

RUMBURGH PRIORY IN THE LATER MIDDLE AGES: SOME NEW EVIDENCE

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AS WITH SO many of the small monasteries of medieval England, the priory of Rumburgh, situated about five miles south of Bungay, has left few traces of its history. The church which the monks formerly served still stands, but their domestic buildings have long since vanished, along with most of the documentary evidence pertaining to the priory. The only modern published accounts of Rumburgh priory simply sketch the outlines of the house's history and are wholly silent for the period between the tax assessment of 1291 and the monastery's dissolution in 1528, save for the names of its priors (Cox 1907, 77–79; Cane 1936, 155–69). Rumburgh might have been saved from this fate of obscurity through its status as a dependent cell of the great Benedictine abbey of St Mary's, York: some of the records of several small cells, including two of Rumburgh's near neighbours, the Norwich satellites of Hoxne and Aldeby (Norfolk), have survived in the archives of their mother houses.¹ However, the dissolution and destruction of St Mary's and the subsequent loss of many of its records kept in St Mary's Tower, York, during the Civil War, has denied its dependencies this advantage.² But fortunately for the student of Suffolk monasteries, a previously unknown manuscript of Rumburgh priory documents has fairly recently passed to the county record office among the Iveagh collection.³ When added to the other surviving material for the priory it provides a rare opportunity to examine in a little detail the later history of one of the smallest monasteries of medieval England.

This manuscript, S.R.O.I., HD 1538/335/1, is an extremely curious volume, which may best be described as a scrapbook of Rumburgh documents.⁴ It is a large notebook, measuring 32cm x 23cm, entitled on the first folio: 'Sixty-four Charters etc. relating to the Priory of Rumburgh in Suffolk'. Following a short description of the foundation and dissolution of the house on the second folio, there follow eight blank folios and another of sugar paper. Then, mounted onto the trimmed pages, are sixty-four sheets of folded parchment and paper, comprising in fact fifty-eight separate documents produced at Rumburgh, very few of them charters, dating from between 1300 and 1612. One document has retained its seals.⁵ A second sheet of sugar paper and eleven blank folios complete the volume. The notebook bears the bookplate of Craven Ord (1756–1832) and comparison with his other volumes of antiquarian notes leaves no doubt that it was he who put together this manuscript.⁶ Ord, Vice-President of the Society of Antiquaries for several years and one of its three Patriarchs at his death, was particularly renowned for his knowledge of church brasses, but his antiquarian interests were broad. He accumulated a large library, including numerous medieval manuscripts, many bought from the Thetford attorney and antiquary Tom Martin, and the Rumburgh cache probably came from this source. His library was dispersed between 1829 and 1832, much of it, including the Rumburgh volume, passing into the hands of the collector Sir Thomas Phillipps. From here it came to the Earl of Iveagh, whose Suffolk manuscripts were bought by the county record office in 1987.

The fifty-eight Rumburgh documents acquired and mounted by Ord are particularly remarkable for their ephemeral nature. They are a diverse collection of routine administrative records – accounts, inventories, court records, short-term leases – of little interest to subsequent owners of the priory's property and therefore unlikely candidates for survival. To what contingency we owe their preservation up to Ord's time is unknowable, but it seems more likely that they always formed a single group of documents

than that Ord or someone else acquired them piecemeal. If so, the inclusion of eleven post-Dissolution documents in the collection up to 1612 suggests that the surviving medieval records remained in the possession of the owners of the priory site at least until that date. Whatever fortuitous route these unbound records took into the possession of Ord, his decision to paste them into a notebook, although not corresponding exactly to modern archival practice, greatly reduced their chances of future dispersal. They show no sign of neglect; with the exception of the three leaves of the Rumburgh rental of 1392, every individual document is in very good condition.

This is also a miscellaneous collection. Having subtracted the eleven post-Dissolution documents, fifteen distinct kinds of administrative record are represented. The most common are documents from the Rumburgh manor court, mainly estreats – digests of ameracements and fines owed to the prior as lord of the manor. A few property records survive, including six leases, one membrane of a late medieval cartulary and one faded rental. Financial details are provided by six priory accounts; four accounts of the warden of St Michael's church, South Elmham; accounts of the prior's hayward and bailiff; one schedule of debts and another of pensions owed to the cell. Finally, there survive three priory inventories, made between 1439 and 1482, whose book lists are the only parts of the manuscript to have already been brought to wider attention.⁷ The earliest of these documents are feoffments of 1300 and 1307, but the vast majority belong to the last ninety years of the priory's existence, from the end of William Esyngwald's priorate in 1439 to the house's dissolution by Wolsey in 1528. This varied material can be supplemented by records produced at the priory's suppression, some of which were printed by Dugdale, as well as by information from the Norwich episcopal registers and what survives of the St Mary's, York, archive. The fragmentary nature of this material precludes anything like a comprehensive survey of the priory's activity and fortunes in the later Middle Ages, but at the same time its diversity does allow a more rounded picture than can a more homogeneous archive, such as those of the cells of Hoxne and Aldeby which consist largely of accounts.

Rumburgh priory was one of the oldest monasteries in medieval Suffolk. The register of the abbey of St Benet Hulme records that a certain Blakere was placed with a number of companions in a dependent cell at Rumburgh shortly before the Conquest (1047x1064).⁸ The cell seems to have survived the Conquest in some form, since Domesday records the presence of twelve monks at 'Wisseta' in 1086 (*D.B.* 1, 293). There has been some confusion over when Rumburgh was given to the large and thriving abbey of St Mary's, York by the lords of Richmond.⁹ However, a copy of the charter of Count Alan III of Brittany, first earl of Richmond, granting Rumburgh to St Mary's as a cell (c.1136) was entered into an early 16th-century Rumburgh manuscript relating to the church of St Michael, South Elmham.¹⁰ This charter granted to St Mary's the church of St Michael, Rumburgh and its appurtenances, confirmed the priory's possession of the tithes of Kettleburgh, Swaffham and Costessey, which Conan his chaplain was then holding, and recorded that St Mary's had granted to Rumburgh all their Cambridgeshire and Norfolk rents in the Earl's fee. In return, it was specified that twelve York monks should remain perpetually at Rumburgh and that the mother house should have the power to place and replace the priors and monks of Rumburgh as it pleased. Earl Alan, therefore, did not add much to the priory's existing endowment, which included revenues from the churches of Wissett and Spexhall and the chapels of Holton and South Cove.¹¹ The scarcity of surviving charters precludes any reconstruction of the endowment process of the priory,¹² but it would appear that little of significance was added after the transfer of Rumburgh to St Mary's, York. Probably the most important development after this time was the appropriation of the churches of Rumburgh, St Andrew, Wissett and the chapels of South Cove and Holton in the 1160s and the subsequent appropriation of St Michael's, South Elmham.¹³

It is not until 1291 that any information about the revenues of Rumburgh priory survives. The *Taxatio* of that year records that the priory possessed an income of a little over £70, over £60 of which came from spiritualities.¹⁴ Much more detailed financial data are provided by the six priory accounts in the S.R.O.I. manuscript, dating from between 1439 and 1493/4, which can be supplemented by material collected by Wolsey's commissioners.¹⁵ The accounts display a marked stability in the annual income received by the priors of Rumburgh. This constancy, however, partly results from the accountancy practice used at Rumburgh. Instead of recording the amounts actually received in any one year, the accountant would insert the sum that *should* have been paid. This is made clear by the debts section at the foot of each account, which itemises sums still owed to and by the accountant, and includes unpaid rents, pensions and portions whose full values had been filled in under 'receipts' as if they had been paid. But this system does not reduce the receipts section of the account to complete fiction since outstanding debts do seem gradually to have been paid off and where a source of income had permanently lost value this is recorded.¹⁶ Therefore, if the exact receipts of a single year cannot be taken literally, the overall impression of Rumburgh's income that these accounts provide may be considered accurate.

A glance at the accounts of the S.R.O.I. manuscript would seem to indicate that in the mid-15th century Rumburgh was in a surprisingly strong financial state for such a small monastery, with an income which consistently exceeded the house's expenditure; but also that the priory suffered from a gradual decline in its income over the second half of the 15th century, from over £80 in the 1460s to under £50 by 1493/4. However, both of these conclusions would be mistaken. It was common medieval accounting practice to carry over the arrears or surplus from the previous year, although, confusingly, 'arrears' was used to mean the excess of receipts over expenditure and 'surplus' the excess of expenditure over receipts. However, the Rumburgh accounts, which atypically run from Quasimodo Sunday (first Sunday after Easter) to Quasimodo Sunday, used an even more complicated system: instead of carrying over either an arrear or a surplus from the previous year depending on that year's balance, a sum was entered under both headings, debts owed to the priory under 'arrears' and those owed by the priory under 'surplus'. These two amounts must be subtracted from the calculation of the actual revenue and expenditure of the priory each year. It was in fact the debts owed to the priory that declined between the 1460s and the 1490s and not its income; and in 1439 and 1466/7 'arrears' and actual receipts were both at around the £40 mark, giving a quite erroneous impression of the priory's revenues.

Aside from 'arrears', the Rumburgh accounts divided up the priory's receipts into five sections: rents and farms (which included court profits), pensions from churches, portions of tithes, full tithes from appropriated churches (including oblations) and forensic receipts (mostly agricultural sales). A breakdown of the seven main sources of Rumburgh's income is shown in the table opposite.

It will be seen that Rumburgh's overall income varied little over the second half of the 15th century. It is harder to compare the 1439 account with the others since the former runs only for the twenty-five weeks between 12 April and 4 October; but a comparison with the later accounts indicates that that of 1439 includes half of the rents and pensions owed to the church and all of the portions, as well as half of the yearly proceeds from sales; only the percentage of the priory's annual tithe income received during this latter half of the year is unclear. In general, there was a slight fall in the value of most of these sources of income over the period covered by the accounts, but the rents and farms received by the priory actually rose, perhaps indicating that priory property was increasingly farmed out over the century. The small decline in revenue, however, was offset by an increase in sales of grain and animals by the time of the last two accounts of the series. The statement of the

TABLE: THE INCOME OF RUMBURGH PRIORY IN THE 15TH CENTURY

Sources	1439 (½ year)	1461/2	1466/7	1468/9	1481/2	1493/4
Rents & farms	5.6.11 ^a	11.13.0	11.13.4	11.13.4	12.3.0	12.12.2%
Curial Y	–	0.3.0	0.8.10	0.4.6	1.0.0	0.9.9 ^c
Pensions	2.0.0	4.0.0	4.0.0	4.0.0	4.0.0	3.0.0
Portions	13.2.2	12.1.0	12.0.10	11.17.2	10.16.2	10.15.8
Tithes	9.4.10 ^b	7.11.10	6.1.4	5.2.4	6.4.4	6.17.7
Oblations	2.8.6	2.15.3%	2.3.8	2.0.10%	1.8.0	1.18.11%
Forensic Y	4.8.8	12.18.3	5.6.0	8.1.8	12.6.8	12.8.10%
Total	36.11.1%	51.2.4%	41.14.0	42.19.10%	48.1.2	48.3.0%

^a Includes estreats of court.

^c Includes 8s. 5d from agistment of beasts.

^b Includes 70s. 8d. from beasts sold.

abbot of St Mary's, York, in his 1528 letter to Wolsey requesting a reprieve for Rumburgh, that the priory's revenues 'doith very lytill surmounte the sum of xxxⁱⁱ sterlinge', if it can be taken at face value, may imply a decline in the cell's revenues in the generation before its dissolution; but since this figure is unlikely to have included sales of agricultural produce, it would seem that this stability in income continued down to the house's closure (Dugdale 1817–30, III, 613–14, no.7).

Like many small monasteries, Rumburgh was heavily dependent on its spiritual income, which far exceeded its revenue from temporalities. The priory received pensions from the churches of Banham (26s.8d.) and Wilby (6s.8d.) in Norfolk, Haslingfield (20s.) in Cambridgeshire and from South Cove (6s.8d.) and Spexhall (20s.) in Suffolk. Portions of tithes were also derived from fourteen churches, the most valuable being those of Costessey and Bawburgh in Norfolk (£4 and 43s.4d. respectively in 1439, though they produced only 40s. and 26s.8d. thereafter) and from Bassingbourn (40s.) and Little Abington (50s. in 1461/2, but gradually falling to 20s. by 1493–4) in Cambridgeshire.¹⁷ The revenues from the priory's appropriated churches, St Michael's South Elmham, St Andrew's Wissett, St Michael's Rumburgh and the chapel of Holton, are harder to measure. The tithe income given in each account comprises great and lesser tithes from South Elmham (£3½–£4), lesser tithes from Rumburgh (£2½–£3) and lesser tithes minus the cost of the priest's salary at Wissett and Holton (a few shillings at most). The great tithes received from Rumburgh and Wissett are recorded as 'entered through the expenses of the cell' – i.e. they have already been accounted for. How much the priory actually received in tithe income from these churches is difficult to say. In 1291, St Michael's, South Elmham, was valued at ten marks, the church of Wissett 'with Rumburgh' at thirty-six marks and Holton at sixteen marks.¹⁸ As we have seen, St Michael's, South Elmham, was bringing in considerably less than ten marks (£6 13s.8d.) by the 15th century, and the value of the priory's other appropriated churches had probably fallen by this time too. It is stated in a taxation assessment of Rumburgh of November 1416 that the priory had experienced a loss of income over the second half of the 14th century owing to the great mortality of parishioners from the pestilence, a problem that would have affected tithe yields;¹⁹ and the

priory accounts show a further decline in tithing income over the 15th century (see table). But even allowing for this depreciation, it would appear that a considerable sum in tithes was collected by the priory which does not appear under receipts in the house's accounts.

The remainder of the priory's income came from temporal sources: rents, farms and sales. As the table shows, receipts from rents and farms were very stable over the period covered by the accounts, producing between £11 13s. and £12 2s. per year. Although the accounts do not itemise this source of income, the patterns of the priory's landholding can be recovered from the 1291 taxation record. This shows lands and rents to the value of £10 12s. 11¼d., almost all of which came from the priory's vicinity. Temporal income was drawn from lands in Wissett (114s. 7d.), South Elmham (39s. 8d.) and lesser sums from Ilketshall St John, Halesworth, Chediston, Spexhall, Holton, South Cove, Stowlangtoft, Tunstall and Dunningworth. It was not only lands that were farmed out, but also portions of tithes owed to the priory. Of the S.R.O.I. manuscript's five leases, two concern the farming of the tithes of North Tuddenham and Little Abington.²⁰ From this evidence, there is no indication that the priory experienced any difficulty in finding suitable lessees for its spiritual and temporal property during the 15th century.

How much direct farming the monks of Rumburgh undertook is harder to say since the priory accounts record only the sums received from sales of agricultural produce and not what was consumed by the monks themselves. These sales might indicate that the monks produced a surplus of food in the 15th century, but the possibility that the sums entered as sales really represent stock consumed by the priory itself, a not uncommon medieval accounting trick, cannot be discounted. Equally, it is not clear whether tithes were received in kind or commuted into a money payment. In any case, the community appears to have provided for many of its own needs: the only expenditure on provisions entered into the priory accounts was the £4-5 spent each year on 'daily expenses' with a few pounds more spent on fish and spices.

The sums received from sales of agricultural produce, whether real or notional, approximated to the income from rents and farms in some years, suggesting that a good proportion of the priory's demesne land was held *in manu*. Each year roughly half of these receipts were from grain sales with the other half coming from sales of animals, dairy products, hides and skins, indicating the mixed nature of the Rumburgh economy. This is confirmed by the stock accounts found at the end of each priory *compotus* and inventory which show modest grain and livestock holdings. In 1467, for example, the monks held seventy cows, thirty pigs and sixty sheep and lambs.²¹ The priory accounts include several pounds spent each year on workers hired for the harvest. The lands cultivated were not all the priory's own and the monks were leased lands worth about £2 a year during the period covered by the surviving accounts.²² It is likely that the majority of lands farmed directly by the priory comprised a home farm in Rumburgh itself: the post-Dissolution survey of the house records several closes there in the monks' demesne, totalling nearly 300 acres (Dugdale 1817-30, III, 615-16, no.9).

Despite its stability, the income received by Rumburgh priory in the 15th century was relatively slender. It is natural to ask how economically viable a monastic institution of this kind could be. No firm conclusions can be drawn from only six accounts, but they do at least provide an indication of the priory's financial health at certain moments during the 15th century. It is never obvious from a medieval account roll whether a profit or a loss has been made, since the account was designed instead to reveal how much the accountant owed his superior or how much he was owed. However, a comparison of the priory's yearly expenditure (minus the 'surplus') with its income (minus the 'arrears') suggests that the 15th-century community did experience a little difficulty in making ends meet. Of the six years for which evidence survives, only in 1493/4 did the priory's receipts exceed its expenditure and during the 1460s it was overspending by up to £15 a year.

This shortfall, however, was partially covered by a reduction of the debts owed to the priory from £47 in 1461/2 to £23 in 1467/8. Indeed, since the money owed by the monks of Rumburgh generally remained considerably less than that owed to them, it would seem that the priory was normally able to subsist on its limited income. The size of the sums owed to Rumburgh in the 1430s and 1460s was high, reaching over £40 in 1438/9 and 1461/2, and must have caused the priory short-term financial difficulty. This debt consisted largely of arrears of rents, pensions or portions and it may be suspected that some of it was bad debt, but as we have seen most seems to have been paid off in due course. Short-term credit seems always to have been available to the priors whenever needed, while they themselves were expected to make up any remaining deficit out of their own pocket. Whatever problems they faced, it would at least appear that the priors of Rumburgh were not too indigent to keep their monastery's buildings in good repair. The post-Dissolution surveyors of the priory made no mention of damage to the edifices they described in detail, whereas on average about £5 per year was spent on the upkeep of the house's property in the years for which accounts survive. The fragmentary evidence contained within the S.R.O.I. manuscript may conceal serious financial problems but from what it does tell us, it would be unwise to assume that small monasteries like Rumburgh were incessantly and inevitably afflicted by economic difficulties.

The names of many of the priors of Rumburgh in the later Middle Ages have long been known owing to the obligation of the York abbots to present the cell's superiors to the bishops of Norwich for institution. However, the lists printed in the *V.C.H.* and by Mr Cane are not complete nor free from error, and a corrected list of Rumburgh priors from the Black Death to the priory's suppression is appended to this article. The S.R.O.I. manuscript adds two new priors not found in the episcopal institution records owing to the incomplete nature of the register of Bishop Nykke (1501–35): William Steyll, prior in 1506, and John Dyatson, prior in 1512 are both found leasing out priory property.²³ We know of thirty-six different priorates of Rumburgh during the last one hundred and eighty years of the house's existence, with five superiors (Richard de Mowbray, John Brown, Walter Hothome, Richard Wood and John Dyatson) all enjoying two terms as prior.²⁴ Therefore the average Rumburgh priorate lasted five years, although the length of the priors' rules varied greatly, ranging from the five month stay of John Lovell (May–November 1492) to the decade spent at the cell by priors William de Dalton (1394–1405) and William Eysngwald (1428–39). This turnover of priors was not always the product of the mother house's policy. The Norwich institution records relating to the priory usefully identify the outgoing superior, usually indicating the reason for his replacement, and three late medieval priors of Rumburgh – Alexander de Wath (after 1357–1361), Thomas Ampulforth (1412–17) and Thomas Goldesburgh (1439–48) – are known to have died in office.

The rough ages of the house's priors can be traced using the ordination records in the registers of the Archbishops of York. The great majority had been priests for between fifteen and thirty years before their promotion and were therefore middle-aged men;²⁵ although Hugh Belton (before 1461–1465) and Richard Wood (1498–before 1507) were instituted priors of Rumburgh less than ten years after becoming priests. It seems probable, then, that the cell's superiors would have had some administrative experience before they were entrusted with the management of the York abbey's southern satellite, but there is also reason to believe that the priorate of Rumburgh was not among the most senior of the mother house's offices. The four late medieval heads of Rumburgh known to have ruled other daughter houses of St Mary's – Richard de Appilton, Thomas Staneley and Thomas Bothe (all Wetheral priory) and John Warde (St Bees priory) – were given charge of the wealthier Cumberland satellites several years after being appointed priors of Rumburgh.

Whereas a number of the heads of Wetheral and St Bees were from there elected abbot of St Mary's, the only two late medieval heads of Rumburgh to reach that pinnacle, William de Dalton (prior of Rumburgh, 1394–1405, and abbot, 1422–23) and Thomas Bothe (prior of Rumburgh, 1448–56?, and abbot, 1464–85) had administered Rumburgh in the early stages of their monastic careers.²⁶ On the whole, St Mary's does not seem to have used Rumburgh priory as a first administrative post for university-educated monks in the way that Durham and Norwich cathedral priories chose to do with their cells (Piper 1980–82, part ii, 9; Greatrex 1991, 570–73). Only three monks known to have been awarded degrees (John Warde, B.Th. (1465–after 1469), Walter Hothome, B.Th. (1486–May 1492, Oct. 1492–1495) and John Lovell, D.Th. (May–Oct. 1492)) were given charge of the cell, all during the second half of the 15th century.²⁷ It would seem, therefore, that the abbots of St Mary's were generally unwilling to dispatch their most highly qualified inmates to their distant Suffolk cell.

The headship of even a small religious house like Rumburgh priory was a position of some importance. The priors of dependent cells were expected to perform some public role, although we have no record of a prior of Rumburgh receiving a royal commission. In any case, the cell's heads wielded considerable power locally since the manor of Rumburgh formed a small liberty wherein 'neither sheryf, exchetour, nor crownner have none entermedling' (Dugdale 1817–30, III, 615–16, no.9). The priors of Rumburgh also held influence as the patrons of churches. Although the abbots of St Mary's, York, presented to most of the East Anglian livings in their cell's gift, the priests of Rumburgh's three appropriated churches were nominated by the priors.²⁸ The heads of Rumburgh were also drawn into a nexus of local ecclesiastical dignitaries through their receipt of portions of tithes from the priors of Norwich cathedral, Pentney and Spinney, the abbot of Sibton, the prioress of Bungay and the master of the hospital of St Giles in Norwich. Various amenities were accorded to the priors, including their own chamber, containing amongst other things several beds (presumably for hospitality), a clock, and in 1448 (though not in 1439 or 1482) a good collection of weapons and armour.²⁹

The degree of independence from their mother house accorded to the priors of Rumburgh is difficult to measure. They were required to return a yearly account of their administration to York for auditing and were also obliged to return to St Mary's for mother house elections and visitations. On the other hand the large distance separating the two monasteries must have allowed the Suffolk cell considerable freedom in practice, and if the abbots of St Mary's made visitations of Rumburgh in the later Middle Ages they have left no record. The cell's 15th-century superiors seem to have been allowed a good measure of control over the Rumburgh endowment. The S.R.O.I. manuscript includes five leases made by Rumburgh priors between 1463 and 1525, issued in their own names and affixed with their own seals, including Prior William Steyll's demise of a close in Wissett for as long as thirty-one years.³⁰ It would also appear that the prior of Rumburgh could enter into legal disputes on his own authority: the bishop of Norwich's resolution of a tithe dispute between Prior Wharton and the chaplain of All Saints, South Elmham, in 1519 makes no mention of the abbot of York in its proceedings.³¹ However, the well-exercised right of the mother house to rotate the priors of Rumburgh ensured that its satellite was never wholly the master of its own destiny, and no heads of the cell were granted their office for life, as one 16th-century prior of St Bees is known to have been.³²

There is little evidence that the priors of Rumburgh played a significant role in the administration of their mother house's properties in Norfolk or Cambridgeshire, but it does seem likely that the abbots of St Mary's would have made use of the presence of an abbey obedientiary in East Anglia whenever necessary. The property confiscated by Wolsey's commissioners in 1528 included 'certen muniments, evidences, and specialities' which had been sent from St Mary's to the prior of Rumburgh for the protection of abbey

rights and lands in Cambridgeshire (Dugdale 1817–30, III, 613–14, no.7). Equally, the mother house did not seek to siphon off a large share of its dependant's income. The only payments made to York were an annual contribution of 13s. 4d. for the abbey's students and a small sum paid to the 'master of the commons' at York for bread and wine for the abbot and convent at Pentecost.³³ But even if the direct benefits of the possession of its southern satellite did not amount to a great deal for St Mary's, the abbey remained fiercely committed to the preservation of its offspring. There is no greater testament to the value mother houses could place on their dependencies than the forlorn attempt of Abbot Whalley to save the penurious Rumburgh priory from Wolsey's dissolution in September 1528, offering some 300 marks for the cell's reprieve (Dugdale 1817–30, III, 613–14, no.7).

Happily, and most unusually, the S.R.O.I. manuscript also contains information about some of the monks dwelling at 15th-century Rumburgh and not just its priors. Whether twelve York monks were ever maintained here, in accordance with Alan III's instructions, may be considered doubtful; the much richer St Mary's cell of St Bees was established for six monks and a prior and its convent probably never exceeded that number by much.³⁴ The earliest evidence for the size of the Rumburgh community comes from the chronicle of St Mary's, York, which provides lists of monks at each York cell at the time of the abbatial elections of 1258 and 1293, and by then the numbers here were well short of the prescribed twelve. In 1258, Prior John de Camera of Rumburgh was accompanied by three *sociis*, but thirty-five years later there were at Rumburgh only Prior Peter de Neuton and one companion (Craster and Thornton 1934, 4, 24). The next indication of the size of the Rumburgh community is found in the returns of the 1381 poll tax when the house was occupied by a prior and two monks.³⁵ More information is provided by the accounts of the S.R.O.I. manuscript. The roll of 1439 records a payment of £4 '*in habitu et speciebus duorum Fratrum*', and the remaining five accounts all show a sum of £6 being paid to the prior and two co-brethren for the same purpose.³⁶ Moreover, the 1448 schedule of debts includes sums owed to two Rumburgh monks and the 1528 inquisitions held by Wolsey's commissioners also found there to have been a prior and two monks at the priory.³⁷ There seems little doubt, therefore, that three was the customary size of the Rumburgh community in the later Middle Ages.

It also appears from the priory's accounts that there was a very rapid circulation of monks at Rumburgh. In four of the five complete years for which accounts survive, a payment was made for the removal (*remocione*) of two brethren to or from Rumburgh. In 1461/2 two monks were sent from Rumburgh to the York cell at Lincoln, another two were moved in 1466/7, two more monks were brought from York to Rumburgh two years later, and in 1481/2 the priory paid the travel expenses of two monks returning to York along with those of two more coming from the mother house to replace them. If there were indeed only two monks and a prior at Rumburgh during the 15th century, these entries would indicate that the entire 'convent' was regularly changed, perhaps even at yearly intervals. It is unfortunate that there is no surviving evidence from any of the other York cells or from the mother house itself to confirm this supposition, but an annual rotation of the cell's population would at least tally with the avowed policy of Gloucester abbey.³⁸

It is not only the numbers of monks staying at Rumburgh which can be recovered from the S.R.O.I. manuscript; the priory's accounts also record the names of sixteen York monks staying therein. By locating these men in the ordination lists in the Archbishop of York's registers we can discover at what stage of their monastic careers they were posted to Rumburgh. Of the fifteen Rumburgh monks whose names appear in these lists, nine had been ordained priests less than ten years before they are recorded at the priory and only two more than twenty years before. The majority of the known monks sent to Rumburgh

were, therefore, in the earlier stages of the monastic life, though all had already passed through priestly orders and had acquired some experience at York before being sent out to dwell away from the mother house. This would suggest that the St Mary's abbots were careful whom they despatched to their smaller satellites. There is no sign of any local East Anglian recruitment to Rumburgh priory from toponymic surnames, either of the monks or the priors.

No evidence survives about the quality of the religious life in later medieval Rumburgh priory. Small dependent priories, particularly those some distance from their mother houses, have often been portrayed as prone to lax discipline. This reputation in part stems from the use of cells as places of temporary exile for difficult brethren by some mother houses (Knowles 1963, 686). However, an episode recounted in the register of Archbishop Greenfield of York (1306–15) suggests that it would be wrong to assume that the abbots of St Mary's unthinkingly or irresponsibly conveyed miscreants to the abbey's smaller cells. After a visitation of Selby abbey had revealed serious abuses, the Archbishop decided to remove temporarily three offending monks to other monasteries. On 14 December 1306, Greenfield wrote to the abbot of St Mary's, York, requesting him to receive one of these Selby monks, Henry de Belton, into his cell of Rumburgh for the duration of Belton's penance. However, nine days later the Archbishop wrote again to St Mary's acknowledging, presumably at the abbot's petition, that Rumburgh was not a suitable home for the Selby monk and he should instead be detained at the mother house.³⁹ One Rumburgh monk, John de Gisburne, is known in 1311/12 to have fled the priory,⁴⁰ but on the whole it cannot be said whether the monks of Rumburgh ordinarily maintained respectable standards of observance. No visitation records survive for the cell (it would appear that the bishops of Norwich did not visit Rumburgh) and the only abbot's register surviving for St Mary's, York, a source which often included the superior's response to particular disciplinary problems in dependencies, is reticent on this subject.⁴¹ The apparent lack of regulation of the priory's affairs cannot have facilitated the preservation of regular observance in this small cell.

If the quality of the monastic life practised at Rumburgh remains unknowable, it is at least possible to trace some of the activities of the monks sent to dwell here. The Benedictine chapter prescribed study as the chief monastic occupation in times of leisure, and some opportunities for intellectual endeavour were available to the monks of Rumburgh (Pantin 1931–37, I, 74, II, 50–51, 205). The S.R.O.I. manuscript provides information about the small priory library, housed in its church, in the book lists entered in the house's three inventories. These lists are especially valuable because they show how the monastery's library changed over time. Rumburgh's collection consisted largely of liturgical books, with only about ten volumes for study in the mid-15th century and a few more in 1482, although some of the liturgical texts could also have served as study books. The small size of this library has understandably led Professor Richard Sharpe to question the potential for intellectual activity at the priory (Sharpe *et al.* 1996, 788–89). However, there is some reason to believe that Rumburgh's limited collection was all this small cell required. As we have seen, the priory's population was probably settled at only three monks during the 15th century and was regularly circulated and therefore the priory would not have needed a large library to have been able to provide its inmates with at least the staple monastic reading of one book per year.

The priory's liturgical collection changed little between 1439 and 1482, but the books intended for study varied from one inventory to the next. From this it would seem that most of these volumes were borrowed, very likely from the mother house at York, and only a core belonged to the priory. This small permanent stock was augmented during the century by gifts of books made to the cell by its priors: William Esyngwald (1428–39) donated a copy of Peter Lombard's *Sentences* and Thomas Goldisburgh (1439–48) gave a

Bible and John de Burgh's handbook for priests, *Pupilla oculi* (although this book was not recorded in the 1482 list). We cannot tell how many of the books at Rumburgh in 1482 were permanent additions since this is the last of the series of inventories. Books borrowed from the mother house could have been carried by the monks on their regular journeys to and from Rumburgh, but it is perhaps more likely that they were chosen and transported by the house's priors who would, after all, have expected to remain at the cell for several years. The fact that the books kept at the priory did circulate is as good evidence as we are likely to get that they were actually read. It is also possible that monks brought their own books with them, which would not have been entered into the priory inventories because they were effectively private property. While staying at Rumburgh the St Mary's monks received pocket money (*peculium*) of 20s. each year and so the purchase or commissioning of books was not beyond the means of individuals. The books listed in the priory inventories are of a mixed character, ranging from canon law to saints' lives and from the statutes of Pope Benedict XII to the *Meditations* of St Bernard. Two cryptic entries are of particular interest: an unidentified and, for the monks of Rumburgh, unidentifiable '*liber in Greco*' and a work, bound up with Pope Benedict's constitutions, called 'the statutes of the cells'. Presumably this was a set of injunctions produced at St Mary's for the regulation of its family of dependencies, and our knowledge of Rumburgh priory would be much fuller had these statutes survived.

The other activities of the monks of Rumburgh are harder to elucidate. Very little information survives about the liturgical routine of the priory, but it is likely that the cell followed the calendar of its mother house. The only liturgical book from Rumburgh to survive, the recently-identified volume of music for masses for masses of Prior Lancelot Wharton, tells us little about corporate worship.⁴² One of the Rumburgh monks was assigned to the wardenship of the church of St Michael, South Elmham, and four accounts of this office are included in the S.R.O.I. manuscript.⁴³ In each of these a monk of Rumburgh priory has detailed the church's receipts that year from oblations and lesser tithes (between 38s. and 53s.) and how that money had been allocated. The principal expense each year was the forty shillings given to the accountant 'for his habit'.

The existence of a priory obedientiary to collect profits from St Michael's, South Elmham, raises the intriguing possibility that a monk served the church as parish priest. The prevalence of the medieval monk-priest has been the subject of considerable disagreement among historians, with the current consensus tending to rest with the minimizers. Nevertheless, there are several instances of poor priories obtaining a dispensation permitting them to appoint a monk to serve their parish churches where there were insufficient revenues available to pay a secular priest's salary.⁴⁴ The practice of employing one of its two monks in the collection of a relatively small income would certainly make much more sense if the warden was also the parish priest. That Rumburgh monks may have served this church and also the church of St Michael, Rumburgh as priests is also suggested by the priory's accounts. These all note that the tithe revenue recorded from the church of Wissett and the chapel of Holton represents that received after the discharge of the salaries of the priests of those two churches, but no such payments to priests of South Elmham or Rumburgh are shown. Moreover, the paper survey of the priory recorded that both of these churches lacked the resources to find a priest (Dugdale 1817-30, III, 615, no.9). It is also noteworthy that the priory acquired a handbook for parish priests, the *Pupilla oculi*, in the 1440s and possessed a copy of William of Pagula's *Oculus sacerdotis* in 1482, along with two volumes of sermons.⁴⁵ Because the bishops of Norwich did not institute the priests of the two churches in question, there is insufficient evidence to resolve this issue, but there is certainly some reason to suspect that Rumburgh monks may have served their own church and that of South Elmham in person in the later Middle Ages.

The 16th-century paper survey of the priory, although erroneously stating that St Michael's church, Rumburgh, lacked parochial status, noted that the local laity shared the priory church with the monks (Dugdale 1817–30, III, 615, no.9). This arrangement, not uncommon with small priories, could lead to conflict and the relations between the monks and parish of Rumburgh were not always cordial. A list of the previous priors of the St Mary's cells, apparently made in the 1320s, records that during the priorate of Robert de Brune (adm. 1273) 'there arose discord between the parishioners and him concerning the service made in the same church, which still persists'.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, there are signs that the presence of a monastic establishment at Rumburgh, albeit a small one, provided an important spiritual focus for the locality. Occasional gifts and bequests to the monks are recorded in the S.R.O.I. manuscript, but the main evidence of the house's spiritual impact on the laity comes from the oblations left in 'the money box of St Bega the Virgin'. It has long been known from the comments of the post-Dissolution surveyors of the priory that St Bega was venerated at Rumburgh, 'to the which there is moche offeryng uppon Mighelmas day of money and cheses' (Dugdale 1817–30, III, 615, no.9). However, the accounts of the S.R.O.I. manuscript allow for the first time the measurement of the saint's Suffolk appeal. The most received from offerings to the saint in a single year was 55s.3½d. in 1461/2, but the 48s.6d. taken between April and September 1439 suggests that the cult was even more popular earlier in the century; unless, of course, St Bega attracted offerings only at Michaelmas. At the end of the 15th century, the saint was apparently still generating an annual revenue of about two pounds, which, although a relatively modest sum, was not far short of the 67s.9d. received at St Bees itself in 1516/17 (Todd 1980, 23). The transplantation of this very localized Cumberland cult into Suffolk is a phenomenon of some interest. It must be assumed that the cult was introduced here by a former prior of Rumburgh, who had previously become attached to the saint while dwelling at the priory of St Bees, another cell of St Mary's. As such, this case provides a good example of the productive exchange of influences made possible by a network of dependent houses. The focus of the cult was an image of St Bega in Rumburgh church, adorned with two pairs of beads 'de le gerte', two stones of beryl enclosed or mounted in silver and other ornaments, before which were placed two money boxes of black velvet.⁴⁷ In 1448 (but not in 1439 and 1482), the priory also possessed a book of the hymns and prayers of St Bega to aid its veneration of the saint.⁴⁸

Whatever support the priory of Rumburgh attracted from its locality, neither this nor the abbot of St Mary's petitions were able to resist Wolsey's resolution to close the cell to endow his Ipswich grammar school. Having already suppressed twenty-two monasteries for his Oxford college, Wolsey obtained a bull for the dissolution of eight more small priories in May 1528. On 11 September, Wolsey's officers, led by Stephen Gardiner and including Thomas Cromwell, arrived at Rumburgh and suppressed the priory, taking away its movable goods. Abbot Whalley of St Mary's made his petition to Wolsey on 20 September to no avail and inquisitions were held in Ipswich and Norwich on the 25th and 28th respectively into the dissolved priory's properties. On its dissolution Rumburgh escheated to the crown, but the priory was granted to Wolsey on 30 December 1528, and the process was completed early the following year with the quitclaim of its cell by St Mary's, York.⁴⁹ Soon after, however, Wolsey fell and Ipswich school was disendowed, with Rumburgh priory passing to Sir Robert Downes and thence to the Duke of Norfolk. The priory's early dissolution resulted in its omission from the mass of monastic documentation produced in the 1530s, but this deficiency has been more than remedied by the unexpected appearance of Craven Ord's hugely informative scrapbook.

APPENDIX: THE PRIORS OF RUMBURGH, 1349–1528

<i>Name</i>	<i>Appointment*</i>	<i>Removal</i>
John de Cayterigg		Sep. 1357 (Percy, f.22)
John de Martone	Sep. 1357 (Percy, f.22)	
Alexander de Wath		Aug. 1361 (Percy, f.49v)
Richard de Appilton	Aug. 1361 (Percy, f.49v)	Apr. 1370 (Despenser, f.2)
Thomas Lascels	Apr. 1370 (Despenser, f.2)	June 1373 (Despenser, f.21v)
John de Garton	June 1373 (Despenser, f.21v)	
Nicholas de Kelfeld		July 1392 (Despenser, f.168)
Thomas de Helmeslay	July 1392 (Despenser, f.168)	July 1394 (Despenser, f.192v)
William de Dalton	July 1394 (Despenser, f.192v)	Oct. 1405 (Despenser, f.326v)
John Lellay	Oct. 1405 (Despenser, f.326v)	Sep. 1407 (Tottington, f.2)
William Hewyk	Sep. 1407 (Tottington, f.2)	Dec. 1412 (Tottington, f.54)
Thomas Ampulforth	Dec. 1412 (Tottington, f.54)	July 1417 (Wakering, f.22v)
Thomas Staneley	July 1417 (Wakering, f.22v)	Feb. 1426?
Thomas Gasgyll	Inst. Feb. 1426 (Alnwick, f.5)	June 1428 (Alnwick, f.15)
William Esyngwald	June 1428 (Alnwick, f.15)	Oct. 1439 (Brouns, f.29v)
Thomas Goldesburgh	Oct. 1439 (Brouns, f.29v)	Mar. 1448 (Lyhart, f.14–14v)
Thomas Bothe	Mar. 1448 (Lyhart, f.14–14v)	
Hugh Belton	[Occ. Apr. 1461–Apr. 1462 (S.R.O.I. MS, no. 13)]	Jan. 1465 (Lyhart, f.146)
John Warde	Jan. 1465 (Lyhart, f.146)	[Occ. Apr.1468–Apr. 1469 (S.R.O.I. MS, no. 22)]
Richard de Mowbray		May 1478 (Goldwell, f.61)
John Brown	May 1478 (Goldwell, f.61)	June 1482 (Goldwell, ff.102v–103)
Richard de Mowbray	June 1482 (Goldwell, ff.102v–103)	
John Brown		Jan. 1486 (Goldwell, f.120)
Walter Hothome	Jan. 1486 (Goldwell, f.120)	May 1492 (Goldwell, ff.156v–157)
John Lovell	May 1492 (Goldwell, ff.156v–157)	Oct. 1492 (Goldwell, f.162v)
Walter Hothome	Oct. 1492 (Goldwell, f.162v)	Apr. 1495 (Goldwell, f.185–185v)
Thomas Burton	Apr. 1495 (Goldwell, f.185–185v)	
William Skelton		Sep. 1498 (Goldwell, f.203v)
Richard Wood	Sep. 1498 (Goldwell, f.203v)	
William Steyll	[Occ. Sep. 1506 (S.R.O.I. MS, no. 36)]	June 1507 (YM, M2/6a, f.8)
John Ledale	June 1507 (YM, M2/6a, f.8)	
John Dyatson		Oct. 1509 (YM, M2/6a, f.13–13v)
Richard Wood	Oct. 1509 (YM, M2/6a, f.13–13v)	
John Dyatson	May 1510 (YM, M2/6a, f.17v)	[Occ. Dec. 1512 (S.R.O.I. MS, no.38)]
Lancelot Wharton	[Occ. Dec. 1519 (S.R.O.I., HA30/369/340) & Aug. 1525 (S.R.O.I. MS, no. 42)]	
John Hawton	[Occ. Sep.1528 (C142/76/25 & 47)]	

* Unless stated otherwise, the date given is for the appointment of the new prior by the abbot of St Mary's, York, rather than the date of institution by the bishop, which was effectively a confirmation.

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NOTES

- 1 Forty-five late medieval account rolls survive for Aldeby priory and thirty-nine for Hoxne priory at the Norfolk Record Office, along with a few miscellaneous deeds: N.R.O. DCN 2/6/1–45 (Hoxne), DCN 2/2/1–30 (Aldeby). St Mary's abbey, York, possessed four other cells in the later Middle Ages: St Bees and Wetheral in Cumberland and smaller priories in Richmond and Lincoln.
- 2 An inventory of the records kept at St Mary's Tower records thirty-three boxes of St Mary's 'evidences', one chest of court rolls and numerous bundles of accounts, which would no doubt have shed some light on the abbey's cells. Two boxes each for the priories of St Bees and Wetheral were stored here, but no records belonging to Rumburgh priory: English and Hoyle 1993, 91–94.
- 3 S.R.O.I., HD 1538/335/1. This manuscript will hereafter appear in the notes as S.R.O.I. MS.
- 4 A calendar of this manuscript, prepared by Dr David Allen, is available in S.R.O.I.
- 5 S.R.O.I. MS no. 49, a post-Dissolution quitclaim. No surviving Rumburgh priory seal is known.
- 6 See Ord's Collections for the History of Suffolk: S.R.O.I., HD 1538/1.
- 7 Sharpe *et al* 1996, 788–97, B122–4; these lists have also been utilised by J. Middleton-Stewart in 1994, 149–63, to discuss books available to the laity in the deanery of Dunwich in the later Middle Ages, although it is unlikely that the parish would have had access to the priory library.
- 8 West (ed.) 1932, I, 89–90. Blakere was given licence by Bishop Aethelmar of Elmham (1047–70) and Abbot Thurstan of St Benet Hulme (d.1064) to dwell at '*cella quadam que Romburch dicitur deo cum quibusdam fratribus seruire monastice*', which was to be subject to the abbey of St Benet Hulme.
- 9 At the time of Rumburgh's dissolution, it was believed at St Mary's that they had been given the priory by Alan Niger, count of Brittany. A 13th-century charter of Geoffrey, bishop of Ely names Count Stephen as the York cell's founder; whereas charters of Bishop Eborard of Norwich (dated 1136x1145), Duke Conan of Brittany (1156x1158) and Henry II (1156x7) all name Alan III of Brittany, first earl of Richmond, as founder (Dugdale 1817–30, III, 613–14, no. 7; Harper-Bill (ed.) 1990, 46–48, no. 51; Farrer and Clay 1914–65, I, 269–77, no. 354; IV, 39, no. 33). Knowles and Hadcock attribute the grant of Rumburgh to St Mary's to Count Stephen, presumably on the strength of a charter of c.1135 whereby Stephen notifies Bishop Eborard of his grant of certain Norfolk and Suffolk tithes to 'my monks' of Rumburgh (Knowles and Hadcock 1971, 74; Dugdale 1817–30, III, 612, no. 3). Matters are complicated further by the possibility that Rumburgh priory had temporarily belonged to the abbey of St Méline, Rennes, some time after the Conquest, before passing to York. Professor Harper-Bill has noted that Stephen's charter, significantly, makes no mention of St Mary's, York, which suggests that the priory had then not yet passed into that abbey's possession (Harper-Bill 1990, 48n).
- 10 Oxford, Bodl. MS Top. Suffolk d.15, f.35–35v.
- 11 These possessions are specified in Bishop Eborard of Norwich's confirmation of Earl Alan's grant of Rumburgh priory to St Mary's abbey, 1136x1145 (Harper-Bill 1990, 46–48, no. 51).
- 12 Professor Harper-Bill plans to print the few surviving Rumburgh charters in a later volume of the Suffolk Records Society Suffolk Charters series.
- 13 Harper-Bill 1990, 125, no. 159. According to an early 15th-century episcopal inquisition, the church of St Michael, South Elmham, was appropriated by the monks of Rumburgh in 1241: N.R.O., Register VIII (Bishop Wakering), f.128.
- 14 Dugdale omits the *Taxatio*'s entries for the priory's appropriated churches, an error repeated by Cox and Cane, whose figure of £35 5s. 11¼d. seriously undervalues the house's income: *Taxatio*, 118; Dugdale 1817–30, III, 613, no. 6; Cox 1907, 78; Cane 1936, 156.
- 15 S.R.O.I. MS nos. 6–7, 13, 21–22, 34–35. The information collected by the suppression commissioners of Rumburgh in September 1528 can be found in the Cardinal's Bundle in the Public Record Office: P.R.O., C142/76/25 and 47. The economy of Rumburgh priory is being studied in fuller detail than is possible here by Caroline Cardwell for an M.Phil. thesis at the University of East Anglia.
- 16 The prior of Pentney's arrears owed for the pension of Little Abington church were reduced from £22 10s. in 1461/2 to £8 13s. 4d. in 1466/7 and down again to just £4 by 1468/9. This gradual acquittance implies that the debt was indeed paid rather than written off. Between 1439 and 1461/2, the tithes portions received from Costessey, Bawburgh and Linton all fell in value: S.R.O.I. MS nos. 6–7, 13, 21–22.

- 17 Rumburgh priory also received portions from the churches of Banham, Wilby and Swaffham in Norfolk, Linton in Cambridgeshire and Chediston, Wix, Sibton, Ilketchall and Kettleburgh in Suffolk.
- 18 *Taxatio*, 118.
- 19 N.R.O., Register VIII (Bishop Wakering), f.128 r.-128 v. Rumburgh priory was exempted from payment of a clerical subsidy in 1416: Jacob 1937-47, III, 394.
- 20 S.R.O.I. MS nos. 20 (1463) and 37 (1509).
- 21 *Ibid.* no.21.
- 22 S.R.O.I. MS nos. 6-7, 13, 21-22, 34-35.
- 23 *Ibid.* nos. 36 and 38.
- 24 All five of these returning priors were appointed for their second spell as head of Rumburgh between June 1482 and May 1510. This might therefore represent a deliberate policy at St Mary's abbey, or it could have resulted from a shortage of monks prepared to serve as prior of the house.
- 25 Without a dispensation, monks could not be ordained priests until they were twenty-four, and it was common monastic practice for inmates to proceed to the priesthood as quickly as possible so that they could contribute to the monastery's heavy commitment of masses.
- 26 A similar hierarchy of cells has been noted at Durham priory: Piper 1980-82, part ii, 8-9.
- 27 Hothome is known for partially transcribing Bishop Richard of Bury's *Philobiblon*: Emden 1963, 316; Dobson 1999, 262.
- 28 The Norwich episcopal institution records show the abbots of St Mary's presenting priests to the churches of Banham, South Cove, Spexhall and Wilby.
- 29 S.R.O.I. MS nos 32, 52, 57-58.
- 30 *Ibid.* nos 20, 36-38, 42.
- 31 S.R.O.I., HA 30/369/340.
- 32 York Minster Library M2/6a, ff.16-17.
- 33 S.R.O.I. MS, nos 6-7, 13, 21-22, 34-35.
- 34 Wilson 1915, 28-30. There were a prior and six monks at St Bees in 1258 and a prior and seven monks in 1293: Craster and Thornton 1934, 4, 24.
- 35 Mackie 1998, 1, 102. I am grateful to Dr Mackie for this reference.
- 36 S.R.O.I. MS nos. 6-7, 13, 21-22, 34-35.
- 37 *Ibid.* no. 51; P.R.O., C142/76/25 and 47.
- 38 The 1301 Gloucester statutes ordained that no monk of the abbey was to spend more than a year at any of its cells, nor was anyone returning to the mother house from a dependency to be posted to another cell for at least a year, under normal circumstances: Hart 1863-67, III, lxi-lxii. At Durham, monks ordinarily stayed in individual cells for stretches of about two years: see Piper 1973, 9; 1980-82, part ii, 12; 1986, 19.
- 39 Belton was sent to the larger York cell of St Bees soon afterwards, from which he ran away: Brown and Thompson 1931-40, II, 16-19, 21, 55, 113-14, 193-94, nos. 695, 701, 706, 808, 938 and 1086.
- 40 Craster and Thornton 1934, 51-52.
- 41 Visitation records for the diocese of Norwich, omitting Rumburgh, are printed in Jessopp 1888, 74. The location of a daughter house in a different diocese from its parent abbey raised questions over which bishop enjoyed powers of correction over the house. It may be that Rumburgh avoided episcopal visitation altogether as a result of this confusion. The St Mary's register dates from the 16th century, by which time it was customary for abbots to enter only routine matters into their main registers: York Minster Library M2/6a.
- 42 Middleton-Stewart 1994, 158; Cambridge, St John's College MS K 31.
- 43 S.R.O.I. MS nos. 10-11 (1451-2), 12 (1454-5), 14-15 (1456-7), 33 (1488-9).
- 44 For example, a dispensation to serve the parish church of Middlesbrough was granted to the Whitby abbey cell at that site in 1452 by Archbishop Booth of York: York, Borthwick Institute Register XX (Archbishop William Booth), f.147v.
- 45 S.R.O.I. MS nos. 32, 57-58.
- 46 Craster and Thornton 1934, 78.
- 47 These ornaments are described in the 1482 inventory of the priory and are mistranslated in Middleton-Stewart 1994, 152: S.R.O.I. MS no. 32. The priory church also displayed images of the Virgin and St Michael but these did not attract similar levels of devotion: S.R.O.I. MS no. 57.
- 48 *Ibid.* no. 57.
- 49 *L and P*, IV, part ii, nos. 3537, 4259, 4755, 4762, 5075, 5186, 5353-54; P.R.O., C142/76/25 and 47.

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Abbreviations:

- D.B.* *Domesday Book*, ed. A. Farley, 1783, 2 vols, H.M.S.O., London.
- Dugdale* Dugdale, W., *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. J. Caley, H. Ellis and B. Bandinel, 1817-30, 6 vols, London.
- L and P* *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, ed. J.S.Brewer, J.Gairdner and R.H.Brodie, 1862-1932, 21 vols, H.M.S.O., London.
- N.R.O.* Norfolk Record Office, Norwich.
- S.R.O.I.* Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich Branch.
- Taxatio* *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae, auctoritate P. Nicholai IV, circa A.D.1291*, Record Commission, 1802. London.
- V.C.H.* *Victoria History of the Counties of England*, 1900-. London and Oxford.