

NOTES ON SUFFOLK MANUSCRIPT BOOKS.

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It is well-known that a particularly fine series of illuminated psalters originated in East Anglia in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The best extant examples are listed by Mr. Sydney C. Cockerell in describing the "Ormesby" Psalter, which belonged to Norwich Cathedral.† Mr. Cockerell has a theory that the making of these psalters, several of which originated in the neighbourhood of Gorleston, was due to commercial speculation, and that they were not the work of the religious houses, to which they were given, or by which they were purchased.‡

Very little is known of the making of manuscript books in Suffolk. The great library of the Abbey of Bury certainly included some works which were written within the Abbey's *scriptorium*, and these probably included Lydgate's finely illuminated "Lives of SS. Edmund and Fremund," now Harleian MS. 2278; but the task of identifying any special school of writing or illuminating at Bury Abbey has defied even so expert a scholar as Dr. Montague Rhodes James.§ The books of that library were widely scattered after the suppression of the Abbey. Many

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†*Two East Anglian Psalters at the Bodleian Library*, described by S. C. Cockerell and M. R. James, Roxburghe Club, 1926, p. 1.

‡*Ibid.* p. 32.

§M. R. James. Articles on *The History and Remains of the Library of St. Edmund* (Cambr. Antiq. Soc., 1895), 104.

are at Pembroke College, Cambridge, many in public libraries, some belong to the Corporation of Ipswich, others to the Bury Grammar School, and the library of St. James's, Bury.

Still less is known as to the lesser libraries in Suffolk, or the origin of the books which they contained. Judging from the pitifully scanty inventories of the small Suffolk priories, which were compiled upon their suppression, very few of these houses owned more than the extreme minimum even of service books. In August, 1536, the Royal Commissioners returned no books at all for St. Olave's Priory, 'divers bokes of ther use littell worth' at Flixton Priory, diverse books valued "nil" at Holy Trinity Ipswich, no books at Blythborough or Letheringham. Only at Redlingfield Priory there was a mass-book worth 12d. in addition to "four books of their use, little worth." At Leiston Abbey were divers old books of their service, but "nothing worth." At Ixworth Priory an old mass book "after ther use lytell worth" was valued at 4d. and six "old bookes for ther service lytell worth of dyverse kyndes," at 20d. The mass book at Campsey Priory was blocked with the cruets at the High Altar, and together they were valued at 6d.* The Grey Friars of Ipswich, in April, 1538, had twenty books "good and ill"; but these were all service books since they were taken "owt of the quere."† The wealthier knights of St. John had at their Commandery at Battisford, 1 Dec., 1539, "a missall in parchment (5s.) a portas [i.e., breviary] in parchment (5s.), two half portasses in paper (nil), oone manuell (nil) and oone processioner in paper perused (i.e., worn out). These were all in the chapel, and the Commissioners returned no contents at all for the "study" which certainly existed, since particulars were given of the furniture in "the chambre besides the Studye."

*Inventories of Church Goods (Excheq. K.R.), E11 7/12/7.

†E36. Vol. 153, p. 129.

Service books "of the use" of these houses of Austin Canons or other orders would at best have little market value, at a time when all monastic orders were dissolving. There are indications that the Commissioners thought little of books, except for their outward ornament. Of the celebrated Red Book of Eye, written in Lombard characters, and said to contain the Gospels brought over by St. Felix, they said that there was in the vestry at Eye Priory, 26 August, 1536 "an olde Masse Boke callyd the redde boke of Eye garnysshed wth a lytell sylver on the one side, the residew lytell worth." They valued it at 20d. and noted that it was with the Prior.*

Poor and "perused" as were most of these service books, it would be interesting to know how many fragments remain in Suffolk, say, as the bindings of parish registers or other church books, or the covers of court rolls and rentals. The College of Stoke by Clare had a considerable library in addition to its mass books and other service books, both written and printed, which were valued at 26s. 8d. For "the bokes in the library wt ther chenes, stalles, yrons, and waynscott" were valued at £5 on 8 December, 1547, and were delivered 18 March following to the Dean, Matthew (afterwards Archbishop) Parker, and to William Hunwyke gentleman. Afterwards, 28 January, 1556, all the goods of the College were delivered to Sir John Cheke, knight.† This library had doubtless been gathered for the education of the secular priests, who were trained at the College, and possibly included the books for the school which was attached.

With this exception there is no appearance of any monastic collections of books, nor of any considerable *scriptorium*, so far as is shown by the imperfect records

*E117/12/7.

†E117/12/8.

of the lesser Suffolk houses. The question which arises is whether there were indeed in Suffolk, or perhaps over the Norfolk border, any secular organisations which turned out manuscript books for profit, or whether the manuscripts which were privately owned in the county were the work of individual scribes, employed by wealthy patrons to copy the particular books which they wished to have.

This question has special importance in regard to the origin of some of the manuscripts of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. It might be expected that there would be a special demand for copies of Chaucer's works in Suffolk, and particularly in the household of his descendants, the De la Poles, after his granddaughter Alice had married William De la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, in 1437. At least three of the extant manuscripts have distinct associations with Suffolk. One of these is the finely illuminated "Ellesmere" manuscript; another is the manuscript at Helmingham Hall, which has been in the possession of the Tollemache family at least since the sixteenth century, and contains signatures of members of several mid-Suffolk families scribbled in its margins.

A third manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales* which was plainly associated with Suffolk at an early date is now at the British Museum (Harl. MS., 7335). This book contains a note that it was "bought at Ipswich 30 Dec., 1737." Amongst other scribbles and pen-trials it contains the following:—

- (1) f. 6. John Blechenden (early 16th century court-hand).
- (2) f. 6. Roberd Coluelle (or Coluyll) (15th c., twice).
- (3) f. 12. Explicit q[uod] Robart blake (15th c.)
- (4) f. 34. Tant quant q[e] vyuray awarwyk (15th c.)

(5) f. 39. Adam John nabbes (15th-16th c. ; probably pen-trials).

(6) f. 42.v. aben poln[e] or poln[us] (15th-16th c.)

(7) f. 58. Explicitq [uod] Robart blake de Cotton (15th c. ; possibly a distinct hand from (2), followed by unexplained letters.

(8) f. 75. jenhay Ward or jenhau Ward (followed by a note, only partly legible).

(9) f. 76. By me hanesse Crane of Earlsohm have a merry master (16th c.)

(10) f. 100. Wyllm Hau Ward (or Hay Ward) has to ye foresayd xs, (or possibly) his to resauesave xs.

(11) f. 100. tomis lam.

(12) f. 139. heffelle (?) (early 16th c.)

(13) f. 147. v. [r]essauyd of my master xvijj s.

The connexion with Cotton is particularly significant because it was at Cotton Hall that was born in 1396* William de la Pole, who afterwards became Duke of Suffolk, and married Alice the daughter and heir of ~~Sir~~ Thomas Chaucer, generally taken to be the poet's son. That Alice herself sometimes visited Cotton Hall is proved by the letters to John Paston as to her project for a sudden visit there in October, 1468, and January, 1469, in order to claim the overlordship of Hempnall Hall in Cotton, the manor to which the Pastons laid claim.†

Whether Alice Duchess of Suffolk, or her descendants, had books at Cotton Hall has not so far been ascertained. Four French books and an English translation by Lydgate were sent to Ewelme,‡ for her from her home at Wingfield in August, 1466 ; but no inventory of her goods nor of those of her son and grandson, dukes of Suffolk, have been discovered either among testamentary records or at the Public Record Office. It is

*Proof of age Chancery Inq. p.m. Hen. V., File 29. No. 63.

†*Paston Letters* ed. Gairdner, ii, 324, 337.

‡Hist. MSS. Com. Rep. VIII, pp. 628-9.

perhaps by reason of their tragic deaths that so few of the descendants of Alice Chaucer left any wills.* Margaret, widow of the last Duke, who accepted the rank of Earl, calling herself Margaret Suffolk, made her will† in a curious mixture of English and Latin and desired that "all myn old plate hoc est residuum meum totum of plate cheynes Joyelles, and other stuff be sold and disposed for my soule." This was doubtless the final disposition of the chief goods which remained to the de la Pole family from their ancestors, for it is unlikely that the few goods left at Metz‡ by Margaret's exiled brother-in-law "*Blanche Rose*," the last of the family, included anything of much worth, and certainly they were little likely to include books.

Cotton Hall, in common with the other lands of the family, was frequently forfeited and recovered until it was granted to Charles Brandon the new Duke of Suffolk. In 1490, however, William Pratyman, of Bacton, with John Lopham, of Gipping, had acquired a lease of the manor which had been made in the previous year by John duke of Suffolk, son to the Duchess Alice (Chaucer), to a certain Simon Wyseman, and from that time onwards it was farmed by the Pretyman family as lessees,§ until William Pretyman the younger bought it in 1592.||

The farm or manor of Cotton Hall is frequently mentioned in the wills of the Pretyman family, who themselves lived near by at Bacton, but there is nothing

*That of her husband, buried at Wingfield 1450, has been printed by the Rev. S. W. H. Aldwell in his history of Wingfield from the Archbishop's Register; but no wills of the later dukes exist there or among the records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

†P.C.C. 6 Holder.

‡John de Hédin, *maitre d'hotel* to Margaret of Savoy petitioned to have them in 1525 (L. and P. Hen. VIII, IV (1) 1217); for *Blanche Rose* see "Richard de la Pole, White Rose", by H. W. Wolff in *Blackwood's Mag.*, 1891, pp. 831-47.

§Court Rolls at Moyses Hall, Bury St. Edmunds.

||Copinger. *Suffolk Manors*. iii, 247.

to show whether they had any goods at Cotton, either of their own or taken over from the De la Poles. A gold cup was found in the moat a hundred and twenty years back. It would be of interest to know whether it was of such a date as to have belonged to the De la Poles. The will of George Pretyman who died about 1732 has not been found in the Archdeaconry of Sudbury or in the Consistory Court of Norwich; and his widow Jane made her will* in 1733 as of Bury St. Edmunds. It was proved in August, 1738. Cotton Hall went with Bacton to her eldest son Baron Pretyman. His will of 8 March, 1757, sanctioned the sale of the Hall if necessary. One of his mother's trustees, and one of his own executors, was their friend Mr. Thomas Martin, of Palgrave, the antiquary, who proved Baron Pretyman's will, 25 March, 1758.

It seems possible, that if the book in question remained with the Pretyman's as part of the household goods left behind at Cotton, it may have been sold at Ipswich, 30 December, 1737, by the advice of "Honest Tom Martin," the antiquary, who acted as steward for the Cotton manors at least from 1722 to 1746. That he had an interest in Chaucer manuscripts is proved by those from his collection that exist in the library of Glasgow University. One of these, the Canterbury Tales, was given to him by Mr. John White, of Ipswich, surgeon; another, the Romaunt of the Rose, was given to him by James Sturgeon, a surgeon of Bury St. Edmunds. It is unfortunate that the Ipswich Journal for December, 1737, is wanting from the files both at the Ipswich Public Library and at the British Museum, so that it is not possible thus to ascertain whether any collection of books was advertised for sale at Ipswich at that date, Nor so far, has any big sale of books there in 1737 come to my knowledge. Perhaps some reader can supply information on this point.

*Arch. Sudbury, Clagett IV, f. 426.

The court rolls of Cotton manor, some of them bound in leaves from service books ornamented in red and blue, came later into the hands of the Rev. Churchill Babington, D.D., of Cockfield Rectory, whose library of early printed books and collection of Roman antiquities were visited by members of the Suffolk Institute in 1877.* After his death in January, 1889, the court rolls were purchased by the late Mr. H. Trigg and they are now at the Moyses Hall Museum at Bury. It would be interesting to know whether Professor Babington's collection of books included any manuscripts of Suffolk origin, or if he had any catalogue which would have shown whence he obtained the Cotton court rolls.

The phrase "explicit quod" twice used in connection with Robert Blake is the common method of the time for showing that a book or tale is finished so far. The only Robert Blake† of Cotton who has been traced as yet is one who was a "steinor" of the painted cloths for hanging walls, of which an example remains in the Ancient House at Ipswich. He was a copyholder in the manor of Cotton, he was assessed in Cotton to the subsidy of 1524, with John Chapman and John Palant for "wages and profett."‡ and his will was made 28 Aug., 1558, and proved 17 Ap. 1559.§ He was then old enough to be a grandfather and he bequeathed the tenement called Blakes in Cotton first to his son Andrew and then to Andrew's son John. Failing the issue of John, it was to be sold and preference given as purchaser to John "Blake," a stainer, whom testator had brought up, and whom he calls also "John Blacks son late of Eye." It is suggested that this Robert

*See the *Proceedings* of 1887, Vol. VI, p. 313.

†The *Paston Letters* have frequent reference to "Blake" who was bailiff of Swaffham, and in one instance acted on behalf of the Duchess of Suffolk, apparently in connexion with Aspal's manor in Swaffham; but he was probably Simon Blake (Blomefield, *Norfolk*, vi., 202).

‡*Suffolk in 1524*, ed. Hervey, 172.

§Arch Sudbury XXIV, 206.

Blake or some other stainer of his name and family had used this manuscript in drawing patterns for staining cloth, marking in the book how far his work had reached on several occasions. His notes certainly occur against episodes well suited to be subjects for his craft. - Two are written in the Knight's Tale, where he first writes his name diagonally in the margin of fo. 6r, against lines 1616 to 1621, in which Arcite parts from his rival Palamon in a grove, having pledged himself to return on the morrow with knightly armour, so that they might fight for the Lady Emily. Again, he writes "Explicit q[uod] Robart blake" against line 2066, part of the description of the Temple of Diana in the lists where they fought. Lines 2065 to 2066 read:—

"Ther saugh I Attheon an hert y maked

For vengeaunce that he saugh Dyane al naked," so that Robert Blake may have been painting a series of cloths to represent the episodes in the story of Diana with which the Temple was adorned. In fact, he may well have been emulating the skill described by Chaucer for "Wel coude he peynte lyfly that it wroughte." The second Tale in which is written "Explicit q[uod] Robart blake de Cotton" is the Tale of the Man of Law. Blake's note occurs on folio 58 at the foot of the page which describes how Constance struggled alone with the steward who came aboard her ship from the "heathen" castle, and how he fell overboard and was drowned.

The earliest scribble in Harl. MS. 7335 appears to be the phrase (No. 4), "Tant quant qe vyuray_v awarwyk," boldly written at the foot of folio 34r. Since the word "vyuray" is in the future tense, the phrase seems to be a pledge to support (the Earl of) Warwick for life. The De la Poles were definitely Yorkist in their sympathies from 1460, when the widowed duchess Alice married her young son John to Elizabeth Plantagenet

daughter of Richard duke of York. They and their neighbours were partisans with Warwick except when he restored Henry VI from October, 1470 until April, 1471, when Warwick perished at the second battle of Barnet. During this Lancastrian restoration, Suffolk remained loyal to his brother-in-law Edward IV., and obliged the men of Eye to pay the Yorkist soldiery. Whether this vow to support Warwick was written by the young Duke of Suffolk himself or by any of his neighbours around Cotton, the likelihood is that it was written in or shortly after 1460, and certainly before October, 1470. Perhaps it belongs to September, 1460, when the Earl of Warwick went on pilgrimage to our Lady of Walsingham.*

Scribble No. 9 refers without doubt to an Agnes Crane of Earl Soham; and not necessarily to a Crane of the well-known Earl Stonham or Chilton families, although two of the Cranes of Earl Stonham had wives named Agnes, and Robert Crane of Chilton had a daughter Agnes, who is said to have married three times.†

In 1524, an Agnes Crane widow assessed at Badley, ‡ was presumably a member of the Chilton family. The will§ of Agnes, the widow of Nicholas|| Crane, of Palgrave, was dated 11 June, very shortly after her husband's death. In 1568, an Agnes Crane was assessed at Huntingfield,** perhaps the nearest approach to Earl Soham. She was obviously the Agnes Crane, widow, of Huntingfield, whose will was dated 25 Nov., and proved 9 December, 1573, †† and had previously been married to Edmund Eue. It is difficult amongst all these Agnes

*Wavrin *Recueil des Croniques d' Engleterre* (Rolls Ser.), V., 309.

†Davy, *Suffolk Pedigrees*, Add MS. 19125, ff. 136, 142, 143.

‡*Suffolk in 1524* (ed. Hervey), 131.

§Arch., Sudbury, xiii., f. 246.

||*Ibid.*, f. 217.

***Suffolk in 1568* (ed. Hervey), 45.

††Arch., Suffolk, xxiv., f. 445.

Cranes to find any clue to the identity of the Agnes whose name has been here written ; but it seems more likely that she would be a spinster than one of the wives or widows.

Nos. (7) and (9) are the only scribbles which have reference to locality. No. (1) "John Blechenden" is perhaps connected with the single word "Blechenden," which occurs elsewhere in the manuscript. Blechenden is by no means a common Suffolk name. There are no wills of Suffolk Blechendens in either of the Suffolk courts or in the Prerogative Court ; but a [blank] Blechingden occurs in the Hearth Tax of St. Margaret's, Ipswich, in 1674, and the family may have been there some time, as Abraham Blechenden had a tenement in that parish in 1630.* The surname is far more common in Kent ; but so far nothing has been found to identify the John Blechenden of this note.

No. (2) the name of Robert Colvelle, probably refers to some local person of that name, although no Colvelle named Robert has so far come to light either in Cotton itself or at Earl Soham. Thomas Colvile gentleman was, however, tenant of a close called Bolours in Cotton in 1564,† and was probably Thomas the son of John Colvyle, of Parham, who was mentioned in his father's will in 1542,‡ and styled himself gentleman in his own will proved 1581. This Thomas had an elder brother Robert "Colvyll," a substantial yeoman of Great Glemham, who was buried in Parham church about between 1552 and 1554.§ Presumably these were of the same family as that Robert "Covelde" or Colvell of Ufford, who inherited Otleys manor in Ufford from Robert Lambe, and was buried in Ufford church porch,

*Ipswich Corporation Records, Enrolments, 1630-31 (between Watson and Stowe).

†Cotton Court Rolls (Moyses Hall), Feast of Annunciation, 8 Elizabeth.

‡Arch. Suff. Bk. 14, f. 252 ; Bk. 23, f. 242.

§Ibid. Bk. 17, f. 20 ; cf. Bk. 16 f. 436.

about 1525.* This Robert is of a date to have written the late 15th century or early 16th century signature in Harl. 7335 ; but nothing has been found to connect him with the (possible) Thomas Lam(b) at folio 100. Nothing is known to connect two earlier Robert Colviles with the Cotton or Earl Soham neighbourhoods. The one was of Bury St. Edmunds in March, 1465[6] and seems to have come from the Isle of Ely,† the other was son of John " Coluell " of Farnham, who bequeathed lands there to him to hold with the testator's wife Christian in 1463.‡

Scribble No. (5) probably refers to no particular person, although it is clear that the writer of it was acquainted with the surname Nabbes. Ashby in Lothingland was evidently the seat of this family in Suffolk. John, Robert and Roger Nabbys were assessed there in 1524 ; and Peter Nabbys then assessed in Southton near Ashby, is probably the Peter Nabys of Ashby, whose will is now missing.§ Other Nabbys were assessed in that year at Somerleyton and Lownde, both in Lothingland. So far no Adam Nabbes has come to light.

It has been suggested that Nos. (8) and (10), which are both in a very illiterate hand, are both attempts to spell, phonetically the Suffolk pronunciation of the name " Haward," which is still pronounced hō'ard, with the vowel sounds as in " towards." The practice of writing the name with a separated syllable beginning with capital W is quite common at the period. It occurs for example in the will of William " Ha Warde " of Denston in 1589,|| and occasionally has the variant " Hayward " for example in the will of Robert

*Ibid. Bk., 9, f. 130.

†Arch. Sudbury, " Hawlee," f. 90.

‡Arch. Suff. Bk., 2 f. 107.

§Calendared in Arch. Suffolk, Bk. 9, f. 205.

||Arch. Sudbury, " Goddarde," 214.

"Hawarde" of Felsham, yeoman, proved 1581, in which he mentions his three sons Jeremy and John "Haward," and William "Haywarde."* At Earl Soham there lived a family of "Howard" early in the 16th century†; but the form Haward has not yet come to light in that neighbourhood nor at Cotton.

No. 11 may merely signify that "Tom is lame"; but there is a possibility that it is intended for the name "Thomas Lam(b)." A certain Thomas Lambe of Fordham, for instance, so called in a marginal note, by the clerk who registered his will wrote his name Lam[m]e. The writing is too late in character to precede in date that of Robert Colville; and no connexion has been found between any *Thomas Lamb* and that Robert "Covelde" or Colville who inherited Otleys from Robert Lamb.

There are here many problems for the solution of which the key may be lying hid in the minds of members who read this article and are more intimate than the writer with local collections or with the families of mid-Suffolk. The publication or private communication would be welcomed of any information which would clear up the history of this manuscript, or would throw new light upon the origin and distribution of others of the kind in Suffolk.‡

*Arch. Sudbury, "Browne," 312.

†Arch. Suff., Bk. 7, f. 150, Bk. 11, f. 113.

‡Communications could be sent to 126, Alderney Street, London, S.W.1.