

## WILLIAM OF WICKHAM



William of Wykeham, 1324-1404, was the son of a peasant family “of poor but of creditable descent and reputable character” living near near Wickham.

William was put to school at Winchester Cathedral Priory, not by his father, who had not the means, but by Nicholas Uvedale of Wykeham and Governor of Winchester Castle. Eventually, William became Chancellor of England, the most powerful man in the land after the King. He had many ups and downs in his long career, but at the time of his death in 1404, he was one of the richest men in England. Much of his wealth went into the schools he patronized.

After leaving school he became secretary to Uvedale and the Constable of Winchester Castle. William caught the eye of King Edward III, on the King’s return from the Battle of Crecy, and was brought to Court in 1348. He became secretary to the constable of Winchester Castle and where he learned about building, which position lead to architectural work for

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King Edward III, for whom he built the Round Tower at Windsor Castle. He was rewarded by being given the incomes of various churches.



William had shown talent as an administrator and was appointed Lord Privy Seal and then elected Bishop of Winchester. His first undertaking was to set about a repair of these Episcopal houses.

Winchester School was first opened in 1373, funded wholly by William of Wykeham. It remains the oldest scholarly foundation in the country.

In 1367 he first became Chancellor of England but resigned this position in 1371.

He had been appointed one of the council set up to superintend the conduct of affairs on the petition of the Parliament and managed to upset the Duke of Lancaster. The Duke had taken control of the dying King and proceeded to overthrow all the Government reforms that King Edward III had made.

The Duke charged William with acts of fraud and misgovernment while he had been in office as Keeper of the Privy Seal and Lord Chancellor. An order was issued for the sequestration of the revenues of his bishopric.

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In 1377, an act of pardon was issued by the new King, Richard II, just a few weeks after the death of Edward III, but the Bishop of Winchester was specifically excluded. His brethren of the clergy took up his cause and it was deemed expedient to drop

proceedings against him.

His properties were restored to him, on condition of his "fitting out three ships of war for the defence of the Kingdom and maintaining them at sea for a quarter of a year."

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With the ascension of Richard II, William was reappointed Chancellor in 1389, retaining the office through 1391.

William died at Bishop's Waltham on 27 September 1404 and was buried in his chantry chapel to the south side of the nave in Winchester Cathedral.



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