

*Two medieval parish books from the  
diocese of Ely: New College MS.98 &  
Wisbech Museum MS.1*

Article

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**TWO MEDIAEVAL PARISH BOOKS FROM THE DIOCESE  
OF ELY:  
NEW COLLEGE MS.98 & WISBECH MUSEUM MS.1**

**Dorothy Owen**

In March 1979, Richard Hunt called on me to inquire about the identification of certain Cambridgeshire place-names which he had found in a New College manuscript. They were easily recognisable as Haddenham, in the Isle of Ely and its hamlets, Lindon, Hill, Hinton and Aldreth. When it was learned that these names were found at the head of lists of personal names, and in association with accounts and miscellaneous estate memoranda, and that the entries occurred in a volume containing a copy of synodal statutes for the Isle of Ely, further investigation of the manuscript's provenance was undoubtedly desirable. Professor Cheney and Dr. Ker had thought it had belonged to the cathedral priory at Ely<sup>1</sup>, but since Haddenham had passed from conventual hands to those of the bishops after the creation of the diocese of Ely in 1108 an association with episcopal properties seemed far more certain<sup>2</sup>. Haddenham was administered as a demesne manor, and it seemed quite possible that the accounts and memoranda were those of a steward, although their occurrence in conjunction with a copy of synodal statutes was hard to explain. The history of the manuscript became clearer when the lists of names could be examined: they were headed by the words *de ciragio*, and were thus a parochial list of house owners liable for the payment of wax-scot. Since there are already known two lists of episcopal tenants in Haddenham in surveys of demesne manors made in 1222 and 1251<sup>3</sup>, and since these wax-scot lists include men who appear in one or other of these, it was possible to conclude that they could reasonably be assigned to 1230-1240, to which period the handwriting almost certainly belongs. Thus we have here a contemporary working list compiled for the use of whoever collected wax-scot in the parish.

Wax-scot was one of the ancient components of the 'offerings of the altar' payable twice or three times a year, by all householders in the parish, towards the lighting of the parish church <sup>4</sup>. It seems to have been first mentioned in 1008 in the law-code of King Ethelred, where it is among the annual obligatory church dues <sup>5</sup>. Many post-Conquest references, in valuations of rectories, ordinations of vicarages and disputes between owners of neighbouring churches, mention it. A late twelfth-century example from the Stixwold cartulary records a dispute between the rectors of Barkston and Honington about wax-scot due from the inhabitants of a grange at Stixwold which lay on their boundaries <sup>6</sup>. Synodal legislation has many references to the levy, but the clearest account comes perhaps from the borough of Torksey, where in 1271, the responsibilities of the inhabitants included:

From every house which had a hearth alight throughout the year *saragium* due three times a year, at All Saints, Purification and Easter, to find candles for the church. <1>

An even more explicit account appears in a valuation of Whaplode rectory copied by the antiquary William Cole from a Spalding priory register: '67s.8d. for Cokwax and Rome penny from eleven score and twelve houses plus forty-nine widows' houses' <2>. This collection on a household basis, seems to have been universal, and can be paralleled in other sorts of parochial money-raising, from holy-bread provision to rates for the repair of the church-yard wall. It clearly required the making and maintenance of a list of houses in the parish, and here we have just such a list, used for collection for a time, and amended at need. There must have been many such lists, although I have never seen an example, and clearly they would have become obsolete too soon to have been long preserved. The importance of such lists in demographic and settlement studies, especially in an area where other contemporary sources are available, made it advisable to publish a complete transcript, which appears in Appendix A below.

Along with the wax-scot lists are accounts for expenditure on buildings and on church supplies, for which the accountant was reimbursed by R. the rector. It seems from this that the accountant and collector was a parochial chaplain (there was no vicarage) who was acting as proctor of the church for a non-resident rector. For his memoranda he used a book, or at least a quire of parchment, which was itself part of the church furniture. Many of the diocesan statutes which had been promulgated regularly in England after the fourth Lateran council in 1216 included a decree for the keeping of a copy of the statutes in all parish churches, as at Winchester in 1224 <3>. The parochial chaplain, if he had the cure of souls, might be expected in the diocese of Worcester to take his copy of the statutes to the synod and read it there, or be examined on its contents <4>. Other bishops required the parish priest to learn the statutes by heart and to expound them in the vulgar tongue to his parishioners <5>. At times an archdeacon or episcopal official conducting a visitation would call on parish priests to exhibit their copies of the statutes, as was done in Ely and Norwich in the fourteenth century <6>.

It is hard to decide whether the whole contents of New College ms. 98 had been at Haddenham. It was said by Coxe to have been part of the founder's gift <7> and there is nothing in it (three *tractates* by William de Montibus and a collection of allegorical stories, all in thirteenth-century hands) which cannot be paralleled among lists of books recorded in the next century in Norwich churches. The gathering containing the parochial material shows no sign that it was added to the rest at a later date, and so far as I am aware, Dr. Hunt had reached no conclusion about it before his death.

Four versions of the Ely synodal statutes were identified by Professor Cheney. Two of these were in diocesan sources, the *vetus liber archidiaconi* and the so-called

Black Book which was compiled for use in the episcopal consistory. <14> A third copy appears in what seems to be a monastic collection in Jesus College Cambridge ms.31, and the fourth, now apparently identified as a parochial copy, is the New College text. It was surprising and gratifying to find a fifth text, and a second of parochial origin, a short time later. The manuscript in which it was identified was recently rediscovered in the library of the Wisbech Museum, to whose curator, Miss Jane Arthur, and the officers of the Society, I am grateful for bringing it to my notice. It had been given to the library on 12 October 1931 by Mr. L. S. Penrose, who inherited it from his Peckover forbears. A note inside the cover shows that Mr. Jonathan Peckover acquired it in a Quaritch sale of Puttick books, on 19 December 1879. He paid £6 5s. for it and seems to have had it rebound immediately. The last full folio shows signs of attachment to an earlier cover, but both it and the first folio have been badly rubbed by exposure without protection at some time. Names perhaps of former owners, 'Thomas Penson senior', 'Thomas Penson', and 'Thomas Hendry', are written in hands of the late seventeenth century on the first folio, and similar hands annotate the latter half of the contents. There seems to be no Penson or Hendry known to Wisbech sources; it is possible that one of them may have been connected with William Penson, heraldic painter, who wrote in the years 1691-7 a journal of a foreign tour which is now BL Harleian ms 3516<15>.

The Wisbech manuscript consists of twelve folios which had been paginated 1 to 23, apparently in the eighteenth century, with an additional fragment, perhaps cut from a cover, or used as a binding strip. The whole manuscript is written in three hands of the first half of the fourteenth century; there are additions in one or more late fifteenth-century hands. The first section, to page 12, contains documents relating to the boundaries and revenues of the parish of Wisbech. These are followed by the Ely statutes and by Archbishop Mepham's statutes for the province of Canterbury of 1328. The second section, pages 13 to 20, is taken up entirely by Stratford's provincial constitutions of 1342, and the third consists of copies of documents concerning clerical grievances in 1316. Notes on the law of marriage were added in the late fifteenth century together with memoranda on the observance of feast days, together with a prayer to St. Hugh, extracts from a will recording bequests to Wisbech church, and some incoherent scribbles. Overlying all of these are pen trials and personal names in hands of the sixteenth century. From these later additions it is clear that the manuscript had remained in Wisbech until the Reformation, and that we have here a Wisbech parish book or books.

Many of the thirteenth-century synodal statutes include provisions that copies of documents relating to the possessions and revenues of the church, and lists of its books and vestments should be written into the missals, psalters or other service books of the parish. <16> Bishops, in ordaining a vicarage, approving the endowment of a chapel, or adjudicating in a tithe dispute, often ordered that a copy of their act should be registered in the missals or other books of the parishes concerned. Bishop Oliver Sutton frequently made such orders, and the practice was maintained by his

successors in the see of Lincoln <17>. Many such documents must have been copied into parish books throughout the country, but natural wear and tear have ensured that few missals or other service books of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries have survived even to the Reformation, and the Wisbech book is certainly not a missal or other service book. The documents which appear in the first section must already have existed in earlier copies, or as original documents <18>. The compilation which we have is a fourteenth-century gathering of material of use to the vicar of Wisbech, and retained with other parochial evidences at least until the end of the fifteenth century. The Haddenham book, on the contrary, is, it seems, a version of a parish list which was discarded as out of date before 1300, and passed out of the hands of the church.

## APPENDIX A

Ms. New College Oxford 98 f.

*De Ciragio*

The list printed below is presented in four columns, mostly in a single hand of c.1230-40. Additions in a slightly later hand are italicised; the crosses represented by + are evidently made in this second hand. Where a name also occurs in the 1222 survey this is indicated by A; where it is found in the 1251 list this is shown by B. This wax-scot list records 213 *houses* in the parish. The 1222 survey, which does not mention Aldreth and Hinton separately, although it appears to include them, has 97 holdings, while that of 1251, when many holdings appear to be divided between two men, has 151.

### HADANAM

### LINDUNE

### HILLE

### HALDERHITE

Rad' Waren'  
 Henricus de Rayechirche  
 Avelina Lotrix  
 Mauricius *scilicet .simo putta*  
 Paulinus  
 Mabilia Col +  
 Ernebur'  
 Michael Brid +  
 Passelewe B  
 Nova domus ad crucem  
 Domus Iohannis Ruffi de  
 Stephor  
 Willelmus filius Reginaldi +  
 Lecia vidua + A  
 Gunnild warenarius  
 Robertus Vacarius +  
 Domus Huberti A *Agnes*  
 Altera domus Huberti A \*  
 Ada  
 Matilda uxor sutoris  
 Randulfus Brid  
 Iohannes Cocus  
 Beatrix Warloc  
 Matilda de Standun  
 Mabilia Walleis  
 Alfreud Rele (sic)  
 Gunnild Petele  
 Alberd  
 Avelina Doget  
 Tova filia Toli  
 Reginaldus sutor  
 Levoc de Heli  
 Alicia (sic) filia Aldeet  
 Gunnild Menenac'  
 ...soldus Dolitel  
 ... uz Pureloc  
 Domus domini Iohannis de  
 Chewelle  
 Hubertus de Teford

Dominus Henricus de Aula A  
 Rogerus Mubrai +  
 Godefridus Harding +  
 Ricardus ad caput ville +  
 Matilda de Aula  
 Henricus filius Eadmundi  
 Petrus Wrong + A  
 Eustacius A  
 Mabilia vidua +  
 Iohannes de Teveresham  
  
 Ricardus ad fontem A  
 Alexander Rugem'  
 Unfridus Colvile  
 Clariz vidua  
 Simon Molendarius  
 Reiner  
 Adam Scacheer  
 Radulfus Sincker  
 Radulfus Faber +  
 Willelmus capellanus +  
 Godefridus filius Ailric +  
 Alexander Pue + B  
 Rogerus filius Roberti +  
 Iohannes Kek  
 Radulfus Cuper  
 Willelmus Cuper + B  
 Ailbern ad caput ville +  
 Alexander Porkar' + A  
 Henricus Cod  
 Simon Neuman +  
 Willelmus Lecelun  
 Willelmus Grum A  
 Willelmus Pirle  
 Willelmus filius Roberti  
 Brunig  
  
 Turolodus messer + A  
 Radulfus filius Seled + A

Reginaldus filius Rogeri  
 Osbertus Frost A  
 Iordanus Kinel +  
 Iohannes filius prepositi +  
 Willelmus prepositus + A  
 Petrus Fleming + B  
 Avelina vidua +  
 Iordanus Turbern +  
 Willelmus Trusse B  
 Reginaldus filius Ricardi + A  
  
 Iordanus Quinchold +  
 Iordanus filius Brixtan + A  
 Galfridus filius Agnetis  
 Radulfus Hog +  
 Robertus Neuman +  
 Walterus Trusse + A  
 Alexander Fekere +  
 Matilda Scrutinger  
 Simon Hering +  
 Radulfus filius Swetwn B  
 Petrus Colevile + A B  
 Petrus filius Radulfi A  
 Hosbern Hog  
 Beatrix filia Ailric  
 Gunnild Turbern  
 Ermenilda vidua  
 Willelmus Cornewaleis + A  
 Iordanus Buc +  
 Margareta filia Helenis  
 Agnes filia Radulfi  
 Willelmus Kibbel A  
 Agnes vidua  
 Willelmus Hoccard  
 Walterus Frost +  
 Henricus filius Wlnard +  
  
 Eustacius + A  
 Henricus Acri

Henricus Est  
 Osbern Toni  
 Robertus Merai +  
 Robertus Prille +  
 Robertus Carpentarius +  
 Robertus del grene +  
 Ricardus miles +  
 Ricardus filius capellani  
 Warinus +  
 Willelmus a la grave  
  
 Filius Unwine  
 Walterus Resbe  
 Willelmus biscop +  
 Everardus del broc +  
 Radulfus Cappe  
 Iohannes ad pontem <9>  
 Robertus ad pontem  
 Toralud Schail  
 Ricardus surdus +  
 Henricus Aqi  
 Petrus Lemmer  
 Iordanus Prille  
 Ricardus West  
 Rogerus West

\* followed by: *Willelmus Telarius*

Tomas Socneman A  
Ricardus de Chewelle A  
*dominus*  
Matilda Buc  
Matilda Tectrix  
Willelmus Cissor Item  
Henricus parcerius  
Eva vidua  
Alexander Parvus +  
Johannes clericus  
Alexander filius Herberti +  
Nigellus  
Henricus Parlebene  
Iohannes Parlebene + A  
Petrus Warloc + A  
Grigorius  
Estrild  
Reme del broc  
Leticia vidua A  
Willelmus filius Herberd  
Ada de Wittune  
Robertus de Cupwuc  
Matilda filia Mirielis  
Matilda filia fabri  
Iohannes de Chewelle  
Ema uxor Turoidi  
Henricus de... bel  
Robertus Godwin  
Ricardus Lindwelle  
Nicolaus Parlebene  
Willelmus Rusticus  
Radulfus Freg  
Erminilda a  
Lece filia ... Toli

Ricardus Fitte  
Rogerus Crud +  
Matilda de Godmecestr  
Bricrive Hude  
Iordanus filius Ruald +  
Robertus messer +  
Robertus Purte  
Lece vidua + A  
Osberne Wronge + A  
Gunnild Wronge +  
Tectrices *Matilda Webister*  
Henricus Toli  
Walterus Crummebred  
Gerard Tabur  
Iohannes de Toft  
Matilda Toli  
Cecilia Hors  
Ricardus Basllard  
Rogerus Purte  
Henricus Colvile  
Petrus Fleming B  
Walterus Cruenine  
Alanus ad capud ville  
Cecilia vidua  
Matilda Sent

Willelmus Wimar  
Wimare Sl... [a blot]  
Tomas filius Radulfi  
Ricardus One +

Petrus Wlnard +

## HENEGETUNE

Filippus de Insula  
Iohannes de Walde  
Ailbern Rus  
Filippus  
Alexander Seful +  
Ade Busser +  
Aluric  
Galfridus Gardener  
Gunnild vidua  
Hugo  
Willelmus Puc  
Ailric de Waude  
Ordery +  
Tomas de Waude  
Willelmus Hattere



## APPENDIX B

Wisbech manuscript; calendar of contents; the numbers of individual items are supplied by me.

p.1 1. *Limitatio marisci.*

A bounder of the marsh called Heyfen in Wisbech, belonging to the manor of Wisbech and to the villis of Leverington, Newton, Tydd, Elm and Wells (detailed bounds omitted here), where the villis named could common horn under horn with their beasts, saving to the Bishop the demesne and fisheries within the limits.

Another copy of this document is entered in the Red Book of Thorney (University Library, Cambridge, Add.ms. 3020, f.193v.); it also appears in the Old Coucher of Ely (E(ly) D(iocesane) R(ecords) G3/28, f.33) and in the Ely Priory cartulary (BL Egerton ms. 3047, f.208v.).

2. *Limitatio parochiarum de Wysbech et Elm.*

A definition of the boundary between Wisbech and Elm, made by a jury of twenty-four sworn men elected by the villis of Elm, Wisbech, Wells, Leverington, Newton and Tydd, on the authority of the Bishop of Ely (details omitted). Whatever lies to the south of the named points belongs to Elm, whatever is to the north belongs to Wisbech.

3. Memorandum of an agreement made on 24 August 1246 with the consent of the Bishop, and in his presence, for the definition of the boundaries between Wisbech and Elm, on the oaths of not more than fourteen men of the parishes of Tydd, Newton, Leverington and Wells.

4. Confirmation by Bishop Nigel of a judgment made by men chosen for their age and experience as to the boundary between Wisbech and Thorney, which is in dispute between the monasteries of Ely and Thorney. 1133-69. This charter occurs in a slightly different form in the Red Book of Thorney, fol.168.

p.2 5. *Confirmacio domini episcopi Elyensis super limitacionem parochiarum tam in marisco quam in terra arabili.*

Confirmation by Bishop Hugh de Northwold of an agreement about tithes of the marsh of Northwold between the parishes of Doddington, Elm and Wisbech, made in the marsh, in the Bishop's presence, 17 June 1248.

6. Amplified definition of 5 with regard to personal tithes and offerings due from Northwodeland and Le Whythemoor, which were uninhabited in 1248.

- p.3 7. *Sententia in visitatione Walter archiepiscopi Cantuariensis.*  
Mandate of Archbishop Walter Reynolds in the dean of Wisbech ordering him to carry out, with ecclesiastical censures if necessary, his commissaries' decision in a cause appealed to the Archbishop by the vicar of Wisbech, who complained that his parishioners were refusing to pay personal tithes and other lesser tithes from grass, straw, sedge, garden stuff, poultry, windmills, cheese and butter. 6 July 1325. The legend on the seal 'Ad Christum pro me sit semper passio Thome' is described.
- p.4 8. *Sententia magistri Iohannis de Bruton commissarii archiepiscopi Cantuariensis.*  
Original mandate as in no. 7, ordering the dean of Wisbech to implement the decision of the commissaries in the cause, 5 August 1315.
- p.5 9. *Excommunicacio contenta in concilio Oxoniensi pro refrenacione perversorum.*  
A list of all faults which incur the penalty of excommunication according to the constitutions of the Council of Oxford of 1222, to be read in the diocese of Ely three times each year.  
This list is longer than that supplied by the 'original' text of the council (*Councils and Synods* ii, pp. 106-7) and resembles the expanded versions included in the Oxford text of Lyndewode's *Provinciale* (1679), appendix, p.9.
- p.6 10. *Constitutio archiepiscopi Cantuariensis videlicet magistri Simonis.*  
Provincial statutes of Archbishop Simon Mepham issued in a council at St. Paul's in February 1328/9.  
The text of this entry resembles closely the copy included in *Provinciale*, appendix, pp.41-3.
- p.9 11. *Incipiunt statuta synodalia.*  
Synodal statutes for the diocese of Ely, dated by *Councils and Synods part 1*, pp. 515-23, 1239-56, with additions for 1256 x 76. This text closely resembles the latest redaction quoted there.
- p.12 12. *Confirmacio vicarii de Wysebech per dominum ..... Nicholaum iv.*  
Bull of confirmation to William de Schropeham and his successors of their title to the vicarage of Wisbech. 13 December 1291.  
This document is not included in *Les Régistres de Nicolas IV*, ed.E.Langlois, *Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome*, 2e sér, 5, 1886-93.
- p.13 13. Constitutions of Archbishop Stratford, 1342<20>.  
The text resembles closely that given in *Provinciale*, appendix, pp.43-49, although the paragraphs are slightly differently divided.

- p.14 14. Articles and responses of the clergy to Edward II during and after the Parliament of Lincoln in 1316, with a copy of a royal writ of protection of clerical goods from distraint, 14 November 1316. The articles and responses, here apparently associated with the diocese of Norwich, are printed in *Concilia Magnae Britanniae*, ed. D. Wilkins. ii,459-62, 4 vols., London 1737.<21>
- p.22 Extracts from the *Corpus Iuris Canonici* concerning marriage within the prohibited degrees; fragmentary prayers addressed to St. Hugh of Lincoln; Hoc rusti dusti dignum Anglice the devyllis Hown clos. Rusti dusti.
- p.24 Binding strip containing a list of feast days, and an extract from the will of Roger——, concerning a gift of plate to Wisbech church and a couplet:  
Fl....s octobris vicesima prima kalendas  
Henrici sexti sexto Wysbech notat anno

## NOTES

1. *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain, a List of Surviving Books*, ed. N.R. Ker, Royal Historical Society, 2nd.ed., 1964, p.78; *Councils and Synods*, II, AD 1205-1313, ed. F.M. Powicke and C.R. Cheney, 2 parts, Oxford, 1964 I, 515-23.
2. 'Haddenham' by E.M. Hampson in *V(ictoria) C(ounty) H(istory) Camb. IV*, Oxford 1953, 140-49.
3. BL Cotton ms. Tib.B ii, ULC EDR G3/27 (Liber R).
4. *English Historical Documents*, I, ed.D. Whitelock, London 1955, pp.405-6.
5. *Councils and Synods*, II, part 1, pp.336, 544.
6. BL Add. ms. 46701, fol. 102.
7. R.E.G. Cole, 'The royal burgh of Torksey', *Associated Archaeological and Architectural Societies*, 28, part 2, 1905-6, 402. Cole read 'faragium' for what should clearly have been 'saragium'.
8. BL Add.ms. 5845, fol. 96.
9. *Councils and Synods* II, part 1, 137.
10. *Ibid.*, 179, 319.
11. *Ibid.*, part ii, 1059, Exeter 1287.
12. *Ibid.*, part i, 214, 354, 435; part ii, 1079; *Register Martival*, vol. 2, part 2, ed. C.R. Elrington, Canterbury and York Society, LVIII, p.630; *Vetus Liber Archidiaconi Eliensis*; ed. C.L. Feltoe and E.H. Minns, Cambridge Antiquarian Society 1917, *passim*; *Inventory of Church Goods 1368*, ed. A. Watkin, Norfolk Record Soc., vol. XIX, 2 parts 1947-8, ii, xlvi.
13. *Catalogus Codicum Manuscriptorum qui in collegiis antiquis Oxoniensibus hodie adservantur*, ed. H.O. Coxe, 2 vols, Oxford 1852, New College Ms. xcvi.
14. ULC Add. ms. 3468; D.M. Owen, 'Records of the Bishop's Official at Ely', in D.A. Bullough and R.L. Storey, *The Study of Medieval Records*, Oxford 1972, pp. 215-231.
15. C.E. Wright, *Fontes Harleiani*, London 1972 p. 273.
16. *Councils and Synods* II, part 1, 82, Salisbury I, 1217 x 1219.

17. *Rolls and Register of Bishop Oliver Sutton*, ed. R.M.T. Hill, Lincoln Record Society, vol.48,123,129, vol.64,50,61; Lincoln Episcopal Register 5, fol., 72v.

18. Appendix B above, no.7, describes the legend on a seal.

19. This name suggests the existence of a bridge in Aldreth at this period. C.f. *VCH Cambs.* IV, 141, where a bridge is reported in 1279.

20. A second hand begins at this point.

21. A third hand begins.