

UNIV ONLINE CATALOGUES

Papers of Thomas Benwell (Master 1428-41)

Thomas Benwell is first recorded as Fellow of University College in 1421/2. He was then Master of University College from 1428-1441, and later rented a room in the College in 1441-1442/3.

Benwell appears to have been a controversial person: It was during his tenure that the College was engaged in its unsuccessful (and expensive) legal dispute with Osney Abbey concerning the Abbey's rights to a quit rent from Wakeman's tenement (see **UC:E/E1** for more details, and some deeds which were possibly forged at the time). Furthermore, the Register of the Chancellor of the University reveals that in 1436 he was accused of "incontinence" with one Agnes Babelok, and with other women, but managed to prove his innocence (see *Registrum Cancellarii Oxoniensis*, Vol. I pp.17-18 [Oxford Historical Society, Vol. 93, 1932]).

Two documents are directly linked with Benwell now in the College. The date of the first (**L1/1**) suggests that it might be linked with the dispute over Wakeman's tenement; the second sheds an interesting light on how the College administered its estates. Both these documents have been published and translated in R. H. Darwall-Smith, *Early Records of University College* (OHS n.s. xlvii 2015), pp. 66–9.

Recatalogued in March 1997.

UC:MA10/L1 - THE SETTLEMENT OF A DEBT

UC:MA10/L1/1

9 Feb 11 Hen VI (1432/3)

Settlement of Debt

Parties:

1. Thomas Benwell, Master and Senior Fellow of the College of William of Durham in Oxford, which is called the Great Hall of the University of Oxford.
2. The Fellows or Scholars of the same College.

Comments: 1 has deposited with 2 100s to be spent for the use of the College. By this action, 1 settles any debts which he might owe the College.

Given at Oxford in the Chapel of the above College.

The deed is in fair condition, save for a small hole, which was there in Smith's day (see UC:AR2/MS1/10 p. 39), but the seal is lost.

Language: Latin.

UC:MA10/L2 - TESTIMONIAL ON A HORSE

UC:MA10/L2/1

15 May 1426

Testimonial

Parties:

1. a) Master Robert Spycer, Vicar of the parish church of Godestur.
b) Edmund Smygt the Elder.
c) William Rede.
d) John Sprenger.
e) John Asser.
f) Richard Pakeman.
g) Thomas Spycer, all of the same place.
h) Master John Nende, Perpetual Rector of the parish church of Rothyng

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- Margaret.
 i) William Walthun.
 j) John Stevene.
 k) John Glasyer.
 l) John Hode.
 m) William Huchyn, all of the same place.
 n) John Rede of Wyllynghale Doo in Essex.

Comments: 1 all testify that Thomas Benewel, Fellow and Procurator of the Great Hall of the University of Oxford brought to the town of Godestur a chestnut (rubeam) horse which was gravely ill, which he said he had taken (*conduxit*) from a smith (*faber*) called Thomas Smygt, Gymelet Maker, of Oxford. Benewel presented the horse to 1b above, asking that he should inspect it and work out why it was ill. 1b declared that the horse was not ill through excessive work, nor was it injured in its sinews, veins, joints or feet (*nervis venis juncturis vel pedibus distraciatus*), nor had it suffered any illness through Benewel's handling of it, but that it had been suffering an internal illness for a long time. 1 have made the above testimonial at the request of Thomas Benewel [no doubt so that he would not be held responsible for the state of the horse].

Good Easter is very near Margaret Roding, and presumably Benwell had been visiting the College's estate at Marks Hall when his horse fell ill.

Given at Godestur.

The document is in fair condition. No less than twelve seals are attached to it, in varying degrees of condition. William Smith (UC:AR2/MS1/10 p. 38) noted 14 seals attached to it, so that they must have been the seals of all the members of Party 1 above.

Language: Latin.

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