

The earldom of Kent from c. 1050 till 1189

Colin Flight

In the 1160s, when the sheriff of Kent presented himself at the Exchequer, there were three accounts which he was required to settle every year: ‘the farm of the county’ (*firma comitatus*), ‘the farm of the county by tale’ (*firma comitatus numero*), and ‘the farm of the land of the bishop of Bayeux’ (*firma terre episcopi baiocensis*). The first account was reckoned blanch,¹ the other two both *numero*, ‘by tale’. During the first few years of the new reign, it seems to have been uncertain exactly how much the sheriff was answerable for, as far as the second and third accounts were concerned. By about 1160, any doubts had been resolved, and from then onwards the totals remained constant: £412 7s. 6½*d.* blanch for the farm of the county, £165 13s. 4*d.* for the farm of the county by tale, £289 13s. 7*d.* for the farm of the land of the bishop of Bayeux. The sheriff had to produce this money; or else he had to explain, item by item, why he should not be required to pay the full amount.

As they appear on the pipe rolls,² the first two accounts are mixed up together, with blanch and *numero* items interspersed. Confusing though this may seem to us, the Exchequer was accustomed to dealing with complications of this kind: it seems almost to have enjoyed them. The two accounts were treated as components of a single

¹ For an explanation of this term the reader may wish to consult the appendix (below, p. 81). The operations of the twelfth-century Exchequer, including some of the blanching procedures employed, are described in detail by the author of the *Dialogus de Scaccario* (ed. Johnson 1950).

² From 1156 onwards, the twelfth-century pipe rolls are all available in print. The rolls for 1156–58 were edited by Hunter (1844a); likewise the roll for 1189 (1844b). The rest have all been published, since 1884, by the Pipe Roll Society. Some excerpts survive from the lost roll for 1155 (below, note 13); there is also a single roll extant from the reign of Henric I (below, note 24).

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reckoning. Sometimes each component was balanced separately;³ sometimes the two were merged to make one blanch account.⁴

For the purposes of this paper, the first and third accounts are the ones which matter. Without much difficulty, we can identify most of the sources from which the sheriff was expected to find the money for paying off these accounts – or, rather, from which he had been expected to find the money, when the total first became fixed. In the course of time, some of these sources became unavailable to the sheriff because the king had given them to somebody else; and when that happened the sheriff was allowed to claim a corresponding deduction from the amount which he had to pay. Thus, from the entries recording deductions of this type, we can construct a list of the items which, at some uncertain point in the past, had been obliged to contribute towards the sheriff's farm. Furthermore, for as long as the sum stays constant, we are probably safe in taking it for granted that all the constituent items stayed constant too.⁵

Table 1. The farm of the county in 1156.

place	amount			why not paid this year
	£	s.	d.	
Dover	24			accounted for separately
Canterbury	29			held by Willelm de Ipra
Milton	100			held by Willelm de Ipra
Dartford	100			held by Willelm de Ipra
Aylesford	32			held by Willelm de Ipra
Faversham	100			given to monks of Faversham
Dartford	10			given to abbot of Angély
other items	17	7	6	
total	412	7	6	

Source: *Pipe roll 2 Henry II*, 64–5.

The account for 1156 identifies most of the blanch items included in the farm of the county (Table 1). At this stage, the commander of

³ In 1163, for example, the account which appears on the roll is really two separate accounts, with no virement between them. The sheriff made two payments – £118 3s. 4d. blanch plus £45 numero – and ended up with a deficit of £1 4s. 2d. blanch on the first account and a surplus of £3 11s. 9d. on the second (*Pipe roll 9 Henry II*, 69–70).

⁴ In this case the numero component was blanched by deducting a shilling in the pound, which is £8 5s. 8d. exactly; so the total was taken to be equivalent to £157 7s. 8d. blanch.

⁵ The assumption, of course, is not absolutely safe. If two or more items were changed simultaneously, the changes could conceivably cancel out, leaving us with the impression that nothing had altered.

⁶ In some circumstances, the deduction allowed to the sheriff might be reckoned either blanch or numero, depending on the terms of the grant made by the king (*Dialogus de Scaccario*, ed. Johnson 1950, 85–6). Aylesford seems to be a case in point: the deduction allowed with respect to this manor is sometimes found counted as £32 blanch, sometimes as £32 numero (equivalent to £30 8s. blanch). The entries relating to towns are not affected by this ambiguity.

Stephan's Flemish mercenaries, Willelm de Ipra, was still in possession of the assets which had been given to him by the former king.⁷ The farm of Dover was being accounted for separately, and two other holdings had been given away in perpetuity, to the abbeys of Faversham and Saint-Jean-d'Angély respectively. This left the sheriff with very little to collect: he paid £6 into the Treasury (evidently blanch, though the roll omits to say so),⁸ and ended up with a debt of £11 7s. 6d. (the odd halfpenny is ignored here, as it usually was). In subsequent rolls we find clues to some of the items not mentioned in the 1156 account,⁹ but there is no point in our pursuing these clues just now.

Table 2. The farm of the land of the bishop of Bayeux in 1156.

place	amount			why not paid this year
	£	s.	d.	
Dover	30			accounted for separately
Canterbury	20			held by Willelm de Ipra
Boxley	55			held by Willelm de Ipra
Hoo	103	8	7	held by Willelm de Ipra
other items	64	17	6	
missing	16	7	6	
total	289	13	7	

Source: *Pipe roll 2 Henry II*, 65.

With regard to the farm of the land of the bishop of Bayeux, the account for 1156 is less immediately informative (Table 2),¹⁰ but it is possible, from later evidence, to identify some of the items unspecified here. We discover, for a start, that Willelm de Ipra's holding in Hoo consisted, more precisely, of half of Hoo plus the whole of Shorne.¹¹

⁷ It used to be supposed (Hasted says so, for instance) that Willelm was created earl of Kent, but that is certainly wrong. He did apparently act as sheriff, till being turned out of office in December 1154 ('Red Book of the Exchequer', ed. Hall 1896, 649).

⁸ The item has to be reckoned blanch in order to make the account add up correctly. Presumably this is the £6 blanch from *Dela* referred to in the next note.

⁹ After December 1157, for instance, the sheriff ceased forwarding a rent of £6 blanch previously paid to him, in quarterly instalments, from a place called *Dela*, the reason being that the land in question had been given to the Templars (*Pipe roll 4 Henry II*, ed. Hunter 1844a, 180). By the way, this *Dela* cannot be Deal; I take it be a forgotten name for the place which later came to be called Temple Dartford.

¹⁰ The account for this year adds up to £273 6s. 1d., which is £16 7s. 6d. short; the deficit is not explained.

¹¹ Another portion of Hoo had recently belonged to king Stephan's daughter Maria (who was prioress of Higham); it was back in the king's hands by 1156, but temporarily incapable of paying its rent in full. During the same year, when the sheriff was collecting danegeld, one of the amounts he did not collect was £1 6s. from 'the king's demesne in Hoo and Shorne', which represents 13 sulungs (*Pipe roll 2 Henry II*, ed. Hunter 1844a, 65, 67).

Hoo and Shorne together were reckoned to be worth £153 8s. 7d.; Shorne by itself contributed £53 8s. 7d.; so Hoo by itself contributed exactly £100.¹² A sum representing the farm of Rochester, probably £25, has to be included too; but this is a point of some complexity, discussed more fully below.

The items on which we need to focus first are the contributions paid to the sheriff from the two chief Kentish towns: £24 blanch plus £30 numero from Dover, £29 blanch plus £20 numero from Canterbury.¹³ The blanch items appear in the farm of the county; the numero items appear in the farm of the land of the bishop of Bayeux. After Easter 1157, the farm of Canterbury reverted to the king, so its components ceased to be itemized on the rolls (but we can probably take it for granted that they remained the same).¹⁴ The farm of Dover continued to be handled separately, and these two items continued appearing on the rolls, year after year.¹⁵ With the help of these figures for Canterbury

¹² Willelm de Ipra lost his lands in Hoo after Easter 1157 (*Pipe roll 3 Henry II*, ed. Hunter 1844a, 102). By Michaelmas 1158, the whole of Hoo and Shorne had come into the hands of the king's brother Willelm (*Pipe roll 4 Henry II*, ed. Hunter 1844a, 180): the value is reported incorrectly that year (the pence are omitted), but appears correctly as £153 8s. 7d. in 1159 (*Pipe roll 5 Henry II*, 59) and later. After Willelm's death, in 1164, three of his knights – Willelm Gernun, Willelm de Quattuor Maris, Willelm de Dulzmaisnil – were left in possession of the holdings which he had given them (*Pipe roll 11 Henry II*, 103). These holdings together were valued at £53 8s. 7d., and it becomes clear, from subsequent rolls, that they each consisted of a one-third share of Shorne.

¹³ The evidence relating to the farm of Canterbury was mostly discussed by Urry (1967, 40–3). In the sheriff's account for 1155, surviving only as a summary in the thirteenth-century 'Red Book of the Exchequer' (ed. Hall 1896, 648) and covering only three-quarters of the year, the blanch figure for Canterbury appears as £24 (with the numeral written as *xxiii* but corrected to *xxiiii* later). This suggests that the farm due for the whole year would have been £32; but I do not regard that as certain. The figure recorded in 1156 is definitely right: it is confirmed by the account for 1157, where the sheriff claims a deduction of £14 10s. 'for the half year when Willelm de Ipra had it' (*Pipe roll 3 Henry II*, ed. Hunter 1844a, 101). After 1234, when the citizens were allowed to farm the city themselves (see next note), the sheriff once again started claiming a deduction of £29 blanch from the farm of the county (*Pipe roll 26 Henry III*, ed. Cannon 1918, 143).

¹⁴ I have not worked out the subsequent history of the farm of Canterbury; in particular, I do not know what happened to the numero component after 1189, when the farm of the land of the bishop of Bayeux ceased being accounted for by the sheriff. In October 1234, the city was granted to the citizens, for £60 a year (cf. *Calendar of charter rolls 1257–1300*, 472–3): a matching entry appears in the published pipe roll for 1242 (*Pipe roll 26 Henry III*, ed. Cannon 1918, 149).

¹⁵ The first separate account for Dover, appearing on the roll for 1157 and covering a period of 2½ years (*Pipe roll 3 Henry II*, ed. Hunter 1844a, 108), does not add up correctly: there seems to be some scribal or arithmetical error. The account for 1158 is correct: the blanch component has been converted to numero – 'extended', in the jargon of the Exchequer – by adding a shilling in the pound, so the total comes to £55 4s. numero (*Pipe roll 4 Henry II*, ed. Hunter 1844a, 185).

and Dover, we can elicit some information from Domesday Book which does not appear on the surface.

In the 1080s, the king's reeve who had charge of Dover was paying an annual render of £54, £24 to the king and £30 to the earl. The king's share had to be blanch, which in this context meant that the reeve had to pay a surcharge of 25 per cent; the earl's share was taken at face value, *ad numerum*.¹⁶ At Canterbury, a similar division existed. The person in charge (apparently an agent of the sheriff) paid £30 blanch and £24 at face value.¹⁷ We are not told that these payments went – in theory – to the king and the earl respectively, but it seems that we can safely make that assumption.¹⁸

Table 3. Division of the renders of Dover and Canterbury.

	1086		1156	
	king blanch	earl numero	king blanch	earl numero
Dover	£24	£30	£24	£30
Canterbury	£30	£24	£29	£20

Sources: Domesday Book, *Pipe roll 2 Henry II*.

When we confront these figures with the figures recorded in the pipe rolls (Table 3), the conclusion is obvious. The blanch items which appear in the farm of the county are the king's share of the revenue; the unblanched items which appear in the farm of the land of the bishop of Bayeux are the earl's share. For Dover the figures appearing in the rolls are identical with the figures recorded in Domesday Book; for Canterbury both payments have been reduced,

¹⁶ Domesday Book, fol. 1ra. For the blanch component the formula used is 'of pennies which are twenty to the ora'. The ora was a unit of 16 pence, one-fifteenth of a pound. Thus, for every 16 blanch pennies which he was reckoned to owe, the reeve was being made to pay 20 actual pennies.

¹⁷ Domesday Book, fol. 2ra. The blanching formula here is 'assayed and weighed', which – on the evidence of a single entry elsewhere (fol. 16rb) – seems to have meant, conventionally, a surcharge of 30 per cent.

¹⁸ In the recent past, the revenue from a third town, Fordwich, had also been divided between the king and the earl, in the ratio 2:1 (Domesday Book, fol. 7rb). The king's share was given by king Eadward to the abbey of Saint Augustine. Later on, the earl's share was also given to the abbey, by the bishop of Bayeux: for this he had to obtain the king's consent.

but the resemblance remains clear enough. Thus I infer that the account which appears in the rolls as ‘the farm of the land of the bishop of Bayeux’ was, and would more accurately have been described as, the farm of the assets which had once belonged to the bishop by right of the earldom of Kent.

I do not propose to try digging far into the past. There is nothing unlikely in the suggestion that a tenth-century ealdorman of Kent would, upon appointment, be put in possession of certain assets – a share of the revenue from some of the towns, a share of the proceeds from the shire court, perhaps some landed property – which belonged to him only for as long as he held office. But I do not know of any Kentish evidence which bears upon this question, one way or the other. It is not until the mid eleventh century that the picture begins to clarify.

Around 1050, Kent was part of the province of earl Godwine. A writ of king Eadward, issued for (and preserved by) the monks of Saint Augustine’s, between 1042 and 1050, is addressed to ‘archbishop Eadsige, earl Godwine, and all my thegns in Kent’ (Harmer 1952, no. 38); the implication is that Eadsige as bishop and Godwine as earl were expected to be presiding over the session of the shire court to which this writ was delivered. From Domesday Book, we can identify some of the property which Godwine owned in Kent; and we have good reason to think that some of these assets belonged to him by right of the earldom. A share of the revenue from Dover is explicitly said to be allocated to the earl, and in the past a share had gone to earl Godwine;¹⁹ the manor of Hoo had been held by earl Godwine in the time of king Eadward.²⁰

Godwine died in April 1053. From some entries in Domesday Book, like the one relating to Hoo, where Godwine is named as Odo’s predecessor, it might seem that the earldom remained in the king’s hands, after 1053, until it was conferred upon the bishop of Bayeux soon after 1066. But that is fairly clearly not the case. The indications are that when Godwine’s son Harold succeeded to his father’s earldom, Kent became part of his province, as it had been part of his father’s. There are two writs, apparently authentic, addressed by king Eadward to ‘all my thegns in Kent’, in which Harold is named as earl (Harmer 1952, nos. 35, 39). Given that, it has to be inferred, I suppose, that any assets which had belonged to Godwine by right of the earldom would have belonged to Harold later by the same right,

¹⁹ Domesday Book, fol. 1ra. Similarly, a one-third share of the revenue from Fordwich – the same share which later was given to Saint Augustine’s by the bishop of Bayeux – had previously belonged to earl Godwine.

²⁰ Domesday Book, fol. 8va.

even though Domesday Book gives us no hint of this. What it tells us is the truth (that the manor of Hoo, for instance, belonged to earl Godwine), but not the whole truth (that Hoo later became – as I suppose it did – the property of earl Harold). This reticence does not appear to have any hidden meaning. Harold's right to the earldom was not questioned by the new regime, only his right to the kingdom; but possibly people had got into the habit of not mentioning his name more often than was necessary, at least when dealing with agents of king Willelm.

It is also possible that Kent became part of the earldom of Harold's brother Leofwine – perhaps in 1057, when the death of two other earls may have caused some redistribution of authority, perhaps not till 1066, when Harold became king. Unfortunately the only evidence connecting Leofwine with Kent (apart from the fact that like his father and brother he did possess a fair amount of property here) is a single writ from the Westminster archive, of very doubtful authenticity (Harmer 1952, no. 76). Taken at face value, indeed, it would seem to prove that Leofwine was earl before 1050 (in the time of archbishop Eadsige), which is hardly credible. Even if it is a forgery, this writ can be taken to imply that there was a belief among the Westminster monks – who were quite possibly better informed than we are – that Leofwine had been earl of Kent at some uncertain point in the past. But that is thin evidence.

By the evening of 14 October 1066, king Harold and earl Leofwine were both lying dead on a battlefield in Sussex. Ten weeks later, on Christmas day, duke Willelm was crowned king of England. Not much later, probably within the next few months, the new king's half-brother, Odo bishop of Bayeux, was given the earldom of Kent.

The vicissitudes of Odo's life are a well-known story (Bates 1975). In the aftermath of the conquest he rose to a position of wealth and power, second only, some believed, to the king. In 1082 he fell. He was arrested and put into prison; and there he stayed till 1087, when the dying king was persuaded to release him. Briefly restored to something resembling his former position, Odo began intriguing against the new king, Willelm II; by the spring of 1088 he was openly in revolt. But everything soon went wrong for him. By May his last stronghold, the castle at Rochester, had been besieged and forced to surrender. Odo survived; but he had to leave the country and forfeit all his English possessions.

In Domesday Book, compiled from data gathered in 1086, Odo's lands in Kent are all still listed as his. His men continued to occupy the manors which he had distributed among them. If we did not know it from other sources, at first sight we would hardly suspect that he was under arrest at the time. We have to look more closely – in

particular at the manors which Odo had kept for himself (the manors held ‘in lordship’) – before we realize that we are not being told the whole truth: these manors, though still reckoned to belong to Odo, are all being administered by men who answer to the king.

Again, we would not suspect, from Domesday Book alone, that there were some assets which belonged to Odo by right of the earldom of Kent. No attempt is made to distinguish these from those which he possessed by the same right as any other landholder – i.e. by the duty of supplying the king with some specified number of knights. That silence is not significant in itself. The Domesday commissioners had a fairly clear idea what information was relevant for their purposes and what was not, and distinguishing different forms of tenure was not part of their task. There are, of course, many things which Domesday Book fails to tell us – things which the commissioners knew, or could have found out about, but which did not fall within their terms of reference.

By the twelfth century, there were (so it seems) three large manors which were reckoned to belong to the earldom. Shorne does not appear in Domesday Book (presumably because it was treated as a limb of Hoo), and the entry relating to Boxley does not seem to help us much.²¹ Concerning Hoo we are told (i) that in the time of king Eadward it was held by earl Godwine and (ii) that now it is held in lordship by the bishop of Bayeux.²² Hoo is the only manor of which both these statements are made.

As earl of Kent, Odo would also have had a claim on ‘the third penny of the county’, i.e. a one-third share of the profits arising from the shire court. An earl, it seems, was not automatically entitled to the third penny: in the twelfth century at least it had to be explicitly

²¹ Domesday Book, fol. 8vb. The farm being paid in the 1080s, by the man appointed to administer this manor, was exactly the same as the deduction claimed by the sheriff with respect to Boxley, in the 1150s and later, namely £55. Boxley belonged to Willelm de Ipra till September 1157; by Easter 1158 it belonged to the monks of Boxley.

²² Domesday Book, fol. 8va. The name Hoo, it seems clear, was being used in a very wide sense, equivalent to what the pipe rolls call Hoo and Shorne (above, note 12). There are stated to be ‘six churches’ belonging to the manor of Hoo. In the light of later evidence, these churches should, I suggest, be identified as follows: Hoo, Allhallows, Saint Mary Hoo, Halstow, Shorne, Cobham. Shorne and Cobham were given to the monks of Bermondsey by Henric I (Johnson and Cronne 1956, no. 1021). Hoo and Allhallows were given to the nuns of Saint-Sulpice-la-Forêt by Henric II; later, through some exchange of property, they came into the possession of the monks of Rochester (*Calendar of patent rolls 1258–66*, 62; Thorpe 1769, 421).

granted to him by the king.²³ Though I do not think we have any definite proof that bishop Odo enjoyed this privilege, it seems a safe guess that he did. In February 1227, when a newly created earl of Kent was awarded the right of receiving the third penny, the sheriff was instructed to pay him £50 a year in lieu of it (see below); but that is manifestly a nominal figure, and probably much more than an eleventh-century earl could have hoped for.

After it had been finally forfeited by Odo, the earldom of Kent remained unoccupied for more than 100 years. But nobody could have predicted that in the 1080s: at any moment, the king might decide to appoint a new earl. To allow for that possibility, the assets belonging to the earldom were administered separately. We first catch a glimpse of this in the pipe roll for 1130.²⁴ From the 1150s onwards we find the same account appearing on the roll every year, under the (somewhat deceptive) title 'Farm of the land of the bishop of Bayeux'. Like an empty shell, the earldom of Kent continued to exist, even though there was no earl to occupy it.

This arrangement persisted throughout the reign of Henric II. The last full account occurs in the pipe roll for 1189, drawn up a few weeks after the coronation of king Ricard.²⁵ Deductions of the type which recur every year – £55 because Boxley has been given to the monks of Boxley, £30 because the Dover account is being handled separately, £26 13s. 4d. paid to the monks of Reading as a donation from the king,²⁶ and so on – add up to £132 8s. 1d.; so the sum which

²³ Round 1892, 287–98. By around 1160, in those counties which had earls entitled to the third penny, the arrangement was for the sheriff to make the payment and claim a deduction from his farm. The sums in question had evolved into fixed amounts, mostly in the order of £20 to £30 (the largest being the sum of £40 10s. 10d. paid to the earl of Essex).

²⁴ Edited by Hunter (1833). Because it stands alone, and because the Exchequer, at that time, was operating under rather different rules from those which applied in the 1150s and later, this roll is often hard to understand; but a few relevant facts seem clear enough. For 'the farm of the land of Odo bishop of Bayeux' (p. 64) the total appears to be £286 13s. 11d. (including an item of £61 0s. 2d. mysteriously transferred to the Dover account), a little less than the total recorded later. The only manor named in this account is Boxley, a small portion of which, worth £5, has been given to Ansfrid the steward. In each of the two accounts relating to the collection of danegeld (pp. 66, 67–8), the sheriff claims a deduction of £5 2s. (calculated at the rate of 2s. per sulung) with respect to 'the king's demesne of Hoo and Boxley'. Apparently the whole of Hoo (including Shorne) was in the king's hands at the time, together with most of Boxley.

²⁵ *Pipe roll 1 Richard I*, ed. Hunter 1844b, 232.

²⁶ A gift of £13 6s. 8d. to the monks of Reading, paid out of the render of Hoo, makes its first appearance on the roll in 1166 (*Pipe roll 12 Henry II*, 111); the amount was doubled three years later (*Pipe roll 15 Henry II*, 161). The Reading cartularies preserve copies of several documents relating to this payment (Kemp 1986, 321–5).

the sheriff is expected to pass on to the Exchequer (deducting any expenditure which he can prove to have been properly authorized) is £157 5s. 6d. That was the value of the unassigned assets remaining in the account.

Within the next twelve months, the package was broken up, and these assets were sold off. (This was a time when everything was up for sale: the new king seemed to have only one thought in his head, how to raise money for the crusade.) A small portion of Shorne – ‘the remnant of the land of the bishop of Bayeux which is in the king’s hands’ – paid a rent of £1 7s. 3d. in 1191 and subsequent years, disappearing finally in 1198.²⁷ Two unsettled debts continued to be recorded. Henric de Cornhill was still being held accountable for a debt incurred by his father during his term as sheriff, partly with respect to ‘the land of the bishop of Bayeux’;²⁸ and Alan de Valeines, the sheriff who rendered the last account in 1189, kept on being summoned to ~~account~~ ^{answer} for the deficit recorded in that account.²⁹ (This debt of Alan’s is the clue which will shortly allow us to solve another puzzle.) Except for these few loose ends, the whole account vanishes from the pipe rolls after 1189.

In January 1227, when Henric III declared himself old enough to assume full power as king, one of his first acts was to create an earl of Kent. The justiciar, Hubert de Burgo, was given the title; he was also awarded an annual allowance of £50 to be paid to him by the sheriff, out of the farm of Kent, in lieu of the third penny;³⁰ but, apparently, that is all he got. If anybody remembered that there was a whole package of assets which had been allocated to the earl in the past, and which had been kept intact, year after year, against the time when it might be needed again, that knowledge no longer had any practical value. It was too late now for the package to be reassembled.

Alan de Valeines was sheriff of Kent for five years, from September 1184 till September 1189. During his time in office, a problem arose with the farm of the land of the bishop of Bayeux. Alan’s first account (1185) is quit, but the second (1186) leaves him with an unexplained

²⁷ *Pipe roll 3 Richard I*, 148, repeated in subsequent rolls till *Pipe roll 10 Richard I*, 204.

²⁸ *Pipe roll 34 Henry II*, 203, repeated in subsequent rolls. This debt was finally paid off in 1198, after Henric’s death, by his son-in-law Hugo de Neville (*Pipe roll 10 Richard I*, 199, 200).

²⁹ *Pipe roll 2 Richard I*, 146, repeated in subsequent rolls. In 1199, after Alan’s death, the debt descended to his son Willelm (*Pipe roll 1 John*, 60–1).

³⁰ *Calendar of charter rolls 1226–57*, 13, cf. 81, 131. A corresponding entry appears in the pipe rolls for 1230 and 1242 (*Pipe roll 14 Henry III*, ed. Robinson 1927, 110; *Pipe roll 26 Henry III*, ed. Cannon 1918, 143), which are, for this period, the only rolls available in print.

debt of £11 3s. 7d. In each of the next three years this debt continues to increase, by an amount of roughly £5 or £6, fluctuating from year to year (Table 4). From 1187 onwards, the rolls contain various brief remarks explaining the reason for this growing deficit. These amounts, we discover, 'are being held over on account of the customs of Rochester, from which the archbishop claims exemption'.³¹

Very briefly, the story seems to be this.³² In the past the archbishop's men – meaning chiefly the men of Maidstone involved in the shipment of goods up and down the Medway – had not been made to pay the usual customs when they passed through Rochester. The sheriff now questioned this arrangement, at least so far as it affected him. If the exemption was justified at all, he said, then he ought to be allowed a corresponding deduction from the farm he had to pay: in the language of the Exchequer, it ought to be computed to him. Pending a resolution of this question, the sheriff was instructed to keep a record of the amount which he claimed to be losing.³³ Because the sum varies, it seems to be an actual amount, not a nominal one; so I take it that the men of Maidstone were under orders to stop and report to the customs officers in Rochester, who would calculate what was due but not demand the money. At the end of the year, when the sheriff presented himself at the Exchequer, he was, provisionally, permitted to withhold this amount. But the Exchequer did not forget it.

Table 4. Deductions allowed to the sheriff of Kent with respect to the customs of Rochester.

year of account	debt for current year			accumulated deficit		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
1185		nil			nil	
1186	11	3	7	11	3	7
1187	5	10	2	16	13	9
1188	5	10	4	22	4	1
1189	6	6	0	28	10	1

Sources: *Pipe rolls 31–4 Henry II, 1 Richard I.*

³¹ *Pipe roll 33 Henry II*, 205.

³² I hope to discuss the evidence relating to Rochester in greater detail elsewhere.

³³ The sum recorded in 1186 seems to be a double amount: the sheriff, I suppose, was allowed to deduct a sum he had paid – under protest – for 1184/85, as well as a similar sum for the current year. This temporary compromise was still in force more than fifty years later (*Curia regis rolls 1233–7*, 245–6; *Close rolls 1234–7*, 389; *Pipe roll 26 Henry III*, ed. Cannon 1918, 145). From the pipe rolls it ought to be easy to discover when the dispute was finally brought to an end; but the relevant rolls are not available in print, and I have not been able to consult the originals.

In 1192, for the first time, the farm of the city of Rochester appears on the roll as a separate account, and the citizens of Rochester appear as the farmers of it. Their representatives – Unfrid the vintner and Godard the clerk – were summoned to render account before the barons of the Exchequer, independently from the sheriff. Straight away, the citizens started incurring a deficit just like the one accumulated by Alan de Valeines during the 1180s. Their first account leaves them with a debt of £4 19s., ‘held over because of the customs of the city which are demanded from the men of the archbishopric of Canterbury, concerning which the plea is not yet concluded’;³⁴ and year by year the total goes on increasing, in amounts of roughly £5 or £6 (Table 5).

Table 5. Deductions allowed to the citizens of Rochester with respect to the customs of the city, till 1199.

year of account	debt for current year			accumulated deficit		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
1192	4	19	0	4	19	0
1193	4	12	2	9	11	2
1194	6	9	4	16	0	6
1195	6	0	2	22	0	8
1196	6	0	0	28	0	8
1197	5	18	0	33	18	8
1198	6	6	7	40	5	3
1199	3	18	0	44	3	3

Sources: *Pipe rolls 4–10 Richard I, 1 John*.

Thus it becomes clear (i) that the customs of Rochester were one of the sources of revenue expected to contribute towards the farm of the city, and (ii) that the farm of Rochester was one of the items which, until 1189, had been included in the farm of the land of the bishop of Bayeux. If the argument which I have developed above is accepted, it will follow from this that the farm of Rochester, in the eleventh century, was one of the assets appropriated to the earldom of Kent.³⁵ Unlike Canterbury and Dover, the king did not retain a share for himself.

In the 1190s and later, the farm of the city was set at £25, to be paid in two equal instalments.³⁶ We cannot quite exclude the possibility

³⁴ *Pipe roll 4 Richard I*, 307–8.

³⁵ In the 1080s the rent being paid from Rochester was £40, but this was twice as much as the city was thought to be worth (Domesday Book, fol. 2ra). It was reported to have been worth £5 ‘in the time of king Eadward’, and the same ‘when the bishop (of Bayeux) took possession’.

³⁶ The city’s first charter, dated 6 November 1227, begins by ratifying the existing financial arrangements: the citizens are to pay £25 to the Exchequer each year, half at Easter and the other half at Michaelmas. This charter survives as duplicate originals in the archives of the city (Bartlett 1961, 18–20; cf. *Calendar of charter rolls 1226–57*, 64).

that the value of the farm was changed, when the citizens were first allowed to take charge of the account. But there is one clue suggesting that the same value which applied in the 1190s applied in the 1160s also. In the pipe roll for 1166, in the account of the farm of the land of the bishop of Bayeux, the following item occurs: ‘And to Willelm de of Lanvalein £12 10s. in Rochester, for half the year’.³⁷ The circumstances are obscure, but it seems that a sum of money from Rochester, normally paid to the sheriff (and forwarded by him to the Treasury), was, on this occasion, paid to somebody else.³⁸ Whatever the reason was, it seems very likely that the sum in question was one instalment of the farm of the city. If so, the farm of Rochester was £25 in 1166. Subject to the usual reservations, the figure which was valid in that year is likely to be valid for the whole period during which the total remains the same, from the 1150s until the 1180s.

Appendix

Blanch reckoning

Some payments due to the king traditionally had to be made in ‘white’ money – imaginary money, free from all imperfections. If a sheriff was required to pay £100 blanch, it was not enough for him to pay 24000 actual pennies, which might be deficient in weight or purity or both. By one means or another, his money had to be ‘blanched’ – converted to its equivalent in ideal money. This was a complicated business. Sometimes the king’s officials imposed a surcharge: for example, if they demanded an extra shilling in the pound (5 per cent), the sheriff would have to pay £105 numero, 25200 actual pennies. Alternatively, the officials might wait till the sheriff had paid his money and then make some deduction: for example, if the sheriff paid £105 numero, a deduction at the rate of a shilling in the pound would convert this sum to £99 15s. blanch, and the sheriff would discover that he still owed 5s. blanch.

In the 1160s and later, the rate of deduction was (in theory always, in practice often) determined by an assay. For each payment, a sample of 240 pennies was melted down and refined; the resulting lump of

³⁷ *Pipe roll 12 Henry II*, 111.

³⁸ Or perhaps it should rather be taken to mean that Willelm was being excused from making a payment which he normally ought to have made. I do not know of any evidence which might prove that Willelm held an official position in Rochester, but he certainly did own some property here (with respect to which he was excused from paying 15s. towards an aid or gift levied on the city in 1165 (*Pipe roll 11 Henry II*, 107)). His main holdings in Kent were the manors of East Chalk and Henhurst.

silver was weighed against a pound weight; and pennies were added, one by one, until the scales were in balance. The number of pennies added to the scale defined the rate of deduction, in pence per pound, which was to be applied to the whole payment. A record was kept of the difference between what the sheriff had paid (in real money) and what he had been credited with (in ideal money), because the treasurer and his colleagues were answerable to higher authority for the whole amount: this difference was called the combustion.

I cite just one example. In the roll for 1168, the newly appointed sheriff, accounting for the farm of Kent for the second half of the year, is credited with a payment of £66 15s. 10d. blanch; the corresponding combustion is £3 4s. 2d. (*Pipe roll 14 Henry II*, 209, 220). Thus it is easy to work out – as the reader may like to check – that the sheriff paid £70 numero, and that the Exchequer made a deduction of 11 pence in the pound, 770 pence in total.

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