

# AN ARMS SALE AT NETTLESTEAD IN 1682

by DAVID ALLEN

THE HISTORY OF the English militia as a defence force may be traced in unbroken lineal descent from its origins in the Anglo-Saxon *fyrð*-service, through Henry II's Assize of Arms of 1181, Edward I's Statute of Winchester of 1285 and its various re-enactments, and the 1558 legislation of Philip and Mary, all of which decreed the weaponry which men must provide for the national defence, proportionally to their wealth in landed property or goods. The inadequacy of the early Stuart militia – even though augmented by the Elizabethan innovation of the trained bands – in the early stages of the Civil War, resulted in the creation of Cromwell's New Model Army.

Though that army, under the leadership of General George Monck, who had purged it in advance of all odiously republican elements, did not oppose the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, its mere existence, as a political force with a tradition of interference in affairs of state, representative of an alien theory of government, was both a grave threat to the King and an affront to the ultra-royalist Convention Parliament, and it was rapidly disbanded. Yet the series of republican plots which began towards the end of 1660 brought home to the government the need for security and led to the creation of an infant royal standing army of three regiments, one of them formed from Monck's 'Coldstreamers', the last regiment of the Cromwellian forces to be stood down.

The new force was from the beginning neutral in politics, and remained subordinate to the civil power. Yet the experience of the Interregnum had created such a widespread distrust – amounting virtually to a national hatred – of standing armies as instruments of tyranny, that neither Parliament nor the country as a whole saw Charles II's army for what it was – 'a weak and often poorly-run police force' (Childs 1976, 14). Nor did Parliament appreciate that the King's motive was simply to secure his throne and avoid having to go on his 'travels' again, not to overawe the Legislature. As a more acceptable alternative to the expansion of the army – which in any case the Crown could not afford – the Restoration Parliament therefore, by a series of enactments between 1661 and 1663, authorised the re-establishment of the militia, which was much more popular with the country gentry who traditionally officered it, on a revised basis.<sup>1</sup>

The 1662 Act (13 and 14 Car. II, cap. 3) 'for ordering the forces in the several counties of this kingdom' perpetuated the old requirement for the owners of real and personal property to provide and equip militia soldiers in accordance with a revised set scale of charges, dependent on their means. The liability to supply mounted troops fell upon the more wealthy, while infantry provision was the responsibility of the less affluent. Those with insufficient wealth to furnish an entire horse or foot soldier were combined in groups, each responsible for finding one man. At the bottom of the scale, petty constables were empowered to raise foot soldiers in respect of those of small estate, and recover the cost by a parish rate.<sup>2</sup>

The same Act also specified (section XXI) the equipment to be provided. A horseman must have armour consisting of 'back, breast and pot . . . the breast and pot to be pistol-proof'; he should be armed with a sword and a case of pistols, the barrels of which were to be not less than 14in long; and his horse was to have 'a great saddle or padd with burrs and straps to affix the holsters unto, a bit and bridle with a pectoral and crupper'. Of the two types of foot soldier, a musketeer was required to have a musket with a barrel not less than 3ft long, the bore to take bullets weighing at least twelve to the pound. In addition he was to be provided with a 'collar of bandealers' [*sic*] and a sword. A pikeman must have an ash pike at least 16ft long overall and a sword, and like the mounted soldier should have for protection armour comprising back-, breast- and head-piece.

The obligation to arm the militia, as we have seen, fell upon the person rather than the property; when assessing individual liability either real (landed) or personal wealth could be taken into account. The arms sale about to be discussed shows, however, that, in practice, at least in the post-Restoration period, specific sets of arms and armour could come to be associated with particular land holdings, even to the extent of being bought and sold along with them.

Vincents Farm in Nettlestead changed hands in 1682.<sup>3</sup> The origin of the name is obscure. No reference has been found to a family of this name in Nettlestead, but a number of 16th- and early 17th-century Vincent wills exist from the adjoining parish of Baylham, proved between 1549 and 1620.<sup>4</sup> These Vincents, of yeoman status, held lands both in Baylham and in Great Blakenham (which also adjoins Nettlestead), and it seems not unlikely that members of the same family were at some time tenants of Vincents Farm. The property was known by this name at least as early as 1621, for a note by Thomas Wingfield of Nettlestead, of 'the tenures of all my freehold landes', dated 12 March that year, includes 'my house wherin I dwell called Vincentes with the Frehold landes I purchased of Mr Henery Colborn in Netlested and Somersham & are holden of the Mannor of Netlestead by Socage and by the yerely Rent of vs.'. The Colborns had held the property from the Wentworths, lords of the manor of Nettlestead; in 1619 the Crown issued a licence to Thomas, Lord Wentworth, to alienate it to Wingfield, who afterwards consolidated his holding by purchases of neighbouring lands.

In May 1639 the farm was sold to Dr Thomas Eden, Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge,<sup>5</sup> who left it on his death in 1645 to his nephew Thomas Eden of West Hanningfield, Essex. He in turn sold it in September 1653 to Thomas Conn, citizen and haberdasher of London, and his wife Judith, from whom it passed to their sole surviving child Dorothy, widow of Robert Palmer, citizen and clothworker of London.<sup>6</sup> On 25 October 1682, by deed of bargain and sale enrolled in Chancery, Vincents was sold by Dorothy Palmer and her mortgagees to John Burrough of Ipswich, grocer and John Pistor of Claydon, clerk, for £1,790. A supplementary deed executed by the purchasers the same day declared that the property was intended to form part of the jointure of Jane, Burrough's daughter and Pistor's wife, and that the down-payment of £490 on the purchase had been advanced by Burrough out of money provided by his son-in-law.

Also on the same day, 25 October 1682, by a separate deed of bargain and sale (Fig. 87 and Appendix I), Dorothy Palmer sold to Burrough and Pistor, for an undisclosed but 'competent summe',

All that and those the Pike Musket Bandaleeres, two Soldiers coats and two Swords and other Armes and Furniture for two Soldiers to serve in the Militia of the said County of Suffolke for and in respect of a certaine Farme called Vincentes and Land belonging in or neare the parish of Nettlestead in the said County which the said John Burrough and John Pistor have late Purchased or are about to purchase of and from me . . . To have and to hold . . . for and as their owne proper goods and Chattells absolutely and for ever.<sup>7</sup>

The document underlines the fact that it was the owner rather than the occupier of property who was assessed towards the equipping of the militia.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, it clearly shows that (except, presumably, in cases of group provision by the less well off) the arms and equipment, though provided for the use of the state, nevertheless remained the supplier's 'owne proper goods . . . absolutely' – a fact perhaps not always appreciated.<sup>9</sup> However, in the case of Vincents Farm at least, the weaponry was apparently not kept on the premises. Certainly from the time of the Wingfield sale in 1639, Vincents was in the hands of absentee landlords, resident in

Know all men by these presents That Dorothy  
 Palmer of London widow Relict and Executrix of Robert  
 Palmer late Cittizen and Clothier of London for and in  
 Consideration of a competent Summe of lawfull money of England  
 to me in hand paid by John Burrough of Ipswich in the County  
 of Suffolke Grocer and John Rister of Claydon in the same  
 County Clerk The Receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged  
 Have granted Bargained and sold and by these presents  
 Doe grant Bargaine and sell unto the said John Burrough  
 and John Rister their Executors Administrators and  
 Assignes All that ~~was~~ and those the like Musket  
 Bandaliers, two Soldiers coats and two Swords and other  
 Armes and ffurniture for two Soldiers to serve in the  
 Militia of the said County of Suffolke for and in respect of  
 a certain ffarm called Vincents and Land belonging in or  
 neare the parish of Nettlesstead in the said County which  
 the said John Burrough and John Rister have late Purchast  
 or are about to purchase of and from me the said Dorothy  
 Palmer Daniell Barcke and Benjamin Cole To have and  
 to hold unto them the said John Burrough and John  
 Rister their Executors Administrators and Assignes for  
 and as their owne proper goods and Chattells absolutely  
 and for ever In witness whereof I the said Dorothy  
 Palmer have herunto sett my hand and Seale this  
 five twentieth Day of October 44 in the yeare  
 of our Lord Christ One Thousand six hundred Eighty and  
 Two and in the ffour and Thirtieth yeare of the Reigne  
 of our Sovereigne Lord King Charles the second over England

Sealed and Delivered  
 in the presence of:

Jeremy Mount  
 Valentine Clarke  
 Isaac Cornwell

Dorothy Palmer

FIG. 87 - The deed of bargain and sale of the Vincents Farm militia arms and armour, 25 October 1682 (S.R.O.I., HA 119/2/2/2/6; by permission of the Suffolk Record Office).

Cambridge, Hanningfield and London, and the farm was let out to tenants. The inventories attached to the surviving leases – for example, that dated 10 July 1676 from Judith Conn to Edmund Kerich of Bramford, yeoman (see note 8) – make no mention of the arms among the contents of the house; they were probably kept, along with the group-purchased weapons and those paid for by parish rate, in the parish armoury.

The owners of Vincents were assessed for the provision of a musketeer and a pikeman, that is, for two foot-soldiers. Since no-one whose annual income from land was less than £50, or whose goods were worth less than £600, was chargeable with the full cost of a foot-soldier, and since the liability increased proportionally for those of greater estate up to the maximum of £500 per annum (£6,000 in goods) which triggered the obligation to provide mounted troops (13 Car. II, cap. 6, sec. III), the assessment indicates that the farm was worth between £100 and £150 per annum. (As the owners were not resident in the county, they had no personal estate eligible for assessment.)

The arms and equipment whose ownership was transferred did not precisely match the provisions of the 1662 Act. Both sets of equipment included coats (not specifically mentioned in the Act), but while the musketeer's equipment was complete, including the required musket, bandolier and sword, the provision for the pikeman lacked helmet, breastplate and backplate (unless they were included under 'other arms and furniture'), and consisted only of pike and sword.

The arms were unlikely to have been new or in prime condition. Indeed, the framers of the 1662 Act itself had anticipated that weaponry left over from the Civil and Commonwealth Wars would be made use of; in laying down minimum dimensions for the bore of muskets and the length of musket and pistol barrels and pikes, the Act nevertheless permitted the use of existing weapons of smaller sizes. Moreover, by 1682 the militia was already suffering from neglect. In the early and mid 1660s, while the restored monarchy was still insecure, the militia had enjoyed substantial gentry support for its functions of preventing republican insurrection and suppressing Dissenting conventicles, particularly since the alternative was an increase in the size of the detested regular army. But following the second Dutch War of 1667, mismanagement of which led to disagreements between Crown and Parliament, not least because of the government's fraudulent conversion of militia funds to other purposes, a new climate of opinion set in, characterised by increasing public distaste for the militia's function of repression. As such repression was now its prime task, the militia thus became deprived of the possibility of reform and threatened with decay through the growing reluctance of those responsible in the localities for making the system work (Western 1965, 30–63). Under these circumstances, little was done to ensure that equipment was renewed.

In June 1685, less than three years after the Nettlestead arms sale, the militia troops of the west of England were called out in support of the regular forces following the Duke of Monmouth's landing at Lyme Regis in Dorset. On 27 June a correspondent at Lavington in Wiltshire wrote to a member of the Earl of Abingdon's household in London with an account of the poor state of preparedness of one contingent of the Wiltshire militia:

Immediately after I had sent away my last to you we received certain information of the D. of Monmouth's being at Lime, & presently after that a warrant for our foot souldiers to be that night at the Devizes; but I believe never did such confusion & disorder appear. First we could not find our Muskets; when we had found them, neither of them would go off, the Locks being almost eat to pieces with rust; after this there was never a Bullet mould to be had neither here nor at Market Lavington & if we had not thought of James Leman by chance that possibly he might have one to make Bullets for some of his Guns, we must needs have sent them away without ammunition.<sup>10</sup>

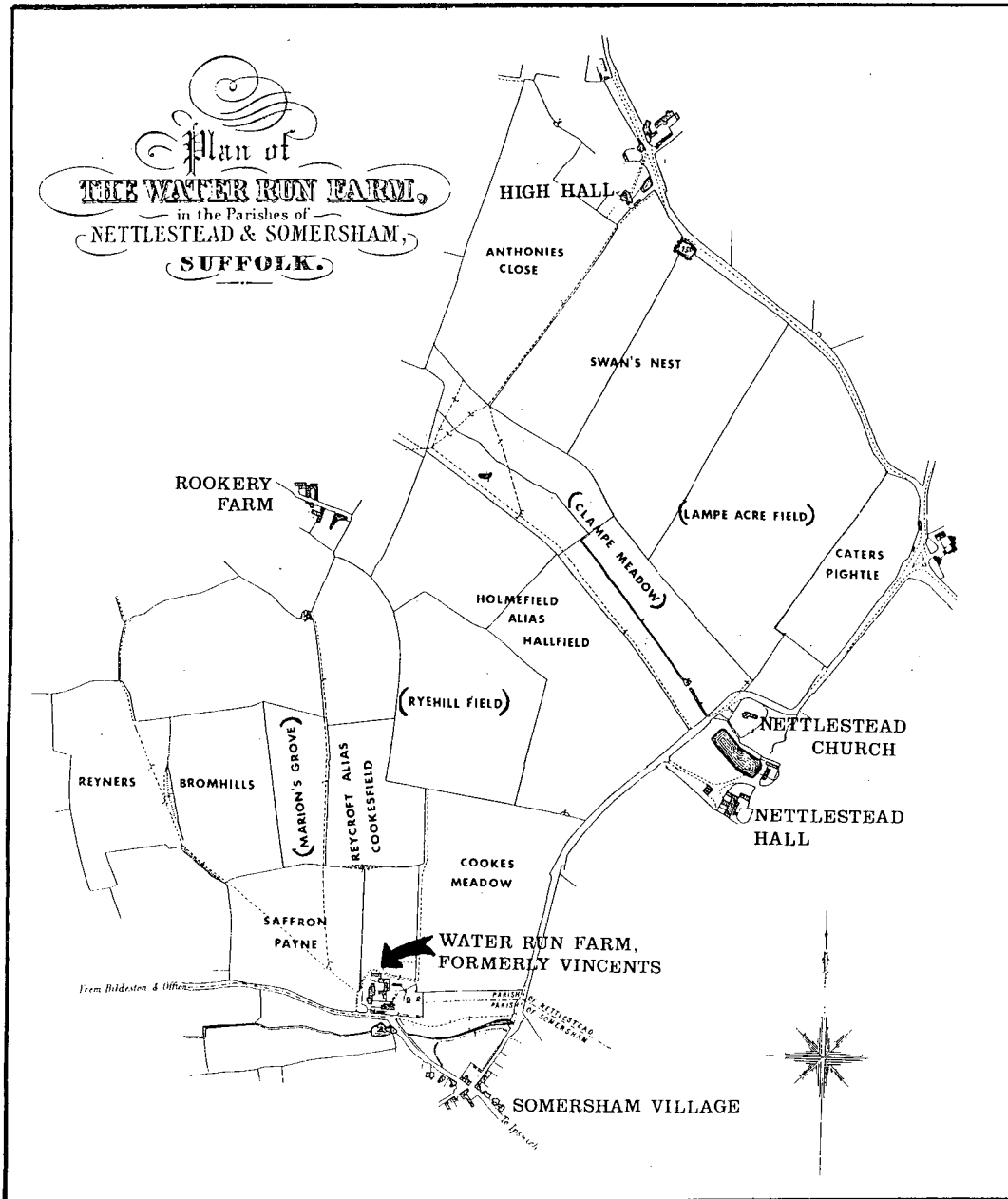


FIG. 88 – Vincents Farm identified with the modern Water Run Farm, by comparison of the field-names given in the 1682 deed of sale of Vincents with those in the 1775 estate memorandum book, the 1839 tithe apportionment and the 1912 sale plan which is used as the basis for this figure. Field-names unchanged since 1682 are unbracketed; those whose positions are reconstructed from abutments in the 1682 deed are enclosed in brackets; with the caveat that some of the latter (e.g. Lampe Acre) were evidently originally smaller. Reference numbers for the documents mentioned are cited in notes 3, 11, 12 and 14.

Evidence from a variety of sources suggests that such neglect was general throughout the kingdom.

APPENDIX I

TEXT OF THE 1682 CONVEYANCE OF MILITIA ARMS

(Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich, HA 119/2/2/6. The original spelling and capitalisation have been retained, the few abbreviations silently expanded, and punctuation added.)

Know all men by these presents That I, Dorothy Palmer of London, widdow, Relict and Executrix of Robert Palmer, late Cittizen and Clothworker of London, for and in Consideracion of a competent summe of lawfull money of England to me in hand paid by John Burrough of Ipswich in the County of Suffolke, Grocer and John Pistor of Claydon in the same County, Clerk, the Receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, Have granted, Bargained and Sold, And by these presents Doe grant, Bargaine and Sell, unto the said John Burrough and John Pistor, their Executors, Administrators and Assignes, All that and those the Pike, Musket, Bandaleeres, two Soldiers' coats and two Swords, and other Armes and Furniture for two Soldiers to serve in the Militia of the said County of Suffolke for and in respect of a certaine Farme called Vincents and Land belonging, in or neare the parish of Nettlestead in the said County, which the said John Burrough and John Pistor have late Purchased or are about to purchase of and from me the said Dorothy Palmer, Daniell Peacocke and Benjamin Coles; To have and to hold unto them the said John Burrough and John Pistor, their Executors, Administrators and Assignes, for and as their owne proper goods and Chattells absolutely and for ever. In witnes whereof I the said Dorothy Palmer have hereunto sett my hand and seale this five & twentyeth day of October in the yeare of our Lord Christ One Thousand Six hundred Eighty and Twoe, And in the Foure and Thirtieth yeare of the Reigne of our Sovereigne Lord King Charles the Second over England etc.

[*signed*] Dorothy Palmer

Sealed and Delivered in the presence of:

[*signed*] Jeremy Mount  
Valentine Clarke  
Isaac Cornell.

APPENDIX II

THE IDENTITY OF VINCENTS FARM

Vincents Farm appears on no modern map. The 17th-century deeds of the property form part of the Pretyman family archive, but there are no deeds later than the 1680s to show when, or from whom, the Pretymans acquired it. The 1682 purchase deeds, however, make clear that the property formed part of the marriage settlement of John Pistor, rector of Claydon, and his wife Jane, and Vincents no doubt came into Pretyman ownership through the marriage of the

Pistors' daughter and sole heir Jane (d. 1738) to George Pretymen of Bacton (1685–1732) in 1711 (Burke 1939, 1847).

A Pretymen estate memorandum book of 1775<sup>11</sup> contains a table of reference to a map surveyed that year (now unfortunately missing), which includes a number of fields mentioned by name in the 1682 conveyance. Some of the same names appear also in the Nettlestead tithe apportionment of 1839,<sup>12</sup> when the property was owned by Col. George Tomline, heir to the Pretymen estates.<sup>13</sup> Using the field names and abutments detailed in the 1682 conveyance, in comparison with similar names from the tithe apportionment and from a sale catalogue and plan of 1912,<sup>14</sup> it has been possible to prove that Vincents Farm coincided more or less with the property known in modern times as the Water Run or Watering Farm, in the southern part of the parish, extending over the boundary into Somersham (see Fig. 88). It appears from the 17th-century deeds that the land attached to Vincents once extended further into Somersham, but there is insufficient field-name evidence for its original boundaries in that parish to be plotted on a modern map.

The farmhouse itself, a two-storeyed, timber-framed and plastered building with flanking gabled wings, is apparently of 16th-century date (Ministry of Housing, 1947). The elaborate wainscotting and overmantels in two of its rooms, described by the Revd Edmund Farrer in 1920,<sup>15</sup> assert the original gentry status of the house, confirmed by the title deeds with their evidence of ownership, first by the Wentworths of Nettlestead Hall and subsequently by the Wingfields.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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#### NOTES

- 1 Boynton 1967, 7; Western 1965, 3, 16; Goring 1975, 192; Childs 1976, 7–20. On the inadequacy of the militia under James I and Charles I, see Firth 1967, 1–14.
- 2 For an account of the method by which liability was assessed in one part of Suffolk at an earlier period, see Pound 1988.
- 3 All the information given in this paper concerning the history of Vincents Farm down to 1682 is taken from three bundles of documents in the Pretymen family archive in S.R.O.I. The first (HA 119/2/2/2/5) was formerly part of a bundle labelled 'useless old writings'; the second (HA 119/2/2/2/6) was reconstituted, during cataloguing by the present author, from a box of miscellaneous loose deeds similarly labelled 'Ancient deeds – useless old writings'; and the third (HA 119/3/1/2/2) consists of 17th-century memoranda on the title to the property. The documents are not individually numbered.
- 4 The Vincent wills from Baylham, all proved in the court of the Archdeacon of Suffolk (S.R.O.I.), include those of John, 1549 (IC/AA1/13/406, 406a); John, 1556 (IC/AA1/15/114); Margaret, 1559 (IC/AA1/17/343); Nicholas, 1592 (IC/AA1/32/59); William, 1592 (IC/AA1/32/57); Agnes, 1594 (IC/AA1/33/109); John, 1600 (IC/AA1/36/132); and Margaret, 1620 (IC/AA1/56/148).
- 5 Thomas Eden of South Hanningfield, Essex: Scholar of Trinity Hall, Cambridge; LL.B., 1600; LL.D., 1614; Fellow, 1599–1626; Master, 1626–45; M.P. for the University, 1626, 1628 and 1640 (twice); Chancellor of the diocese of Ely, 1630; died in London, 18 Jul. 1645; buried in the chapel of Trinity Hall, of which he was a benefactor (Venn 1922, 84).
- 6 The wills of Dr Thomas Eden (1651), Thomas Conn (1654) and Judith Conn (1678) are all in S.R.O.I., HA 119/2/2/2/6.
- 7 S.R.O.I., HA 119/2/2/2/6.
- 8 This is further emphasised by one of the terms of a lease of Vincents Farm, dated 10 Jul. 1676, which makes the tenant liable for all quit-rents, rates and charges 'except onely such duties taxes and payments as shalbe due or payable for or out of the premisses by the Landlords or owners thereof, for or towards the maintenance of the Armyes & Navyes of this Commonwealth, or which shalbe charged upon the premisses for the Landlords or owners to pay, by the supream authoritye of the Nation' (S.R.O.I., HA119/2/2/2/6).

- 9 Private ownership of arms and armour was, of course, still widespread in the 17th century. For instance, armour was bequeathed in the wills of George Jaques of Winston, 1620 (Allen 1989, no. 9), Thomas Carye of Mendham, mercer, 1620 (Allen 1989, no. 105), and Hullock Everard of Gisleham, 1624 (Allen 1989, no. 672). Not all of it was necessarily purchased for militia use, and some may have been obsolete or antique – although the bequest by Robert Fryer of Orford, yeoman, to his kinsman Robert Poolie of Sibton in 1624, of armour already on loan to him from the testator (Allen 1989, no. 581) strongly suggests that it was still serviceable.
- 10 John Martin, Lavington, to Revd William Moore at the Earl of Abingdon's house in Newport Street, London: B.L. Add. MS 38,012, f. 2, quoted in Allen 1970, 208.
- 11 Pretyman archive, S.R.O.I., HA 119/3/1/2/3.
- 12 S.R.O.I., FDA 181/A1/1a.
- 13 Colonel George Tomline, M.P. (1813–89), who was the grandson of Dr George Pretyman (1750–1827), Bishop successively of Lincoln and Winchester, who in 1803 assumed, for himself and his heirs, the surname Tomline, as a condition of inheriting the extensive Lincolnshire estates of Marmaduke Tomline of Riby Grove near Great Grimsby.
- 14 Farrer-Harris Collection, Nettlestead parish file, S.R.O.I., HD 78: 2671.
- 15 *E.A.M.*, 14 (1920), nos 5866, 5874. Farrer's tentative conjectures regarding 17th-century ownership by the Forthe and Leman families were made without the benefit of the title deeds, and are incorrect.

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#### Abbreviations

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| B.L.          | British Library.                       |
| <i>E.A.M.</i> | <i>East Anglian Miscellany</i> .       |
| S.R.O.I.      | Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich Branch. |