

Aids and scutages: 1346-7 : Aid for getting the king's eldest son made a knight : Introduction

The grant of an aid *pour faire fils chevalier*, to be levied at the rate of 40 shillings (480 pence) for each knight's fee, was approved by parliament in September 1346. (The son was Edward, prince of Wales, sixteen years old at the time.)

The letter appointing the collectors for Kent, dated 1 Nov 1346, was printed by Greenstreet (1876:114) from two seventeenth-century copies (BL Lansdowne 309, fos 13v-14r, 122v-3r). It was addressed to the sheriff (Johan de Freningham) and two other men whose names are missing from the copies. (But the sequel proves that one of them was Thomas de Gillingham.) It informs them of the facts; it orders them to deliver the money to the Exchequer on 27 Jan 1347; and it explains what the attached documents are -- copies of the records of similar aids collected in the time of the king's grandfather (Edward I), from which they are to take guidance.

There were, of course, some problems. The collectors tried to enforce payment from the abbot of Robertsbridge for land which was held "in pure and perpetual alms", not by knight's service, and the abbot had to obtain a writ (dated 16 Feb 1347) ordering them to desist (*Aids* 3:54-5). Their account was not finalized till after September 1348 (when Johan de Freningham was superseded as sheriff) - apparently not till after April 1350 (when they were ordered once again to stop harassing the abbot of Robertsbridge). (This second writ is dated 12 Apr 1350 (*Aids* 3:55).) But at last they succeeded in producing an account which the Exchequer was willing to accept.

The collectors' account survives in the original (E 179/123/21). It also survives through having been copied into the "Book of Aids" (E 164/3), an early fifteenth-century compilation. It has been printed twice. Greenstreet's edition (1876) was based on the copy in the "Book of Aid"; but he checked the proofs against the original roll, as well as against the book. The PRO edition (*Aids* 3:20-52) was based on the roll, but is not quite as accurate as Greenstreet's. (There are two big mistakes: one whole entry (273) is omitted, and so is the subtotal for Hoo hundred (324-7), which ought to read "Total four pounds ten shillings for two fees and one quarter". There is a misprint in entry (326), where "xx" ought to be "xxx".)

My translation was initially made from the PRO edition; but I have checked it against Greenstreet's edition and believe it to be reliable. There are certainly some mistakes - but apparently these are present in the original roll (a fair copy, I suppose, written by a scribe who sometimes misread his exemplar).

In the accompanying file, after first making sure that the arithmetic works out correctly, I have stripped out all the monetary details (it goes without saying that half a fee paid 240 pence, that a sixth of a fee paid 80 pence, and so on). Even in a simplified form, the text is not easy to make sense of.

For one thing, some holdings had become fragmented to such a degree that the arithmetic becomes very difficult to keep track of. To take one of the extreme cases, a half fee in Newchurch hundred once held by Willelm de Sylesbregge (130) was now divided into ten pieces, two of which were entered under different hundreds (113, 252). This is how the fractions add up:

$$1/60 + 1/10 + 3/40 + 1/40 + 1/15 + (1/16) * 3 + (1/68) * 2$$

and these are what the corresponding payments should be:

$$8 + 48 + 36 + 12 + 32 + 30 * 3 + 7 * 2 = 240$$

This is hard work, even for someone who was used to calculating with fractions, and used to counting in imaginary pounds and shillings as well as actual pennies.

For another thing, the text has to be read as a palimpsest: there are three layers to it. Greenstreet's (1876:107-11) comments on the subject are almost but not quite right. He recognized that there were three layers of text; he saw that the earliest layer dated from before 1255, the second layer from 1301-6. But then he went wrong. He thought that the second layer had to be the record of an aid occasioned by the knighting of Edward I's eldest son (soon to be Edward II) in May 1306. In fact, no aid was asked for or granted then. The aid in question is the *aide pour fille marier*, which, though authorized by parliament in May 1290 (*Rot parl* 1:25), was not actually collected till 1302-3. In Kent it was collected by the sheriff (Henric de Cobeham) and Ricard de Rokesle, whose commission was dated 7 Nov 1302 (*Cal pat rolls* 1301-7, 76-7). (Half of the money was due on 9 Feb 1303, the rest on 17 May.)

When this aid was first approved, it was explicitly granted on the same terms as the aid which had been granted to Henric III for getting his daughter married to the king of Scotland, except that the rate was to be higher this time, 480 pence per fee (*Rot parl* 1:25). That earlier aid was the *aide pour fille marier* of 1245-6; and (until just recently) I thought it could be assumed that the aid of 1245-6 was collected in the same way as the aid of 1346 - hundred by hundred, from the tenant who was in possession. But that (as is clear to me now) was not the case. On the contrary, the aid of 1245-6 was collected in the old-fashioned way, from the king's tenants in chief. There was, it seems, only one thirteenth-century aid which was collected from the tenant at the bottom of the feudal ladder, not from the tenant at the top - the aid levied in 1242-3 for the king's crossing to Gascony. Whatever parliament had in mind, the exchequer seems to have decided that the new aid should be based on that one, not on the aid of 1245-6. If that is right, the earliest layer in the palimpsest should date from 1242-3.

To see how the text evolved, we can choose some typical entry, such as the one for Horton (185) in Felborough hundred. The account submitted by the collectors of the aid of 1242-3 would have said something like this:

From Bartholomeus de Badelesmere, for half a fee which he holds from Hamo de Crevequer ...

A copy of that account was supplied to the collectors of the aid of 1302-3, and the corresponding entry in their account would have said something like this:

From Johan de Northwode, for half a fee which Bartholomeus de Badelesmere held from Hamo Crevequer ...

A copy of that account was supplied to the collectors of the aid of 1346-7, and in their account that entry turns into this:

From Roger de Northwode, for half a fee which Johan de Northwode held from Hamo Crevequer ...

The first name dates from 1346-7, the second from 1302-3, the third from 1242-3.

On closer inspection, however, the earliest layer of text proves not to be homogeneous. Some of the *fiz* Gerold fees are said to be held from Margeria de Reviers (d 1252), others from her grandson and heir the earl of Devon (or, as he is called here, "of the Isle"). Willelm de Wiltone did not get possession of the barony of Chilham till after Oct 1251, when his future wife was still single (*Cal close rolls 1247-51*, 512). Possibly this means that the collectors of the aid of 1302-3 were supplied with copies of two earlier lists of knight's fees - not just a list derived from the account of the aid of 1242-3, but also another list drawn up about ten years later - and oscillated between them in compiling their own account.

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There also exists a later version of the Kent account for 1346-7 amplified with much sixteenth-century annotation. The origin of this version is not altogether clear, but its authorship is generally attributed to Ciriac Petit, of Colkins in Boughton under Blean, who died, aged "about 80", on 9 Sep 1591. (He was buried in Boughton church.) The compilation appears to date from 1543-4, but the text as it survives includes some passages appreciably later than that (at least two, it seems, which cannot have been added before the 1570s). Petit was not an antiquary. At the time he was serving as a government official - he held the post of "feodary of Kent" - and he saw it as part of his job to know the history of every manor. His notes are the product of extensive research among the chancery records.

This version survives in at least two seventeenth-century copies. One of them (in BL Lansdowne 276) was probably made for John Philipot; it certainly passed into his possession (*Greenstreet 1876:306*). The second copy (BL Lansdowne 309, fos 123v-51v) is later - the scribe signs off with the date 13 Dec 1662 (fo 157v) - but not derived from Philipot's copy. There is nothing to indicate for whom it was made or why. (I have looked at this

manuscript, but only once, and only briefly. Quite possibly I missed some clue.)

From these two copies - there may be others, but these are the two which he consulted - Greenstreet extracted the identifications of the manors named in the 1346-7 account and printed them as footnotes to his edition. I have put these notes of Petit's into a separate file, in case anyone wants to see them - but I am doubtful whether they retain any value, at this distance in time. So far as they were useful, they were used by Philipott (1659) and Hasted.

References

Aids = Inquisitions and assessments relating to feudal aids, 6 vols (HMSO for PRO, 1899-1920).

J. Greenstreet, 'Assessments in Kent for the aid to knight the Black Prince, anno 20 Edward III', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 10 (1876), 99-162.

J. Greenstreet, 'Fragment of the Kent portion of Kirkby's Inquest temp. Edward I', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 11 (1877), 365-9.

T. Philipott, *Villare Cantianum* (London, 1659).

Rot parl = Rotuli parliamentorum, 6 vols (London, 1767-77).

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