

The survey of the whole of England:  
studies of the documentation resulting  
from the survey conducted in 1086

Colin Flight



For Jennifer

*Sed quid sibi dominus meus rex uult in re huiusmodi?*  
But why doth my lord the king delight in this thing?  
(2 Samuel 24:3)



## **Contents**

List of tables	vi
List of figures	viii
Preface	ix
1 Introduction	1
2 Seriation of the DB booklets	13
3 Reconstruction of the D volumes	25
4 The surviving portion of the C text – Part I	38
5 The surviving portion of the C text – Part II	49
6 The geld accounts associated with the C text	60
7 Some alien interventions in the C text	71
8 The monks of Ely and the records of the survey – Part I	81
9 The monks of Ely and the records of the survey – Part II	94
10 The conduct of the survey: the fieldwork phase	108
11 The conduct of the survey: the compilation phase	125
<b>Appendices</b>	
I An outline reconstruction of B-Ca	146
II Summaries compiled in the Treasury	148
Bibliography	151
Index	155

## List of tables

Table 1. Division of DB into booklets.	14
Table 2. A preliminary classification of the DB booklets.	16
Table 3. Seriation of the DB booklets.	22
Table 4. Surviving original records of the survey.	26
Table 5. Estimated sizes of the D booklets.	28
Table 6. The bound volumes of D reconstructed.	30
Table 7. The bound volumes of D put into the sequence which determined the binding sequence for the DB booklets.	33
Table 8. Three versions of a passage from the survey of Kent.	35
Table 9. Published reproductions of sample scripts from Exeter Cathedral Library 3500.	41
Table 10. Simulated compilation of a set of C booklets (three scribes, four B booklets, five C booklets).	47
Table 11. Simulated compilation of a set of C booklets (four scribes, six B booklets, eight C booklets).	48
Table 12. Published identifications of the scribes represented in Exeter Cathedral Library 3500.	50
Table 13. Numbers of stints performed by each scribe in each section of the C text.	52
Table 14. The quires of C restored to the sequence recorded by the foliation of circa 1500.	54
Table 15. Batches of booklets contained in Exeter Cathedral Library 3500.	61
Table 16. Booklets and scribal stints in batches 3–4.	62
Table 17. Published reproductions of sample scripts from the batch 4 booklets.	68
Table 18. Four versions of the text for one Wiltshire hundred.	70
Table 19. Annotations made in C-So by a scribe at work on D-So.	75
Table 20. Three versions of DB-So chapter 4.	78
Table 21. Two versions of DB-So chapter 33.	78

Table 22. Collation of Cambridge, Trinity College O. 2. 41.	83
Table 23. Contents of the cartulary initiated by scribe T1.	84
Table 24. Collation of Cambridge, Trinity College O. 2. 1.	86
Table 25. Collation of BL, Cotton Tib. A. vi, fos. 36–120.	88
Table 26. Reconstructing B-Ca with or without the evidence of V.	90
Table 27. A reconstruction of the program governing the survey.	92
Table 28. Contents of xEl as represented in T.	95
Table 29. Core segments of xEl as represented in T.	97
Table 30. Cambridgeshire hundreds.	99
Table 31. Oscillations in segment xEl-Sk-1.	103
Table 32. Program for generating the summaries in Exeter Cathedral 3500, fos. 527v–8r.	105
Table 33. Program for generating the summaries in Exeter Cathedral 3500, fo. 531r.	106
Table 34. Order of the entries in the schedule of farms (Lit. E 28, fos. 5va–c) compared with that in the description of the archbishop’s manors (fos. 2va–3va).	112
Table 35. Two descriptions of the town of Sandwich.	113
Table 36. Entries misplaced in DB because of headings omitted in C-NnWaStOx.	130
Table 37. Scribal stints in the surviving D booklets, as they were identified by Rumble (1987).	135
Table 38. The index for DB-Dn.	138
Table 39. The first fifty items from the index for D-Sk (281r) put into a DB-like order.	139
Table 40. Two indexes for DB-Yo: the index provided by the DB scribe (298vb) and an imaginary index, modelled on the first one, representing the actual contents of the text.	141
Table 41. Revised seriation of the DB booklets.	142

## List of figures

- Figure 1. Part of booklet DB-YoLi. Transition from *T'ra ad .. car'* to *T'ra .. car'*. 17
- Figure 2. Booklets DB-Mx and DB-Bd. Oscillation between *Quando recep': similit'* and *et tntd' quando recep'*, followed by a transition to *Val' et ualuit .. sol'*. 18
- Figure 3. Booklet DB-Sx. Transition from *ualeb'* to *ualb'*. 19
- Figure 4. Booklets DB-St and DB-Wa. Disappearance of one formula coinciding with the appearance of another. 19
- Figure 5. Booklets DB-Wi and DB-Do. Stabilization of word-order in the formula *De hac t'ra s't in d'nio .. hidę*, followed by a transition from *De hac t'ra* to *De ea*. 20
- Figure 6. Booklet DB-So. Transition from *tenuit* to *teneb'*. 21
- Figure 7. The sequence of DB booklets represented as a tour of the country. 23
- Figure 8. Changing perceptions of the documentation resulting from the survey. 27
- Figure 9. Order of the entries in xEl-Ex-2 mapped onto the order of hundreds in B-Ex. 100
- Figure 10. Order of the entries in xEl-Nk-1 and xEl-Nk-2 mapped onto the order of hundreds in B-Nk. 101
- Figure 11. Order of the entries in xEl-Sk-1 and xEl-Sk-2 mapped onto the order of hundreds in B-Sk. 102
- Figure 12. The sequence of DB booklets construed as an approximate map of the progress of stage 2 of the survey. 119



## Preface

This is not the book that I set out to write. About ten years ago, after I had finished correcting the proofs of a book which had kept me busy for some inordinate length of time, I had to make up my mind what I was going to do next. Casting around for some topic which I might have the resources to cope with from a distance (specifically from a base in Clemson, South Carolina), I decided that I could usefully do some work on the evidence relating to the survey of Kent conducted in 1086. With most of this evidence I was already at least superficially acquainted; and I had easy access (in Clemson), or fairly easy access (in Columbia), to the facsimile editions of some of the crucial manuscripts, and to most of the other published material that I should need to see. When I started work, I set myself two objectives, neither of them very ambitious: I wanted to make accurate transcriptions of all the relevant documents; and I hoped to be able to make some progress – beyond that achieved by previous commentators, from Hasted (1797–1801) through to Morgan (1983) and Williams and Martin (1992) – in mapping the evidence onto the actual landscape.

Within a few years, I felt that I was far enough advanced to start to think of putting together a book. The introduction that I had in mind was going to include a few pages – no more than that – explaining how the survey of Kent fitted into the larger scheme of which it was part, the enterprise known to contemporaries as the survey of the whole of England. I did not expect these pages to be hard to write. To the extent that I had already had to think about it, I knew that some of the secondary literature was wrong, often wrong to the point of perversity. Nevertheless, as far as I understood things at the time, there seemed to exist a fair measure of consensus, focused on the book by Galbraith (1961). I was not impressed by Galbraith's treatment of the evidence from Kent, but this, for him, was a matter of minor significance, and I did not think of judging the book on that basis. A summary of Galbraith's interpretation, to the extent that it seemed to be generally accepted, was all that I intended to write. In drafting these pages, however, I discovered that what I was saying did not make sense. It did not cohere; it did not engage convincingly with the evidence. Reading and rereading what Galbraith had written, not just in this book but also in other publications, I began to see that his interpretation was fundamentally flawed.

At that point, I suppose, I might have decided to drop this portion of the introduction, ignore the problem, and deal with the evidence from Kent as if it stood alone. But I never really thought that this was an acceptable option. It seemed clear to me that I should have to go back to the primary sources, look at the evidence for myself, and see what conclusions I could come to. There have been times, I confess, when I have cursed myself for making this decision. One such time was the day when I sent off a cheque to pay for a microfilm copy of the Exeter manuscript. Not that I begrudged the money: I knew that I was condemning myself to a long spell of hard labour, without any guarantee that the labour would show any profit. There have been times, too, when I have cursed the rest of the world. Nothing that I have done could not have been done

by someone else – quite possibly done better by someone else – a long time ago. How was it decided that historians should be paid for practising pirouettes, while waiting for me to do the work? But I persevered, despite moments of anger and periods of despondency, taking comfort from the thought that I was, at least, incidentally, gaining some sharper insight into the evidence from Kent.

Over the last six years or so, I have thus been engaged on two parallel projects, switching from one to the other from time to time. I have continued working on the survey of Kent, and am hopeful now that a year or two more will bring that project to completion. (Some of my conclusions are anticipated here, especially in the last two chapters.) In the intervals of that, however, I have been working on the larger problem, the survey in its entirety. This book is the culmination of that second project. Having said what I have to say, I do not expect to write anything further on the subject; but comments from interested readers would never not be welcome. (My e-mail address is <flightcr@earthlink.net>.)

For the most part, I have worked alone. During the years that I spent at the University of Birmingham (more than twenty years, I shudder to think), I had to inure myself to a solitary mode of existence. Over time I learned to appreciate the advantages of isolation; by now I do not think that I could work in any other way.

There are, however, numerous debts which I have incurred in the course of writing this book. They are footnoted in the text, but I am glad to acknowledge some of them here as well. Caroline Thorn read draft versions of chapters 1–5 and gave me the benefit of some candid comments. Tessa Webber was kind enough to check my diagnosis of the Exeter manuscript, comparing it in detail with her own notes and saving me from several errors. In Exeter, Peter Thomas gave me access to the manuscript itself; both he and the assistant librarian, Michael Howarth, have been unfailingly helpful. During the last few months, as the book approached completion, David Davison has been a model editor, responding patiently and promptly to query after query. My thanks to each of them, and to all the librarians and archivists whose help I have had to call on, somewhere along the line.

The two documents printed in Appendix II, both of them first edited by Ellis in 1816, are republished here by permission of the Dean and Chapter of Exeter and the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge, respectively.

Sea Point, December 2005