. Pages 128–97 contain a printed transcript, together with detailed notes and description, of Durham Cathedral Dean and Chapter Muniments, Bursar's Rent Book G (1495–1496).
- 34 For example, freemasons, master carpenters, roughmasons, plumbers, glaziers and master tilers were to receive 6d per day without food but only 4d per day with such provision, the rates dropping to 5d and 3d respectively in the winter months. Labourers were to receive 4d per day without food and 2d with, the rate falling to 3d or $1\frac{1}{2}$ d in winter; see 11 Henry VII, c. 22.
- 35 Woodward, *Men at work*, 148.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 41–2.
- 37 Bursar's account, 1498–1499, *reparaciones*.
- 38 Though Thomas Castell was remembered as a builder, his endeavours were confined to rebuilding the priory gatehouse and its chapel and repairing the 'four doctors' window in the north transept of the cathedral. Building work undertaken during the first part of the fifteenth century was sufficient to remove the need for further major projects; see R. B. Dobson, *Durham Priory, 1400–1450* (Cambridge, 1973), 295–6.
- 39 D. Knoop and G. P. Jones, *The medieval mason* (Manchester, 1933), 85–6.
- 40 H. Swanson, *Medieval artisans: an urban class in late medieval England* (Oxford, 1989), 83; Woodward, *Men at work*, 17–18.
- 41 Bursar's account, 1515–1516, *reparaciones*.
- 42 The seasonality of employment is discussed in Woodward, *Men at work*, 135–42.
- 43 In 1497, 1493 and 1499, William Cliff, one of the priory's leading carriers and a tenant of the bursar, was paid 1s a day for ploughing at Whinneyclose, using his own plough. Rent rebates in respect of ploughing to Cliff and another tenant suggest that without

- the use of their own ploughs the going rate would have been 8d a day; see Bursar's Rent Book G, 1495–1496, fols. 52, 73v.
- 44 In 1497, for example, John Biddick, carpenter, took 1s 4d per week for 27 weeks' work upon the mill in the tenure of John Potts, earning a total of £1 16s; see Bursar's account, 1497–1498, *reparaciones*.
- 45 Bursars' accounts, 1495–1496, 1499–1500, *reparaciones*.
- 46 For the labour involved in these tasks see L. F. Salzman, *Building in England down to 1540* (Oxford, 1952), 187–92, 224.
- 47 Knoop and Jones, *Medieval mason*, 85–6.
- 48 Bursar's account, 1495–1496, *reparaciones*. Similarly, in 1497, William Brian and his associate were employed for six days working on the foundations of the almoner's barn, taking between them 10d a day; see Almoner's account, 1497–1498, *reparaciones*.
- 49 Bursar's account, 1500–1501, *reparaciones*.
- 50 Bursar's account, 1500–1501, *reparaciones*; Commoner's account, 1517–1518, *laborarii*.
- 51 Bursar's account, 1496–1497, *reparaciones*.
- 52 Penn and Dyer, 'Wages and earnings', 365–6.
- 53 T. Lomas, 'South-east Durham: late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries', in P. D. A. Harvey ed., *The peasant land market in medieval England* (Oxford, 1984), 322–3.
- 54 Other tasks, such as animal-keeping and fence-mending, although credited to Falderley alone, were also probably subcontracted to local labourers; Bursars' accounts, 1494–1495 to 1519–1520, *expense necessarie, reparaciones*.
- 55 Bursars' accounts, 1494–1495, 1495–1496, 1496–1497, 1498–1499, 1499–1500, 1500–1501, 1501–1502, 1503–1504, *expense necessarie*.
- 56 Bursars' accounts, 1503–1519, *expense necessarie*; 1507–1508, 1515–1516, 1519–1520, *reparaciones*.
- 57 Bursars' accounts 1503–1504, 1507–1508, 1519–1520, *reparaciones*.
- 58 Commoner's account, 1505–1506, *tectura stramina* (thatching).
- 59 Bursars' accounts, 1497–1519, *reparaciones*; Almoner's account, 1506–1507, *reparaciones*; Commoner's account, 1517–1518, *laborarii, carpentarii et sarracio*.
- 60 Bursars' accounts, 1500–1505 (William Craue); Bursars' accounts 1506–1515 (James Craue); Bursars' accounts, 1504–1511 (William Greveson).
- 61 See my earlier discussion of this in Newman, 'Employment', 55.
- 62 T. Lomas, 'South-east Durham', 317–24.
- 63 R. Lomas, 'A priory and its tenants', 120.
- 64 *Durham Priory bursars' rentals*, 185, 188.
- 65 *Ibid.*, 186.
- 66 Bursars' accounts, 1494–1495, 1495–1496, 1497–1498, *reparaciones*.
- 67 Court Book of the Borough of Crossgate, 1498–1524, fols. 28v, 45v, 75, 116v.
- 68 Almoners' accounts, 1495–1496, 1497–1498, 1504–1505, 1506–1507, 1507–1508, 1508–1509, 1511–1512, 1513–1514, 1515–1516, 1516–1517, *reparaciones*; Bursars' accounts, 1494–1495, 1495–1496, 1496–1497, 1498–1499, 1501–1502, 1504–1505, *reparaciones*; Commoners' accounts 1495–1496, 1505–1506, 1510–1511, *reparaciones*; Hostillers' accounts, 1505–1506, 1509–1510, 1510–1511, 1512–1513, 1513–1514, *reparaciones*.
- 69 See, for example, Bursars' accounts, 1503–1504, 1504–1505, 1505–1506, *reparaciones*.
- 70 Hostillar's account, 1505–1506, *reparaciones*.
- 71 Bursar's account, 1508–1509, *reparaciones*; Hostillar's account, 1513–1514, *reparaciones*.
- 72 Commoner's account, 1517–1518, *carpentarii et sarracio*.
- 73 Bursar's account, 1501–1502, *reparaciones*.