

[Possible story-line here is that generosity is often taken as a sign of weakness and exploited; look out Cameron's Big Society?]

William of Wykham

Born 1324.

Bishop of Winchester 1367-1404; stayed at Castle on at least 129 separate occasions, including 31 instances of ordinations in the Castle Chapel; Farnham the prize of the Diocese, paying its Vicar £13pa (against the general £3-£5).

1340s Black Death (~740 of ~3000 Farnhamians died in first year alone) made workers scarce, upped their wage demands; William of W had to make do with a Farnham manor income £305, expenses £77 in 1367, worsening to £231 and £201 by 1400; introduced sheep farming to try to make up the difference; 1320s-1350s only 130-170 sheep on Farnham lands, 775 by 1399.

Soldiers returning from France, and survivors of Black Death, saw church as an oppressive authority which failed to recognise their dire position; near-communist feelings of rebellion; Rector of Farnham parish church picked on, accused of some crime or other, removed from his post to await trial; some Priests in the area physically attacked mid-service; William of W left in peace.

1369-1382 repeatedly ordered all clergy to arm itself against expected French invasion.

1376-1377 unfairly impeached by King for his failings as Chancellor of England (personal lands confiscated); possible implication is that he was genuinely more interested in people than in income or wealth.

1370s-1390s increasingly generous to "the poor", letting them off fees for land or for marriage or for death duties; Farnham townsfolk took advantage and cooked the books, declaring an unchanging 25s pa income from taxes on goods sold in town market when in fact it varied between £3 and £5 pa.

1386 founded Oxford New College, 1394 Winchester College, as schools to train clergy; punished the Farnham Archdeacon who had let the parish church go unrepaired, stealing the stone for his own houses in Farnham and Frensham.