

Lists of knight's fees in Kent : 1253--5 : Copy of a lost report :  
Introduction

The following text was found by James Greenstreet in a manuscript in the PRO. At the time, the manuscript was classified as Chapter House Miscellaneous Books A 4/33, but that reference is obsolete. The current reference (kindly supplied by Dr Adrian Jobson) is E 36/70. As Greenstreet describes it, the manuscript consists of just twelve leaves extracted from a larger book. That much is clear from the medieval foliation, in roman numerals, which runs from 221 to 232. (There is also a foliation in arabic numerals which runs from 101 to 112.) If that larger book survives, it ought to be easy to identify; but it has not been identified yet, as far as I am aware.

Except for the last verso, which is blank, these leaves are occupied by a single stretch of text, written, in Greenstreet's opinion, by a fourteenth-century hand. There are two strands to the text (see below), but the more important strand is a list of knight's fees in Kent, organized lest by lest and hundred by hundred, which describes the state of affairs that existed in the 1250s. Apparently this text was known to Thomas Philipott (1659); but it attracted very little attention before Greenstreet came across it.

Having transcribed the text and submitted it for publication in *Archaeologia Cantiana*, Greenstreet discovered another copy of it, in a Christ Church register (BL Cotton Galba E iv) compiled for prior Henric of Eastry. With the help of this copy, Greenstreet was able to make two improvements to the text which was about to be printed; but that, in the circumstances, was as much as he was able to do. If anybody should ever think of editing the text again, the Galba copy -- which apparently is somewhat earlier and somewhat better -- would be the one to start with; and the question whether E 36/70 might have been copied from Galba would need to be given some thought.

Greenstreet's edition was published in volume 12 of *Archaeologia Cantiana*. His introduction is worth reading; the "Notes" which he was intending to publish later did not (that I know of) appear.

The list of knight's fees, which I call strand 1, can be dated very closely, from the names occurring in it. It cannot be earlier than 1253 or later than 1255. (Robert de Setvans is already dead: he died in January 1253 (leaving an under-age heir of whom Reginald de Cobeham got custody). Warin de Muntchensey is still alive: he died in July 1255.) That was Greenstreet's conclusion; my own analysis produces some evidence which tends to confirm this dating -- for example, the list reflects the results of an exchange of property agreed between Simon fiz Adam and Ricard de Rokesle in February 1252 (Churchill 1956:409) -- and none which tends to contradict it.

Having thus fixed the date of this list, Greenstreet went on to

conclude that it was connected with the taxation of 1253--4, the *aide pour faire fils chevalier*, the aid for getting the king's eldest son made a knight. (This son was the future Edward I, aged 14 at the time.) Till recently, that seemed a sound conclusion to me, and I did not think of disagreeing with it. But now that I have looked through the great rolls of the exchequer (images of which have been made available on line), I discover that there is a flaw in Greenstreet's argument. The roll for 1254 includes an account of this aid (E 372/98, rot 12 d, IMG\_8318), and from that it becomes clear that the aid was assessed and collected in the traditional way -- from the king's tenants in chief, still largely in accordance with the numbers of knight's fees reported by their predecessors in 1166. It follows that there cannot be any direct connection between the aid of 1253--4 and the list of fees printed by Greenstreet.

Nevertheless, the dating of that list is secure. I suppose that it represents the report of an inquiry carried out on the spot -- perhaps in this county alone -- along the same lines as the one that was conducted thirty years later by a team of commissioners headed by Roger de Northwode. But I have not seen any evidence which might explain exactly why or when this earlier inquiry came to be made.

As it survives, the text is not in good shape. Errors abound -- not just small slips of the kind that one has to expect (confusion between "c" and "t", "n" and "u", "e" and "o", "B" and "H", and so on), but larger mistakes as well. Words are missing here and there; many of the personal names and place-names are badly spelt -- sometimes very badly. In two respects, however, this document is more informative than the surviving records of the aid of 1242--3. For one thing, the arrangement by lest and hundred is intact; for another, the archbishop's fees, omitted from those lists, are included in this one.

At some date, a second strand of text was woven in with the first one. (It has suffered about as much corruption as strand 1, and that suggests that the weaving occurred at a relatively early stage.) Strand 2 consists of a list of lests and hundreds. One cannot hope to date such a list with the same degree of accuracy as a list of knight's fees; I see only one good clue. I doubt whether the seven hundreds would have been called "the bailiwick of Willelm de Casingham" except while Willelm was alive, and he was dead (had apparently just died) in June 1257 (*Cal patent rolls 1247--58*, p 557). For each lest (except Sutton) strand 2 reports the names of the constituent hundreds. For each hundred it reports the names of the constituent "villages" and "borrows". (These words are explained below.) The various paragraphs were taken from some source-text (which I cannot identify) and inserted into the positions defined for them by the preexisting text, i.e. at the beginning of each lest or hundred, as the lests and hundreds were organized in strand 1. This two-ply appearance persists throughout most of the text, as far as the end of Aylesford lest. At that point, for some reason (for one among any

number of possible reasons), strand 2 comes to an end, and Sutton lest is one-ply.

There seems to be some difference of opinion concerning Wingham hundred. From the hundred rolls of 1274--5, it is clear that Wingham hundred should properly have been included in Hedding lest. Strand 1 puts it in Saint Augustine's lest. Strand 2 says nothing about it; but the numbers it quotes -- nine hundreds in Saint Augustine's lest, three hundreds in Hedding lest -- add up to an implicit assertion that Wingham hundred is not in either lest. Effectively that was true -- because this hundred belonged entirely to the archbishop, whose tenants everywhere had stopped attending the meetings of the lests.

In translating this text, I have taken the two strands apart: each is more useful by itself than interwoven with the other. I use Greenstreet's numbering for the entries in strand 1. Many of the names are so corrupt that they are difficult to recognize; I have added some identifications, but not in any systematic way. (There are numerous place-names, especially in strand 2, which I have to confess do not mean anything to me.) In dealing with strand 2, I have put the hundreds into the order determined by the paragraph inserted at the start of each lest. This, I take it, was the order existing in the source-text for strand 2.

Two words are hard to translate. In strand 1 the word "villata" is sometimes used in a technical sense, to denote a place (such as Dartford) which has ceased to belong to any hundred. (More specifically it means a place which has been allowed to have its own police officers.) If that is the meaning, I translate it as "township". But often the word has a looser meaning (roughly equivalent to "civil parish"), and then I translate it as "village". The word "borga", used once in strand 1, frequently in strand 2, means a subdivision of a hundred. Since the seventeenth century, it has generally been written "borough"; but in that form the word is so open to misunderstanding that I have thought it safer to call a "borga" a "borrow".

## References

I. J. Churchill (ed.), *Calendar of Kent Feet of Fines to the end of Henry III's reign* (Kent Records 15, 1939--56).

J. Greenstreet, 'Holders of knight's fees in Kent at the knighting of the king's son, anno 38 Henry III (A.D. 1253--4)', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 12 (1878), 197--237.

T. Philipott, *Villare Cantianum: or Kent surveyed and illustrated* (London, 1659).

First posted Jan 2010, revised Oct 2012