

SHORTER CONTRIBUTION

THE RENTALS OF HOLY TRINITY PRIORY IN IPSWICH

by KEITH BRIGGS

IN 1847, W. P. HUNT printed transcriptions of two thirteenth-century rentals of the Priory of the Holy Trinity in Ipswich.¹ Neither rental contains explicit dating evidence, but Hunt assigned them approximately to the middle of the reign of Henry III and to the early years of the reign of Edward I; thus about 1245, and soon after 1272 respectively. After Hunt's publication, the earlier rental disappeared until it was purchased by Cambridge University Library at auction in 2017 (Fig. 161).² The second rental is in Suffolk Record Office (Fig. 162).³ The present work is motivated by the reappearance of the first rental and the main aim is to determine more precise dates for both documents as an aid to their interpretation as sources for the history of Ipswich.

The year 1200, in which Ipswich obtained its charter from King John, marks the beginning of the period when surviving documents enable us to study the local government of the town.⁴ Thenceforth, Ipswich was governed by two bailiffs elected annually, four coroners, twelve portmen, and various other postholders including beadles, aldermen, and jurors.⁵ Needless to say, these positions were generally filled by the wealthier merchants of the town and it is the frequent occurrence of their names in a range of documents (especially from the second half of the thirteenth century) which makes feasible the narrowing of the date range of the two rentals. The most important of these sources are the rolls of the great (or portmanmote) court and of the petty court, and a lay subsidy roll of 1282 or 1283.⁶ The dating method will largely depend on cross-referencing people mentioned in more than one of these documents.

The two rentals list tenants of the priory of Augustinian canons dedicated to the Holy Trinity, along with the amounts payable and the due dates. Very little is known about the foundation or early history of this priory. A founding date of 1177 is often cited, but *c.*1133 has been given by Christopher Harper-Bill and a date near the middle of the twelfth century would not be in conflict with any other evidence.⁷ According to the antiquary John Leland, the founder was Normanius Gastrode *filius* Egnostri, but the surname Gastrode here is completely obscure and may be spurious, whilst the name Egnostri is certainly corrupt since a charter of the fifth year of King John names the founder much more plausibly as Norman *fil[ius]* Eadnothi.⁸ The buildings of the priory were just outside the town defences to the north, on or near the site of the present Christchurch Mansion.

The charter of King John to the priory also confirmed its numerous holdings outside Ipswich, with the names of the donors of the properties stated.⁹ Land was held in Nacton, Helmingham, Hemingstone, Barham, Bramford, *Wike* (a hamlet to the east of Ipswich), *Brokes* (a region to the west of Ipswich), Newbourne, Coddendam, Bentley, Tunstall, Mendham, *Casemel* (a lost place in Foxhall or Brightwell), Westerfield, and a several other minor locations. The priory also held the churches of Foxhall, St Mary in Bentley, St Mary in Preston, St Mary in Higham, St John in Wenham; and, in Ipswich, the churches of St Laurence, St Mary-le-Tower, St Mary Elms, and the mill of Hanford. In about 1227, the priory acquired an interest in the church of Rushmere St Andrew.¹⁰ In contrast to the town churches and extramural estates, how or when the priory acquired the numerous houses and shops in the central streets of Ipswich, which form the major part of the two rentals and must

have made the priory the biggest landlord in the town, is unknown. On this evidence, by the time of the two rentals, about a hundred years after foundation, Holy Trinity must have been the richest religious house in Ipswich.¹¹

As regards the two thirteenth-century rentals, there is a close association between the documents which largely list groups of properties street-by-street and in the same order in each street. The second rental has greater detail and is produced in a more elaborate style with rubricated capitals. Both may have been originally created for show rather than mundane practical use but contemporary annotations, which are especially common in the second rental, show that they became working documents.¹² The first rental printed by Hunt is certainly earlier than the second as in the latter, a number of properties are said to be formerly held by people mentioned in the former. For example, a property held by Henry Wodekoc in the second rental and said to be formerly held by Smewine, is probably identical to the property in Thingstead held by Alicia Smewine and her sister Matilda in the first rental.¹³ A similar relation holds for the property held by Henry le Stabler and formerly William de Pyntone in the second rental, and that of William de Pintone in the first.

As has been noted, Hunt placed the first rental in the middle of the reign of Henry III which would be about 1245. Explicit death notices of men do not exist for this period and determining a date for someone's death is largely dependent on chance findings of dated mentions of women as their widows which, in turn, depends on the widows continuing to hold property or being involved in litigation. Fortunately, a patent roll of 3 Edward I (dated 16 June 1275) records the widow of Godfrey Davy, '*Isab[ella] que fuit Godefri' Dauy*' (Fig. 163).¹⁴ Though the literal reading of the Latin is 'Isabella who was Godfrey Davy', it should rather be interpreted as 'Isabella who was the wife of Godfrey Davy'; the word *uxor* meaning 'wife' has been omitted either by error or as a clerical abbreviation. That Isabella was indeed the widow of Godfrey is proven by a deed of 1282 which states explicitly '*ego Isabella que fuit uxor Godfr' Dauy* [I, Isabella, who was the wife of Godfrey Davy]'.¹⁵ Since Godfrey Davy appears in the earlier rental, it must have been created before 16 June 1275, the date of the patent roll entry; this date is thus a *terminus ante quem*. The same Godfrey Davy is mentioned in Ipswich great court rolls of 1270, so the rental is potentially as late as that year.¹⁶ There is ample additional independent confirmation that a date after 1275 must be too late; Saerus de Littelund appears in the earlier rental, but his widow is mentioned in a Ipswich great court

Robertus de .ofoz.	vii. s.	vii. s.
Adam de campo	iii. s.	iii. s.
Wille carpent	xii. s.	xii. s.
heredes Johis poring.		
Wille oghelef.	vi. s.	
Rog' le Blandreule	vi. s.	
Thingstede Jofep	vi. s.	
peter' idom'	iii. s.	
Radulph' surtoz	iii. s.	
Watius baddig	iii. s. ob.	iii. s. ob.
Radulph' de loham	iii. s. ob.	iii. s. ob.
Jurdon spilge	vi. s.	vi. s.
Clemosmaru' p' domo	x. s.	
Aldet smelwme	iii. s.	iii. s.
seman schakeloc	ii. s.	ii. s.
seman sakeloc	vi. s.	vi. s.
Thomas kedla	vi. s.	
Wille de pntone	iii. s. ob.	iii. s. ob.

FIG. 161 – The beginning of the first rental (Cambridge University Library MS Add. 10185) (reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library).

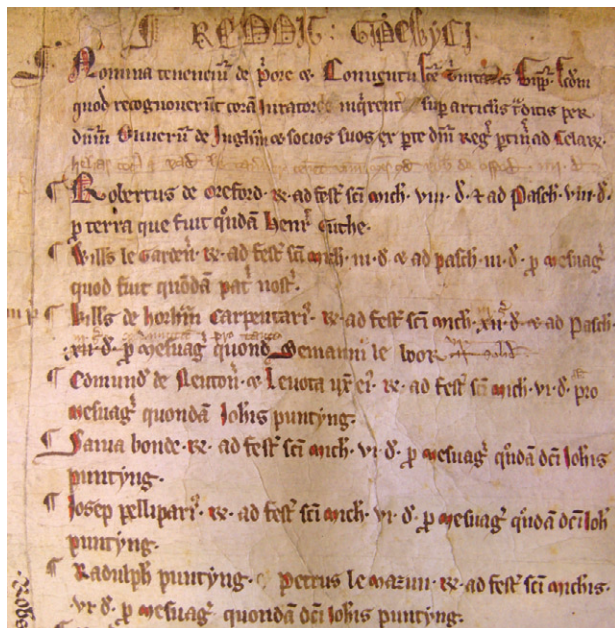


FIG. 162 – The beginning of the second rental
(Suffolk Record Office HD1/9/1/4/1; R.1956.66)
(reproduced with kind permission of Colchester and Ipswich
Museums, Ipswich Borough Collection).

will was enrolled because Robert had died.²³ The feast of St Michael is 29 September and the court was held on the Tuesday closest to this date. This could be 26 September or 3 October 1284.²⁴ Thus, the second rental was created in early October 1284 at the latest. For a *terminus*

roll of 1279.¹⁷ Johannes de Westerfelde also appears, but his widow is mentioned in a 1280 Ipswich great court roll.¹⁸ Finally, Hugo Leu, mentioned in the earlier rental, was dead by 1286/87.¹⁹

Similar methods can be used to determine the date of the later rental.²⁰ Hunt noted that Sir Oliver de Ingham, mentioned in the heading of the rental, was buried in 1291.²¹ But it is possible to be more precise; in an Ipswich great court roll of the twelfth year of the reign of Edward I, there is a copy of the will of Robert de Orford, who is mentioned in both rentals.²² The particular court is headed, ‘*Die martis proxima festum Sancti Michaelis anno regni regis Eadward filii Regis Henricus duodecimo* [Tuesday next to the feast of St Michael in the twelfth year of the reign of King Edward, the son of King Henry]’, and the

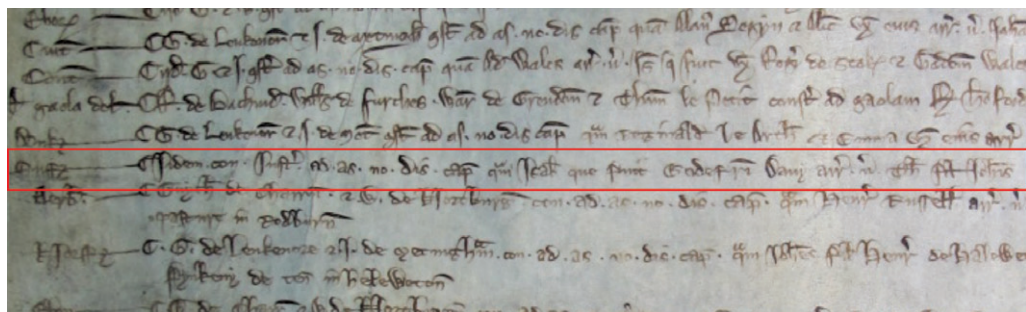


FIG. 163 – The entry in the Patent Roll of 3 Edward I recording
Isab' que fuit Godefri' Dauy ... de ten' in Gypeweye,
proving that Godfrey Davy (mentioned in the earlier rental) was dead by mid-1275, and that the item refers to a holding in Ipswich. This is thus the same Godfrey Davy as in the rental. The second entry on the membrane (not shown) specifies the date as *xvi die Junii anno t[er]cia* [the sixteenth day of June in the third year of the reign], which is 16 June 1275, since Edward's reign started on 20 November 1272 (The National Archives C66/94 membrane 19d, image from http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT7/E1/C66no94/bC66no94dorses/IMG_0361.htm)
(reproduced with kind permission of The National Archives).

post quem, the widow of Humphrey Pistor is mentioned in this rental, but he was alive in February 1283 when he paid the tax imposed by Edward I in that year.²⁵ Therefore, the later rental must have been drawn up after February 1283 and before 3 October 1284. This is a range of about a year and a half, and it is unlikely that it can be further narrowed.

The earlier rental is from before mid-1275, but how much earlier could it be? No document has been found which makes a definite statement possible.²⁶ The number of deaths occurring between the two rentals, as well as several changes of tenancy, suggest that an interval between the rentals of about ten to twenty years is likely. On the other hand, some tenants have not moved between the dates of the two rentals, so the gap cannot be too much more than this. The period between 1265 to 1275 seems most likely, and Hunt's *circa* 1245 is certainly much too early.

A final question concerns the motivation for the creation of two rentals. The obvious care taken in their preparation suggests a special event or reason, but there is no direct evidence as to purpose, and any proposals in this direction must be very speculative. A connection with royal or papal taxation is a possibility. Popes had taxed the clergy intermittently from 1199 and the Council of Lyons announced in 1272 and held in 1274 threatened a new tax.²⁷ This tax was in fact imposed at the rate of a tenth of clerical incomes and the Augustinians were not amongst the few orders who were exempt.²⁸ The date of the earlier rental is compatible with an association with this council and a motive could have been a deliberate under-declaration of income in an attempt to reduce tax. Non-payment risked excommunication.²⁹ But the later rental has no obvious comparable association, since the royal tax of 1283 was imposed on the laity only.³⁰ In any case, the dating given by Dreweatts in their auction catalogue of 2017 for the second rental of 'probably immediately before 1291', and the association suggested with the tax of Pope Nicholas IV of that year, cannot be right.³¹

The two Holy Trinity rentals are fundamental sources for the history of the Ipswich in the thirteenth century. They are the earliest surviving documents of their type and, along with the town court rolls and lay subsidies of the same period, give us much evidence on the social structure and economic activities of the town and on the place of origin of the townspeople. They mention Duce Malin, the earliest known ancestor of Geoffrey Chaucer, whilst the first reference in the English language to the word 'fuck' may occur in the surname of Simon Fukkebotere.³² But there is much more to be discovered in these documents and the more precise dating now provided should be a solid basis for further research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

- 1 Hunt 1847.
- 2 Purchased by Cambridge University Library (CUL) at auction, 6 July 2017 at the sale of Western and Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures, Dreweatts and Bloomsbury, lot 69; CUL MS Add. 10185.
- 3 Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich (SROI), HD1/9/1/4/1; R.1956.66, Colchester and Ipswich Museums, Ipswich Borough Collection.
- 4 The earliest text of the charter is printed in Hardy 1837, 65; Jeaffreson 1883; Martin 1954, 1956, 2001.
- 5 Reynolds *et al.* 1988, ii., 2.101–7; the jurisdiction of these officials extended outside the town over the extensive liberty of Ipswich, Briggs 2017.

- 6 Allen 2000, 44–6, 59; The National Archives (TNA) E179/242/40 and E179/242/42 printed by Powell 1905.
- 7 Harper-Bill 2007, 192.
- 8 Hearne 1774, I, 62; Page 1907, 103; Hardy 1837, 116.
- 9 Hardy 1837, 116; this charter was issued at Bradenstoke in Wiltshire, which King John visited only on 11, 15, and 17 January 1204, Hardy 1835.
- 10 Harper-Bill 2001, 49.
- 11 Its only competitor was the Priory of Saints Peter and Paul, Allen 2018; during the thirteenth century, houses of Greyfriars, Blackfriars, and Whitefriars were also founded.
- 12 The edition of Hunt is generally a very reliable transcription, but all readings cited here have been checked against the manuscripts from CUL and SROI.
- 13 On the interesting name *Smewine*, an unusual survival of an Old English dithematic name-type, see Seltén 1979, 148.
- 14 This item does not appear in the published calendar of patent rolls, which is very incomplete, Maxwell Lyte *et al.* 1904; however, the earlier and more complete calendar by Jessel *et al.* 1883, 147 does cite just such an entry.
- 15 TNA, E40/3898, catalogued as ‘release by Isabella, late the wife of Godfrey Davy of Ipswich, to Alexander Lovegod’.
- 16 SROI, C/2/1/1/2, court of Thursday after the Annunciation in the fifty-fifth year of Henry III, thus 27 March 1270.
- 17 SROI, C/2/1/1/6, roll of 8 Edward I.
- 18 SROI, C/2/1/1/6, roll of 9 Edward I.
- 19 Feet of Fines for 15 Edward I, Rye 1900, 91.
- 20 The methodology for the study of surnames pioneered by Ekwall in his work on medieval London has been followed, Ekwall 1947, 1951, 1956, 1965; in particular, names of prominent people can be safely assumed unique except for the case of father and son of the same name.
- 21 Hunt 1847, iv.
- 22 SROI, C/2/1/1/8, membrane 8.
- 23 Scribal abbreviations have been expanded.
- 24 This must be the very record reported by Nathaniel Bacon writing in 1654, Richardson 1884, 14, when he stated that the will of Robert de Orford was proved in 12 Edward I. This claim is also made by Redstone 1915, 98. Neither author points explicitly to the evidence above.
- 25 Powell 1905, 152.
- 26 The earliest surviving Ipswich court rolls comprise only 39–40 Henry III, 54–56 Henry III and 1 Edward I. After this there is a gap until 7–8 Edward I.
- 27 Lunt 1915, 398.
- 28 Lunt 1915, 401.
- 29 Prior William of Holy Trinity is actually mentioned as excommunicated in an *actum* of the bishop of Norwich in 1269 but no reason is given, Harper-Bill 2007, no. 141; if the date of the first rental was 1269 or just before, there may be a connection between these events.
- 30 Hadwin 1983.
- 31 cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-10185/2.
- 32 Briggs 2012; Briggs 2019.

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