

The great rolls of the exchequer (E 372)

The great rolls of the exchequer – the "pipe rolls", as the Ministry of Silly Names would like us to call them – are not only an important source of evidence; they are also quite easily accessible. Some of the twelfth-century rolls were put into print by the Record Commission (Hunter 1833b, 1844a, 1844b). The Pipe Roll Society, formed in 1883, took on the job of printing all the previously unpublished rolls of Henric II; eventually it got the job done. (Vols 1–22 were printed in record type, the rest in ordinary type.) After that, it continued with the rolls of Ricard I, then of Johan, and then of Henric III. At the time of writing, the latest roll printed is that for the eighth year of the reign of Henric III, i.e. the roll which began to be compiled in late 1224. The early volumes (vols 1–38) can, with a few exceptions, already be found online, most conveniently through this address:

<http://www.archive.org/search.php?query=subject:%22Great%20Britain%20--%20History%20Angevin%20period,%201154-1216%20Sources%22>

Page images of the Kent accounts appearing in the published rolls are available through <http://www.kentarchaeology.org.uk>. Some introductory notes can be found in Goacher (2013). The collection is, as yet, some distance from being complete; but I am hopeful that the pages which are missing can be supplied.

Each roll covers a period of twelve months, beginning and ending at Michaelmas (29 Sep). The text is written in abbreviated Latin, in a stereotyped phraseology which takes some getting used to. Guidance can be got from a manual "concerning the proper procedure of the exchequer", written in about 1180 (ed. Johnson 1950, ed. Amt 2007).

The language of the early rolls is no different from what one might expect to find in rolls which were only to be kept for a little more than twelve months each, i.e. until they were superseded by the next roll. (It is not until the 1190s that a formula starts to occur which assumes that the present roll is the latest in a series. From then onwards, one often finds entries which end with *sic' cont' in R' preced'*, "as is contained in the preceding roll". In other words: "This is a shortened version; if you want to see the full-length version, look at last year's roll.") Nevertheless, it seems to have been taken for granted, from the beginning – that is, from around 1120, when the exchequer came into existence – that the great rolls would be preserved, if not for all time, at least for the foreseeable future.

The earliest great rolls – those of the reigns of Henric I and Stephan – seem all to have been deliberately discarded towards the end of the twelfth century, because somebody decided that the exchequer records were getting out of hand. The accession of Henric II became the cut-off date: anything later than Dec 1154 was kept, anything earlier than that was thrown away. Fortunately no one ever followed this example, and 1154 remained the cut-off date for as long as the exchequer existed.

There are three anomalies, to be mentioned again below: the survival of the roll (or one of the rolls) for 1130 (E 372/1), the loss of the roll for 1155, the loss of the roll for 1213.

As well as the great roll, it was or became the practice to produce a duplicate roll intended for the use of the chancellor (who was, ex officio, president of the exchequer). From 1229 onwards, the chancellor's rolls (E 352) survive with the same consistency as the great rolls; before that they only survive sporadically. In some cases, the chancellor's roll has been substituted for, or transposed with, the great roll – perhaps on purpose (because the great roll had been damaged, or for some such reason), perhaps just through carelessness. The correct identifications were first worked out by Bishop (1961:29n4). For those years for which both rolls exist, it had been the Pipe Roll Society's policy to print the E 372 roll, whether it was properly classified or not; in consequence of that, four of the great rolls (1165, 1173, 1175, 1179) remain unprinted to this day.

Basic details about the published rolls are set out in the accompanying table. In a tentative way, I have put the roll for 1130 into the E 352 column – that is, I have suggested that it may be a chancellor's roll. Because it stands alone, I doubt whether a definite decision will ever be possible. But I find it a little easier to believe that an ancient chancellor's roll might have popped up out of nowhere than that an ancient great roll might have done so. (To speak more plainly, I am speculating that the man who was chancellor in 1130 – *Gaufridus cancellarius* (Hunter 1833b:139–40) – took this roll to Durham with him when he was made bishop there, and that some much later bishop of Durham, recognizing its curiosity value, donated it, what was left of it, to the exchequer.)

At some uncertain date, this roll, misidentified as the great roll for 1155, usurped the place of the genuine roll for that year. This did not happen till after the early thirteenth century. The roll for 1155 was still in existence then, and one of the exchequer officials copied some excerpts from it into the "Red Book". Once the roll itself had been lost, those excerpts became the only record of its contents (except to the extent that they can be inferred from the roll for the following year). (The excerpts from the Kent account were printed by Larking (1869, appendix p 2*) and by Hall (1896, pp 648–9).)

A similar muddle seems to have brought about the loss of the great roll for 1213 (which did certainly exist, as again is clear from the next roll). The chancellor's roll for 1211 was (so it seems) misidentified as the great roll for that year; the great roll for 1211, ousted from its proper place, was misidentified as the great roll for 1213; and the great roll for 1213, ousted from *its* proper place, vanished into oblivion. That something like this happened seems clear enough; but I have no idea when it happened.

Though I include it in the list, the roll for 1215 is not properly

part of the sequence. It was drawn up some years later: it is somebody's partial reconstruction of the roll which ought to have been compiled, but in fact was not compiled, in September 1215. By that time the exchequer had suspended operations; it did not start up again till September 1218.

Exchequer rolls till 1224 (E 372/1-68, E 352/1-21)

Henric I

.
 .
 .
 1130 ?372/1 Hunter 1833b, Green 2012
 .
 .
 .

Stephan

.
 .
 .

Henric II

roll 1	1155			lost - extracts in RBE
roll 2	1156	372/2		Hunter 1844a:1-68
roll 3	1157	372/3		Hunter 1844a:69-108
roll 4	1158	372/4		Hunter 1844a:109-86
roll 5	1159	372/5		PRS 1
roll 6	1160	372/6		PRS 2
roll 7	1161	372/7		PRS 4
roll 8	1162		372/8	PRS 5
roll 9	1163	372/9	352/1	PRS 6
roll 10	1164	372/10	352/2	PRS 7
roll 11	1165	352/3	372/11	PRS 8
roll 12	1166	372/12		PRS 9
roll 13	1167	372/13	352/4	PRS 11
roll 14	1168	372/14	352/5	PRS 12
roll 15	1169	372/15		PRS 13
roll 16	1170	372/16		PRS 15
roll 17	1171	372/17		PRS 16
roll 18	1172	372/18		PRS 18
roll 19	1173	352/6	372/19	PRS 19
roll 20	1174	372/20	352/7	PRS 21
roll 21	1175	352/8	372/21	PRS 22
roll 22	1176	372/22	352/9	PRS 25
roll 23	1177	372/23	352/10	PRS 26
roll 24	1178	372/24	352/11	PRS 27
roll 25	1179	352/12	372/25	PRS 28
roll 26	1180	372/26	352/13	PRS 29
roll 27	1181	372/27	352/14	PRS 30

roll 28	1182	372/28		PRS 31
roll 29	1183	372/29	352/15A	PRS 32
roll 30	1184	372/30		PRS 33
roll 31	1185	372/31		PRS 34
roll 32	1186	372/32		PRS 36
roll 33	1187	372/33		PRS 37
roll 34	1188	372/34		PRS 38

Ricard I

roll 1	1189	372/35		Hunter 1844b
roll 2	1190	372/36		PRS 39 = PRS (NS) 1
roll 3	1191	372/37	352/15B	PRS 40
roll 4	1192	372/38		PRS 40
roll 5	1193	372/39		PRS 41
roll 6	1194	372/40	352/16	PRS 43
roll 7	1195	372/41		PRS 44
roll 8	1196		372/42	PRS 45
roll 9	1197	372/43		PRS 46
roll 10	1198	372/44		PRS 47

Johan

roll 1	1199	372/45		PRS 48
roll 2	1200	372/46		PRS 50
roll 3	1201	372/47	352/17	PRS 52, Hunter 1833a
roll 4	1202	372/48	352/18	PRS 53
roll 5	1203	372/49		PRS 54
roll 6	1204	372/50		PRS 56
roll 7	1205	372/51	352/19	PRS 57
roll 8	1206	372/52		PRS 58
roll 9	1207	372/53		PRS 60
roll 10	1208	372/54	352/20	PRS 61
roll 11	1209	372/55		PRS 62
roll 12	1210	372/56		PRS 64
roll 13	1211	372/59	372/57	PRS 66
roll 14	1212	372/58		PRS 68
roll 15	1213			lost (when?)
roll 16	1214	372/60		PRS 73
roll 17	1215	372/61	352/21	PRS 75
	1216			no roll this year

Henric III

	1217			no roll this year
roll 1	1218	372/62		PRS 77
roll 2	1219	372/63		PRS 80
roll 3	1220	372/64		PRS 85
roll 4	1221	372/65		PRS 86
roll 6 *	1222	372/66		PRS 89
roll 7	1223	372/67		PRS 94
roll 8	1224	372/68		PRS 92

* There was no roll 5. From 1223 onwards, the roll for 1221 is

referred to as roll 4 (*sic' cont' in R' iiii*^o); from 1224 onwards, the roll for 1222 is referred to as roll 6 (*sic' cont' in R' vi*^o).

Getting access to the unprinted rolls means entering a different world – the world of the AALT. This is the portal: <http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT.html>.

Anglo-American Legal Tradition
Documents from medieval and early modern England from the National Archives in London
digitized and displayed through the O'Quinn Law Library of the University of Houston Law Center by license of the National Archives
sponsored by the University of Houston Law Center and by the University of Houston Department of History

The project is under the direction of Professor Robert C. Palmer, Cullen Professor of History and Law at the University of Houston.

Together with a wealth of other material, the collection includes images of the great rolls of the exchequer, beginning with the roll for 1225. For the period 1225–1285 I have copied the links relevant for Kent into a separate file, which I hope will help to make all of this evidence more or less instantly accessible.

Postscript (July 2013)

The oldest roll is now available in a new edition (Green 2012), with a set of images on a CD at the back. A transcription of the stretch of text relating to Kent can be found here:

<http://durobrivis.net/kent/exchequer/roll-1130.pdf>

I can guarantee that it is more accurate than either of the printed editions.

References

Amt 2007 E. Amt (ed.) *Richard fitzNigel – Dialogus de scaccario – The dialogue of the exchequer* (Oxford, 2007).

Bishop 1961 T. A. M. Bishop, *Scriptores regis* (Oxford, 1961).

Goacher 2013 D. Goacher, 'Kent and the earlier Pipe Rolls (1130 to c.1300): some introductory notes', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 133 (2013), 327–35.

Green 2012 J. A. Green (ed.), *The great roll of the pipe for the thirty first year of the reign of king Henry I Michaelmas 1130* (Pipe Roll Society 95 (NS 57), 2012).

Hall 1896 H. Hall (ed.), *The Red Book of the Exchequer*, 3 vols. (Rolls Series 99, 1896).

Hunter 1833a [J. Hunter (ed.)], *Rotulus cancellarii, vel antigraphum magni rotuli pipae, de tertio anno regni regis Johannis* (Record Commission, 1833). The preface appears to be Hunter's work; but there is no name at the end of it, nor on the title page. The only name which gets mentioned is that of Frederick Devon, who made the transcript of the chancellor's roll and collated it with the great roll (preface, pp ix-xii). <http://archive.org/stream/rotuluscancellaria00commgoog#page/n7/mode/2up>

Hunter 1833b J. Hunter (ed.), *Magnus rotulus scaccarii ... de anno tricesimo-primo regni Henrici primi* (Record Commission, 1833). In the Kent account one whole entry is missing from the printed text: for this and three other errors see the list of "corrigenda" at the end. <http://archive.org/stream/magnumrotulumsc01huntgoog#page/n6/mode/2up>

Hunter 1833b repr. 1929 J. Hunter (ed.), *Magnus rotulus scaccarii ... de anno tricesimo-primo regni Henrici primi* (facsimile reprint, HMSO, 1929). The list of "addenda and corrigenda" is new: it includes some further corrections supplied by Charles Johnson. These are the ones for Kent:

p. 63, l. 6 from end, after *th'auro* the figures *cc et xviii li'* have been erased.

p. 67, l. 8 from end, for *Maminet* read *Maminot*.
last line, for *Boxelia* read *Boxeleia*.

Hunter 1844a J. Hunter (ed.), *The great rolls of the pipe for the second, third, and fourth years of the reign of King Henry the Second* (London, 1844. <http://archive.org/stream/cu31924028014920#page/n5/mode/2up>

Hunter 1844a repr. 1930 J. Hunter (ed.), *The great rolls of the pipe for the second, third, and fourth years of the reign of King Henry the Second* (facsimile reprint, HMSO, 1930). Nothing new.

Hunter 1844b J. Hunter (ed.), *The great roll of the pipe for the first year of the reign of King Richard the First* (London, 1844). <http://archive.org/stream/cu31924028014946#page/n3/mode/2up>

Johnson 1950 C. Johnson (ed.), *Dialogus de scaccario* (London, 1950). (Reprinted 1983, with some very slight revision.)

Larking 1869 L. B. Larking (ed.), *The Domesday Book of Kent* (London, 1869).

First posted September 2012, last revised July 2013