

The city and citizens of Rochester -- the farm of the city,  
1185--1280

Despite its length, this paper is strictly limited in scope. It is a commentary on those entries in the great rolls of the exchequer which relate to the farm of the city of Rochester. For the period in question, I have copied all the relevant entries into a separate file, so that this commentary can be read alongside them. The roll for 1189 was printed (in record type) by Hunter (1844); the rolls for 1185--8, 1190--1212, 1214, and 1218--24 have all been printed (in an unsatisfactory "extended" form) by the Pipe Roll Society.\* From 1225 onwards, good images of all the great rolls are available through AALT,† and my transcriptions are taken from those.

\* For the details see <http://durobrivis.net/kent/exchequer-intro.pdf>.

† <http://aalt.law.uh.edu/IndexPri.html>. For an index to the Kent accounts see <http://durobrivis.net/kent/exchequer-images.pdf>.

The more one writes about these things, the more one tends to lapse into the jargon that was used at the time, forgetting that the words may mean something very different (if they mean anything at all) to a modern reader. ("Sheriff", for example, or "bailiff".) A "farm" was the sum which a contractor promised to pay in return for being put in charge of some piece of money-making machinery. He squeezed as much money out of the machine as he could, paid the farm that he was obliged to pay, and kept the balance (less the running costs) for himself.

The financial year ended at Michaelmas (29 Sep). Simplifying slightly, I take it to cover the period from Oct in one year till Sep in the next. The two halves of the year are Oct--Mar and Apr--Sep; the four quarters are Oct--Dec, Jan--Mar, Apr--Jun and Jul--Sep.

#### Oct 1184--Sep 1189

Until 1189, the "farm of the city of Rochester" was one component in the "farm of the land of the bishop of Bayeux" -- that is, the farm of the assets which had once belonged to bishop Odo, not because they were his to keep, but because he was earl of Kent. I explained this briefly in a previous article (Flight 1998) and will work out the proof again more fully here. But I emphasize straight away that there is no doubt about it.\*

\* No one, I hope, will let themselves be led astray by Brooks (2006). The ep's reported by "Domesday Book" to have got possession of the city of Rochester (DB-Ke-2ra49) was the bishop of Bayeux (Flight 2010:196, echoing Hasted and Larking). It was not the bishop of Rochester: there is not the remotest possibility that it might have been.

In the normal course of events, because the farm of Rochester was subsumed in this larger farm, we cannot expect to hear anything

about it. The citizens paid the money to the sheriff, and the sheriff included their money in the larger sum which he was required to pay into the treasury. As long as things ran smoothly, there was no reason for the exchequer to take note of the fact that some of the money paid in by the sheriff had originated in Rochester.\*

\* There is an anomalous entry in the roll for 1166. Among the deductions claimed by the sheriff from the farm of the land of the bishop of Bayeux, this item occurs: "And to Willelm de Lanvalein £12 10s in Rochester for half the year" (*Et Willelmo de Lanualein xii li' et x s' in Roff' de dimidio anno*, GREx 1166:111). This is fairly sure to be one half-yearly instalment of the farm of the city which -- for some reason which the exchequer accepted as valid but did not explain on the roll -- was diverted from its usual course.

In 1185, things stopped running smoothly. The men of Maidstone -- those of them, that is, who owned ships sailing up and down the Medway -- had previously paid customs at Rochester. Now they refused to pay. As tenants of the manor of Maidstone, they said (prompted, it seems, by the archbishop's steward, Adam of Charing), they were the archbishop of Canterbury's men, and therefore exempt from paying any dues of this kind. The men of Rochester complained to the sheriff: they were losing money which ought to have gone towards the payment of their farm. The sheriff (Alan de Valeines) complained to the exchequer: if the citizens were losing money, he was at risk of losing money too.

A plea was begun in the court of the exchequer, but no quick decision was expected. In the meantime, the men of Maidstone were instructed to stop at Rochester and let their cargoes be inspected in the usual way; and the citizens were instructed to keep a record of the customs which they claimed were due but to desist from demanding the money. Until the plea was concluded, they could deduct this amount each year from the farm that they paid to the sheriff, and he could deduct it from the farm that he paid to the treasury. In the rolls for 1186--9, therefore, we find that the account for the farm of the land of the bishop of Bayeux includes an item relating to this plea (Flight 1998, table 4, and below, Table 1). Year by year, the sheriff accumulated a debt for sums "which are in respite because of the customs of Rochester from which the archbishop claims quittance" (*que sunt in respectu propter consuetudines de Roff' de quibus archiepiscopus clamat quietantiam*, GREx 1187:205, twice), "which are held over with respect to the customs of Rochester which are demanded from the archbishop's men" (*que remanserunt super consuetudines de Roffecr' que exiguntur ab hominibus archiepiscopi*, GREx 1189:231--2). (In 1188, the sheriff seems to have persuaded the exchequer that this debt ought to be charged to Adam of Charing, not to him (GREx 1188:88). But the exchequer then changed its mind.)

By 1189, when Alan de Valeines made his last appearance as sheriff, the deficit had grown to £28 10s 1d. That debt followed him into his retirement, with the explanation that "the plea is not yet finished" (*de quibus placitum nondum finitum est, ...*

*propter dilationem placiti nondum finiti*, GREx 1190:146), but the exchequer never attempted to make him pay. When he died, in 1198--9, the debt was inherited by his son, Willelm (GREx 1199:60--1); and eventually Willelm was able to obtain a writ from the king ordering the barons of the exchequer to cancel this and others of his father's debts (GREx 1200:210). So that was the end of the first episode in what turned out to be a long-running serial.

Though the details may seem tedious, this evidence tells us three significant things which otherwise we should not know. First, these entries referring to the customs of Rochester -- reinforced by the similar entries which begin to appear as soon as the farm of Rochester shows up as a separate account -- are the proof that the city, a hundred years before, had belonged to the bishop of Bayeux. Secondly they prove that ships heading up the Medway were required to stop at Rochester, whether this was their final destination or not, submit to inspection by the customs officers there, and pay the appropriate duties (unless they were exempt). And thirdly they prove that these customs were one of the sources of revenue from which the citizens raised the money that they needed to pay their farm. When the men of Maidstone refused to pay, the takings went down by £5--6 a year, and that made a significant dent in their finances.

Oct 1189--Sep 1191

All told, the assets included in the farm of the land of the bishop of Bayeux had a nominal value of £289 13s 7d.\* Over the years, some of these assets were sold off or given away,† and by 1189 the total for which the sheriff still had to answer had been reduced to £157 5s 6d (GREx 1189:232).‡

\* Flight (1998:71), calculated from the account for 1156 (GREx 1156:65). From 1179 onwards, this total is recorded explicitly (GREx 1179:116).

† I ought not to have said that the package was "kept intact, year after year, against the time when it might be needed again" (Flight 1998:78). It was kept apart from the farm of the county; "intact" is not at all the right word.

‡ But to that one should add the "numero" farm of Dover (£30), which was being accounted for separately (GREx 1189:239). At least since the 1150s, that had been the regular practice (Flight 1998:72).

After 1189, this account disappears from the great roll. Presumably the exchequer did continue to keep track of it -- perhaps on a separate roll of troublesome accounts, like the "rolls of escheats" which survive for 1194--6 (see below) -- but no such record survives.

Despite that, it is clear enough what was going on. Within the next year or two, the remaining assets were put up for sale, to raise money for the king's expedition to the Holy Land. Nearly

all of them did get sold: those which did not reappear eventually in the great roll, as two separate entries; and one of those entries is for the farm of the city of Rochester.\* The king, it seems, drew the line at selling a whole city.†

\* The only other asset which remained unsold was a rent of 27s 3d from a piece of land in Shorne. (I see no reason why the king would have wanted to hold on to this particular rent: I suppose the sale fell through, as sales occasionally do.) The entry for this item turns up in the great roll for 1191, towards the end of the Kent account: the sheriff pays in this rent "from the remainder of the land of the bishop of Bayeux which is in the king's hands in Shorne" (*de remanenti terre episcopi Baiocensis que est in manu regis in Schornes*, GREx 1191:148). A matching entry appears in each roll after that, until 1198, when, halfway through the year, the land which produced this rent was sold to Roger Chauvel (GREx 1198:204).

† There is one puzzle which -- though it is not relevant here -- I would not wish to leave unmentioned. The "numero" farm of Canterbury (£20) was one of the components of this account (Flight 1998:71--4), and nothing is heard of it after 1189. It is possible, I suppose, that the citizens may have bought it out, by paying the king some multiple of £20 (£200 perhaps). There is no surviving record of any such transaction, but somehow or other the silence needs to be explained. (There is no mystery about the "blanch" component (£29), which continued to be paid to the sheriff and was accounted for (silently) in the "blanch" farm of the county. That remained the case till 1234, when the city was granted to the citizens in perpetuity for a farm of £60 (numero) a year (CCA-CC-A/A/2).)

One interesting thing did happen during this interval. The king decided that crusaders travelling through Rochester should be exempted from paying a toll called "paage". This was the start of another long-running serial. Taking all of the evidence together, I think the story goes something like this.

Travellers passing through Rochester were normally required to pay "paage" -- one penny for a man on a horse, one halfpenny for a man on foot. This was another source of revenue on which the citizens relied when it came to the payment of their farm. Like the customs, the paage is only heard about by accident.

King Ricard, on his way towards the Holy Land, told the citizens to stop taking paage from anyone signed with the cross.\* Originally, I suppose, that was a verbal command, issued when the king passed through Rochester in November 1189; but then it was realized (perhaps by the citizens in consultation with the new sheriff, Henric de Cornhulle) that a written order would be needed. Somebody (perhaps an agent of the sheriff's) set off in pursuit of the king, and caught up with him at a place called Donzy.† (By this time the king was travelling eastwards from Tours, aiming to meet up with the French king at Vézelay.) At Donzy, on 1 July 1190, the king issued a charter explaining what he had done.

\* Both Burtt (1866) and Larking (1869) seem to suppose that this paage was a special toll which *only* crusaders had to pay. On the contrary, it is clear

that everyone had to pay -- unless they could prove that they were quit. A citizen of London, for example, would have refused to pay (would probably have been annoyed at even being asked to pay), because the citizens of London were exempt from all tolls of this kind. But that had always been so. The effect of the king's decision was to create a new exemption, and therefore a new loss of revenue.

† Donzy is a town in Burgundy, now in the department of the Nièvre. (As Bartlett (1961:17) sagaciously observes, the place in question "cannot be Danzig".)

The original does not survive, but at some stage it passed into the possession of the citizens of Rochester, who took the precaution of having it enrolled at the exchequer. That copy does survive, and this is what it says:

***Carta burgensium de Roff' de quietancia paagii quod sumebatur de crusiatis in uilla de Roff'.*** Ricardus dei gratia rex Anglorum etc. Sciatis nos quietum clamasse paagium quod sumebatur a cruce signatis in uilla de Rouecestr' et prohibemus super forisfacturam nostram ne decetero paagium illud exigatur. Sciatis enim nos illud quietum clamasse de nobis et de heredibus nostris in perpetuum pro anime nostre salute et antecessorum nostrorum et pro ueneracione sancte crucis cuius signum tunc temporis gerebamus. Testibus, Willelmo Marescallo, G(alfrido) de Cella, Philippo de Columbariis, Hugone Bardolf', Willelmo de Sancte Marie Ecclesia decano Moriton'. Data per manum Iohannis de Alencon uicecancellarii nostri Lexouiensis archidiaconi i die Iulii apud Danzie anno primo regni nostri. (Davies 1960:139-40, from C 52/17, m 3d).

Though the citizens did as they were told, they thought themselves entitled to some deduction from their farm, to compensate for the loss of income caused by this command of the king's. The exchequer was not unsympathetic: in principle they agreed with the citizens' interpretation. Kings could be as generous as they pleased, but they could not be generous at somebody else's expense. Income was being lost, and the loss should fall on the king, not on the citizens of Rochester. The wording of the charter itself can be construed to concede that much.

But there was a practical difficulty: how was the amount of the deduction to be determined? The exchequer was not willing to take the citizens' word for it -- not because the barons had any particular distrust of the citizens of Rochester, but because the exchequer did not do business in that fashion. Just as with the customs, there had to be some proper procedure for keeping count of the money which the citizens were losing -- the money which would have been collected if the king had not ordered otherwise. As the sequel will show, that difficulty proved hard to overcome.

Oct 1191--Sep 1192

In 1192, for the first time, the great roll includes a separate account for the farm of the city of Rochester. Two of the citizens made their appearance before the barons of the exchequer. Their names were Unfrid the vintner and Godard the clerk: presumably they were the city's two bailiffs, elected in the previous September, accounting for their year in office.\* Whatever had been happening in the two years before this, no debts were brought forward. The citizens were starting with a clean slate.

\* But they had both just been reelected to serve for another year: the same two men appear at the exchequer again in 1193.

This is the account:

*Unfridus uinitor et Godardus clericus reddunt comptum de xxv li' de firma ciuitatis de Roffecr' pro ciuibus eiusdem uille. In thesauro xi li' et ii s' et ix d'. Et Hugoni de Bosco constabulario de Roff' vii li' et x s' per breue regis de liberatione sua de quarta parte anni. Et in quietantia crucesignatorum transeuntium per eandem ciuitatem xxviii s' et iii d' per cartam regis et per uisum Godardi contratalliatoris. Et debent iiii li' et xix s' que remanent super consuetudines ciuitatis que exiguntur ab hominibus archiepiscopatus Cant'. De quibus placitum nondum finitum est. (GREx 1192:307--8)*

The bailiffs have done their sums in advance; now they have to convince the exchequer that their sums are right. First, they produce a tally issued by the officers of the Receipt proving that they have made a payment of £11 2s 9d; the treasurer's clerk has the countertally, sent up to him from the Receipt. So far so good. Second, they produce a writ which orders them, just this once, to pay £7 10s to Hugo de Bosco, the constable of Rochester castle. (As constable he has a salary of £30 a year, and this is one quarterly instalment of that.) The exchequer would prefer not to see money diverted in this way, before it even reaches the treasury, but the citizens are not at fault. They have the writ;\* presumably they also have a chit from Hugo; so that deduction is allowed. Third, they claim a deduction of 28s 3d for paage not collected from crusaders passing through the city.† To justify this they cite the king's charter; and the amount is vouched for by a third party (a man named Godard, probably an agent of the sheriff's) who has a countertally.‡ The barons of the exchequer -- who would presumably have seen the king's charter and discussed its implications two years before -- approve of this deduction too. So the citizens are left with a deficit of £4 19s, the reason for which is explained in exactly the same terms as the debt incurred by the sheriff in 1186--90: this sum is in suspense "with respect to the customs of the city which are demanded from the men of the archbishopric of Canterbury, concerning which the plea is not yet finished". The citizens were not quit: there was a debt against them which was going to be carried forward into the

next roll. With that proviso, however, they were now free to go home.

\* The writ would have to include the words *Et computabitur vobis ad scaccarium*, "And it it will be computed in your favour at the exchequer". A writ of this sort was handed over at the end of the financial year. Till then it was the citizens' warrant for claiming the deduction; after that it was the exchequer's warrant for having allowed the deduction.

† This entry and the similar one in the next roll were cited by Burt (1866:109--10). As he pointed out, it is possible to calculate how many crusaders travelled through Rochester in the course of the year if one is willing to take a guess at the ratio of footmen ( $\frac{1}{2}$ d each) to horsemen (1d each). He guessed at a ratio of four -- but then got his arithmetic wrong (the results he quotes assume a ratio of six). For the twelve months ending in Sep 1192, the result which he should have arrived at is 113 horsemen plus 452 footmen. (It would be much more interesting to know how many crusaders passed through the city in the twelve months ending in Sep 1190; but we have no data for that year.)

‡ Though the name was not a common one, I suppose that this Godard (who is mentioned again in 1193 and 1194) must have been a different person from Godard the clerk. In 1225 (see below) we are told explicitly that the tally is to be kept jointly by "the sheriff's bailiff and the bailiffs of the town".

#### Oct 1192--Sep 1214

Because this account is the first of its kind, I have gone through it item by item, but I do not propose to continue in the same manner. From here onwards, I just pick out the points which seem to me worth noting.

As in 1192, a deduction for the paage remitted to crusaders appears in the account for 1193, but is not repeated after that. Presumably crusaders were still passing through Rochester, and still being exempted from the payment of paage. But there would come a point, I suppose, when the loss of income involved was too small to justify the expense of keeping track of it in a manner which would satisfy the exchequer. When that point was reached, the citizens (grumbling, no doubt) decided that it would be cheaper to carry the cost themselves.

In 1194 the farm of Rochester disappears from the great roll, because it was one of the accounts which had been entrusted to the exchequer's trouble-shooter, Willelm de Sainte Marie Eglise.\* A separate roll was drawn up for these accounts -- it was called the "roll of escheats", *rotulus escaetarum* -- but since it got stitched to the great roll it does survive. For three years (1194--6), the citizens remained under Willelm's supervision. Each year there was the usual deficit,† and the debts fell on the citizens, not on Willelm.

\* The same man who was with the king at Donzy in Jul 1190 (see above). He took his name from a place in Normandy which is now (corruptly) called

Sainte-Mère-Église. He was elected bishop of London in Dec 1198.

† The remark *De quibus placitum nondum finitum est* is repeated till 1195 (GREx 1195:55) but omitted after that. But the plea was still active in early 1196, as appears from an entry in one of the surviving rolls of the king's court (KB 26/5, printed in *Publications of the Pipe Roll Society*, 24 (1900), 214--44). The printed text says this: *Loquela inter homines domini Canc' de Medeston' et Henr' de Roff' est in respectum usque in iii septimanas post Pascha* (p 242). I take it that *Canc'* should be *Cant'* and that *Henr'* should be *homines* (or some similar word).

In 1197 the farm of Rochester returns to the great roll, and the citizens are directly responsible for it again. Things run smoothly for the next two years -- except for the chronic problem of the customs of Rochester. By 1199, the citizens have run up a debt of £44 3s 3d, and the barons of the exchequer have become alarmed. An entry in the memoranda roll for this year (unfortunately damaged at the point where it begins to get interesting) recorded some discussion of this issue and some decision;\* what that decision was can be discovered from the next great roll.

\* [*Loque*]ndum est de pluribus debitis que annotantur in rotulo que exiguntur a ciuibus Rofn' de areragio fir[me eiusdem u]ille que [sunt] super consuetudines [ciuitatis Rofn'] que exiguntur ab hominibus archiepiscopatus Cant'. Concessum est a Iustic' quod .... de Cornhull' custodiat .... hoc [anno] (Richardson 1943:22, from E 370/1/3).

In 1200 we find that the citizens had been demoted again, so that a strange new experiment could be tried. For the first three months of the year (Oct--Dec 1199) the city had been managed by an agent of the archbishop's; for the rest of the year (Jan--Sep 1200) it had been managed by an agent of the sheriff's. The experiment was repeated in the following year but discontinued after that.

The archbishop, therefore, was charged with a quarter of the farm (£6 5s) in 1200, and with the same amount again in 1201. A payment of £10 is credited to the archbishop in 1202 (I do not understand the reason for this), and that leaves him with a debt of 50s, which is carried forward for the next two years. When the archbishop's debts were all brought together under a single heading, presumably after his death in July 1205, this item was included in the list (GREx 1204:213).\*

\* The inception date for this roll was Sep 1204. To clarify what may look like a contradiction: it had once been the rule that the great roll should be written in a single stretch, completed as soon as possible after Michaelmas, and not altered after that. By this time, however, it was common practice for additions to be made to the roll in the course of the ensuing financial year. And when one starts to find references to "the following roll" (GREx 1203:24--5, for example) it is clear that annotation was still being added to the roll more than twelve months after its inception date.

In parallel with the archbishop, the sheriff, Reginald de

Cornhulle, was charged with three-quarters of the farm (£18 15s) in each of the same two years. In 1201, answering for these two years, he claims the usual deduction with respect to the customs of the city, and uses some of his surplus (brought forward from the Kent account in the previous roll) to square this Rochester account.

Though the archbishop ceases to be involved with the farm of Rochester after 1201, it seems to have taken another few years for the results of this experiment to be put into practice. Two things can be seen to happen. First, it was decided to simplify matters by allowing a fixed deduction for the lost customs. The sum decided on (it is not clear how) was £6 4s 4d, and that deduction turns up for the first time in the roll for 1203.\* Second, it was decided that the sheriff should be made responsible for the whole of the existing deficit -- not just for the debts which he had incurred in 1201--3, but also for the debts which had been incurred by the citizens in 1192--9. That decision -- good news for the citizens -- takes effect in the roll for 1204.†

\* *Et debet vi li' et iiii s' et iiii d' que sunt super homines archiepiscopi.* This seems to imply that the debt was going to fall on the archbishop's men, not on the sheriff; but it never got charged to them.

† There seems to be some confusion in this roll. The deduction is debited twice -- to the archbishop (by error, I suppose) as well as to the sheriff. In the event it gets debited to nobody.

After that, things run smoothly for some years, till the death of Reginald de Cornhulle in 1210. In October that year, his son, also named Reginald de Cornhulle, who was taking over from his father as sheriff of Kent, promised the king the stupendous sum of 10,000 marks "to be quit of all the debts and receipts and accounts which his father and he himself owed to the king" (GREx 1210:120). In consequence of that, the deficit on the Rochester account was written off. And the citizens, without paying anything, were also in the clear.

Nothing much happens in the next few years. In 1211, all we get is the flat statement that the sheriff has paid £9 for the farm of Rochester, for one or other half of the year. In 1212 the account reverts to the same pattern as the accounts for 1203--9, with the same nominal deduction for the unpaid customs. The roll for 1213 has been lost,\* and there is nothing that can be said (except that no debt is carried forward into the following roll). In 1214 the sheriff submits the same sort of account as in 1212, but on this occasion a larger deduction is allowed -- a round sum of £7 -- "with respect to the liberties of the archbishop's men".

\* It was, to all appearances, a perfectly normal roll. Many of the entries can be reconstructed, by interpolating between the rolls for 1212 and 1214. But that applies mainly to the recurrent entries, which are not the interesting ones.

After that, as war broke out between the king and his barons, the exchequer was shut down. It remained closed for some years. During those years, nothing is heard about the farm of Rochester.

Oct 1217--Sep 1225

The exchequer was reopened in 1218, but there was no activity on the Rochester account till 1220, when the sheriff of Kent -- Hugo de Windlesores, Hubert de Burgo's deputy -- answered for three years at once (£75). Nothing was paid. The sheriff was allowed a deduction for each year, at the rate fixed in 1203, with respect to "the liberties of the archbishop's men" (£18 13s). On Hubert's behalf he accepted responsibility for the remainder, but the debt was written off soon afterwards.\*

\* Elsewhere on the roll, there is a long entry in which all of Hubert's debts (this Rochester item among them) are brought together and added up (GREx 1220:59). The total comes to £1656 18s 6½d. On the fictitious assumption that Hubert had spent the identical sum (not forgetting the halfpenny) in fortifying Dover castle and paying the wages of the garrison, the entire debt was cancelled.

It had still not been decided what to do about the loss of income caused by the refusal of the archbishop's men to pay customs at Rochester. Each year some deduction is allowed; each year a debt (if it is a debt) is recorded, but it is never said clearly who (if anyone) is expected to pay it.

In 1221, even after that deduction has been made, the sheriff still ends up with a debt (34s 5d). There is no remark to explain it; the debt is not carried forward into the next roll. From the sequel, however, the explanation seems clear. The question of paage had been brought up again: the sheriff was claiming a further deduction to compensate for the loss of income caused by his being forbidden to collect paage from crusaders passing through Rochester. Perhaps taken by surprise, the barons of the exchequer were uncertain how to deal with this claim. So the item was entered as a debt in the roll (and then silently written off).

The sheriff is still answerable for the farm of Rochester in 1222, but the account is postponed till 1223 and not finalized till 1224. There is a story behind this delay which seems to go something like this. The sheriff's agent in Rochester was a man named Roger Wastehose. Apparently he died in 1222, before settling up with the sheriff, and his widow, Cecilia, had to answer for him. The exchequer was willing to allow a deduction of £12 (why so much?) with respect to the archbishop's liberty, but the balance was charged to Cecilia. She had paid 40s the year before; she paid another 40s in 1224, and was told to pay off the remaining £9 at the rate of 60s a year. But Cecilia had another card to play. Her husband, it appears, had kept a record of the paage remitted to crusaders passing through Rochester in 1219--21: the amount was 54s 8d. She was able to obtain a writ from the king instructing the barons of the exchequer to credit her with

that sum;\* and a belated entry on the roll for 1224 is the record of this small triumph. The story continues -- but there is nothing to be learned about Rochester from the rest of it.†

\* *Computate eciam Cecilie que fuit uxor Rogeri Wastehoese in firma ville nostre Roff' liiii s' et viii d' pro relaxacione paagii facta per preceptum nostrum anno regni nostri iiii<sup>o</sup> et v<sup>o</sup> crucesignatis transeuntibus per Roff'* (*Close rolls 1224--7*, p 43). Unless there is some mistake in the dating, this should include the item (34s 5d) which appears in the roll for 1221. Since that had already been written off, Cecilia (so it seems) was entitled only to the difference (20s 3d), presumably for 1220. Nevertheless, the king's order was explicit, and the exchequer did as it was told. The writ is dated 3 June 1225; so the entry on the roll cannot have been made till more than eight months after the inception date.

† At this point Cecilia owed £6 5s 4d. She paid 30s in 1225 and 60s in 1226, and that reduced the debt to 35s 4d. In 1228 the debt was transferred from Cecilia to a second Roger Wastehose, presumably the first Roger's son. He had (as the saying was) "abjured the realm" some years before, after being convicted of robbing some Flemish merchants on Shooters Hill. He was pardoned in 1227 (*Patent rolls 1225--32*, p 124), returned to England, and entered the king's service. He also inherited the first Roger's debt at the exchequer; but he was not asked to pay it. The debt was finally cleared in 1241--2, probably by his executors: he seems to have died in Gascony in 1242 (*Close rolls 1237--42*, p 516). (It is not strictly true that there is nothing to be learned about Rochester. Roger Wastehose, in 1237, was intending to build himself a house here (*Close rolls 1234--7*, p 452). Probably he did so; but who got the house when he died I cannot say.)

In 1223, for the first time since 1199, the men of Rochester -- represented by their bailiffs, though their names are not recorded on the roll -- answer for the farm of their city. They are charged the usual £25; but the exchequer, taking a lenient view, allows them an automatic deduction of £6 with respect to the archbishop's liberty,\* and only expects them to pay £19 a year. And so things might have continued.

\* The debt (if it is a debt) is carried forward into the following roll. It is charged to the men of Rochester, but only in a tentative way.

In 1225, however, the citizens complicated the issue.\* They obtained a writ from the king instructing the barons of the exchequer to allow them a deduction from their farm "with respect to the quittance of paage from crusaders passing through Rochester towards the sea". The substance of this writ -- the writ itself was handed over and went into the marshal's bag -- is reported in detail on the great roll for this year.† This is where we learn that paage was charged at the rate of a penny for a man on a horse and a halfpenny for a man on foot. We also learn what arrangements were to be put in place for monitoring the loss of income. The sheriff's bailiff and the bailiffs of the town were to cooperate in making a tally,† and the total recorded by this tally (which of course was going to vary from year to year) was to be deducted from the farm of the city. (That is the positive message. There is, implicitly, a negative message too. Only the

actual amount can be deducted. If the tally and countertally are not forthcoming, no deduction at all is to be allowed.)

\* At just this time, the city was being refortified at the king's expense. I hope to talk about that in a separate paper.

† The entry was printed by Madox (1711:229), vaguely alluded to by Burt (1866:109), printed again by Larking (1869:185).

‡ I suppose this means that the tally was split in advance, and that the two halves were reunited whenever the moment arrived for a notch to be cut. A writ addressed to the sheriff of Kent, explaining the facts of the case and telling him that he is responsible for keeping the countertally, is copied onto the close roll (*Close rolls 1224--7*, p 43). It is dated 4 June 1225, one day later than the writ for Cecilia Wastehose. Evidently she and the bailiffs were working together.

The king's instructions are unambiguous. Having taken some time to think things over, the barons of the exchequer see no reason not to comply. The citizens gain their point: a deduction of 9s is allowed.\* That seems a poor return for the time and trouble (not to mention the expense) which the citizens had put themselves to, and for the nuisance they had made of themselves at the exchequer; but perhaps it only covers the last four months of the financial year, since the date of the king's letter.

\* By Burt's reckoning, that would represent something like 36 horsemen and 144 footmen.

In 1226, the exchequer retaliated. If the citizens were not content with an automatic deduction of £6 a year, then let them be made to justify their claim. From now onwards, the loss of income resulting from "the liberties of the archbishop's men" would also have to be tallied and countertallied. The only concession the exchequer made was to write off the existing debts. Once again the citizens were starting with a clean slate.

Oct 1225--Oct 1250

From 1226 onwards, therefore, the Rochester accounts settle into a new shape. In principle, the exchequer is willing to allow two deductions, if they are properly justified. One is for the paage not collected from crusaders; the other is for the customs not collected from the archbishop's men. This second deduction, however, is only allowed provisionally. The amount is entered as a debt and carried forward from roll to roll, pending a decision as to whether the citizens are required to pay it or not.

A deduction for paage (*Et in quietantia paag' crucesignatorum transeuntium per Rofam hoc anno ...*) appears in the roll for 1227 and in the next two rolls. Then it disappears. The last deduction claimed is 7s.\* At that rate, I suppose, the citizens would have been spending more than they stood to save; so they stopped making their tallies. They did not, however, stop feeling

aggrieved.

\* By Burt's reckoning again, that would represent something like 28 horsemen and 112 footmen, on average less than three crusaders a week.

The provisional deduction for the lost customs appears year after year (Table 2). The amount varies. An exact figure (£5 13s 2d), presumably tallied, is reported in 1226, but the exchequer seems to have relented after that, and most of the amounts are round sums -- usually £6--8, but with an unexplained spike of £16 in 1243 -- presumably negotiated between the barons and the citizens. The arrears keep increasing -- by 1239 they exceed £100, by 1249 they are approaching £200 -- and still no decision is made.\* All the way through, it is assumed by the exchequer that the debt will eventually have to be paid, by the citizens that the debt will eventually be cancelled.

\* The ongoing plea is referred to from time to time, but by far the most important evidence (as far as I know) is an entry which appears on one of the rolls of the king's court, dating from the first week of Aug 1234 (*Curia regis rolls* 15:245--6). This records a complaint by the archbishop's men of Maidstone and a retort from the bailiffs of Rochester. The citizens were not just claiming "toll and customs"; they were claiming that they had the right to buy any goods going up the river, whether the owners wanted to sell or not.

In 1227 the citizens obtained a new charter (RCA\_C1\_01\_01b), and the charter begins by saying that the king has granted the city to the citizens for a fee-farm of £25 a year, payable in two instalments, at Easter and at Michaelmas. But that served only to ratify an arrangement which already existed; as far as the farm is concerned, the charter did not change anything. There is no mention of it on the great roll; there is no reason why there should be.

Even with this charter locked up in the city chest, the citizens' tenure was never perfectly secure. If the king were displeased (and it did not take much to displease him), he could seize the city into his own hands at a moment's notice. The itinerant justices had the power to do the same thing, and did not hesitate to use it. Like the inhabitants of other towns and cities, the men of Rochester lost control of their city from time to time, and had to grovel (and pay) to get it back again. If they moved quickly enough, the interruption would not show up in the great roll. If they did not, it would.

On one occasion, the citizens behaved badly towards a foreigner passing through the city. It is not clear what they did, but the foreigner -- a clerk of the emperor's -- took offence and complained to the king. The sheriff was ordered to seize the city. The citizens were given to understand that a fine of £10 would get them out of trouble: they promised to pay the money, and the sheriff was ordered to give the city back to them.\* That fine appears in the roll for 1244 (half of the money was paid in 1245,

the rest not till many years later), but elsewhere in that roll the citizens are found accounting for their farm in the usual way, with no hint that anything untoward has occurred.

\* The order is on the fine roll (C 60/41, m 9). For the period 1216--72, translations and images of the fine rolls can be found through <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/calendar/calendar.html>

Exciting things could happen without any trace of them appearing in the great roll. On a number of occasions, the exchequer demanded payment of the arrears accumulating against the citizens, but the citizens, by promptly appealing to the king, were able to head them off.\* The most serious incident occurred in 1238, when the sheriff of Kent (Bertram de Criol) attempted to recover some of the money owed by the men of Rochester. He did what sheriffs usually did in such circumstances -- he started seizing their livestock. The citizens sprang into action. At their instigation the king wrote to the barons of the exchequer. In fact he wrote two letters (because the citizens had managed to make it understood that they had two quite separate grievances).† In one he ordered the barons to make some deduction with respect to the quittance of paage in accordance with his uncle Ricard's charter;‡ in the other he ordered them to deduct £6 every year "on account of the liberties of the archbishop of Canterbury". The exchequer then wrote to the sheriff, ordering him to back away, returning any animals that he had taken.§ What happened after that I do not know; but it is clear that these letters of the king's did not bring about any change in the rules of the game. The exchequer did not start making a deduction for paage; it did not start subtracting £6 every year. It was a settled rule that the barons should disregard orders which were not precisely worded; perhaps they may have thought these letters too vague to be complied with.

\* Hostile moves by the exchequer are recorded in 1231 (fine roll, C 60/30, m 4), 1236 (*Close Rolls 1234--7*, p 389), 1238 (see above), and 1246 (fine roll, C 60/43, m 8). None of these incidents show up in the great rolls.

† The copies kept by the chancery are on the *Liberate* roll (C 62/12), which is damaged at this point and only partly legible (*Liberate rolls 1226-40*, pp 337--8). The copies kept by the exchequer are on the memoranda roll (E 368/12, rot 11), from which they were printed by Madox (1711:673-4), and again by Larking (1869:185).

‡ In this letter (dated 27 Jun) the toll is called *mala tolta*, "maltolt", not paage. "Maltolt", by the way, is not a loaded word. It does not mean an "unjust toll" (Larking 1869:185), though doubtless there were some people who thought it unfair: it just means a toll, perhaps one originally justified by some emergency.

§ *Et mandatum est uicecomiti Kanc' quod dictam demandam in respectum ponat usque ad quindenam sancti Iohannis. Et aueria et c'. Teste A. archidiacono Salop' xxx die Junii* (E 368/12, rot 11). Not printed before, as far as I am aware.

Finally, in July 1249, the citizens got themselves into serious

trouble -- trouble from which they could not quickly extricate themselves. A burglar who had broken into the exchequer was found and arrested in Rochester; the stolen goods were recovered, but the man was allowed to escape. The king was mightily annoyed. Some of the citizens spent time in the Fleet prison (*Close rolls 1247-51*, p 179); one of them (Simon Potin) was held in Rochester castle and not released till 1 Oct (*ibid* p 205). Acting on orders from the exchequer, the sheriff of Kent took the city into the king's hands -- and on this occasion it remained there for more than a year.

In the exchequer roll for 1251 the sheriff of Kent (Reginald de Cobbeham) accounts for the "issues of the town" which passed through his hands during this period of time: £16 8s 6½d for one whole year (Oct 49--Sep 50), £4 0s 0½d for the last quarter of the preceding year (Jul--Sep 49), and 23s 9½d for the start of the following year (Oct 50). An itemized account explaining how each of these subtotals was arrived at would have given us some detailed knowledge of the state of the city's revenues at the time. Unfortunately all that survives is the summarized version recorded on the great roll.

\* The account terminates at 10 Oct 1250, which is when Reginald gave the city back to the citizens. He paid up in 1253 (this being one of the entries marked with the letter "t" in the previous roll).

Oct 1250--Sep 1261

On 10 Oct 1250, the king wrote to the barons of the exchequer, notifying them that he had given the city back to the citizens, to hold by payment of a farm of £20 a year.\* (This was not a fee-farm: the citizens were to hold "for as long as it pleases the king", *quamdiu regi placuerit*.) The king, however, had not been adequately briefed. In his understanding of the case, this represented an increase of £3 a year: till now, he thought, the citizens had been paying a farm of £17 a year.

\* The copy kept by the chancery is on the fine roll (C 60/47, m 2); the copy kept by the exchequer is on the memoranda roll (E 368/25, m 2).

When this letter reached the exchequer, therefore, it required some interpretation. As far as the barons was concerned, £20 was a reduction, not an increase. From 1226 onwards, they had been charging the citizens £25 a year. The citizens had never paid that much; but that just meant that they were now heavily in arrears. What did the king's letter, seen from this angle, mean?

Consulting their records, the barons decided to take the king's letter to imply that the citizens were entitled to a discount for every year, for the last 26 years. For 1226 they allowed them the whole debt, £5 13s 2d, perhaps because it seemed unfair that no deduction had been made that year for paage; for the 25 years after that, they allowed them £5 a year. So this was their

decision: they would allow the citizens a deduction from their debt of £130 13s 2d, but then they would insist on the rest of the debt being cleared, at the rate of £5 a year. Meanwhile, in accordance with the king's letter, they would charge them £20 a year for the farm of the city, until further notice. For several years to come, therefore, the citizens would be required to pay £25 a year -- the sum which they ought to have been paying all along, in the exchequer's view of the case.

\* Though I do not see how else the total could have been arrived at, the result looks over-generous to me. Why would the discount apply to 1250, when the sheriff was in charge, or to 1251, when the new rate was already in effect?

In the exchequer rolls for 1251 and 1252, we can see these decisions translated into action and put on record. In the roll for 1251 (the same roll where the sheriff is charged for the period Jul 49--Oct 50), the citizens of Rochester account for the year just finished, Oct 50--Sep 51: "The citizens of Rochester account for £20 for the farm of their town, as long as it shall please the king, as is contained in the Originals roll for the 34th year. In the treasury, they have paid (the full amount). And they are quit." In the roll for 1252, most of the arrears are written off, with a sentence explaining why, and the citizens -- besides paying £20 for their farm -- pay £10 (for two years) towards reducing this debt.

From then onwards, for several years, everything seems to run smoothly. In roll after roll, the citizens are credited with the same two payments -- £20 for their farm, £5 for the arrears. There are only two small anomalies. In the roll for 1254, the farm was left unpaid; but the snag, whatever it was, had been removed by the following year, and the roll for 1255 records a double payment. In the roll for 1259, the citizens pay only half of their farm: for the balance they produce a writ from the king saying that they have paid £10 into the wardrobe (the financial office which travelled with the king's court).\*

\* The writ was copied onto the *Liberate* roll; so we know exactly where and when the payment was made -- at Dover on 13 Nov 59 (*Liberate rolls 1251-60*, p 490).

Beneath the surface, things were not quite so smooth. On two occasions, the citizens lost control of the city, but only for short periods. In 1251, a woman who had been convicted of murdering her brother escaped and fled to a church. The citizens were blamed for this, and the city was taken into the king's hands; but the citizens got it back again, by promising to pay a fine of 100 shillings.\* The debt shows up in the roll for 1252; the citizens paid most of it then, the rest in the following year. In 1255, when the itinerant justices arrived in Rochester, they discovered that a man who was due to stand trial had escaped from the king's prison in Rochester castle. Again the citizens were blamed and the city was taken into the king's hands; but again

they soon got it back again, this time by promising to pay a fine of 10 marks.† That debt shows up in the roll for 1256; the citizens paid the money into the wardrobe, produced their receipt at the exchequer, and were declared quit in the roll for the following year. Upsets like this were a hazard for every town. One could hardly hope to avoid them, only to buy oneself out of trouble as quickly and cheaply as one could.

\* *Close rolls 1247-51*, p 506, and two entries on the fine roll (C 60/48, mm 4d, 1).

† Two entries on the fine roll (C 60/53, mm 21, 4).

By Sep 1261,\* the citizens were in a good position. By making a payment of £8 plus, they had finally disposed of the arrears which had been hanging over their heads since 1226. They paid £20 for their farm, and in future (unless the king changed his mind) that would be all they had to pay. In short, they had some cause for celebration. Then the sky fell in.

\* For reasons of its own, the exchequer did not deal with any Kent business this year; so we find these payments recorded on the roll for the following year. But it is, for reasons which will shortly appear, a safe assumption that the payments had been made, as they ought to have been made, in 1261.

Oct 1261--Mar 1266

In Sep 1262 the citizens failed to appear at the exchequer. For this failure they were fined 10 marks, and had to obtain a writ from the king to get the fine forgiven.\* The king and the citizens knew -- what the exchequer did not (or at least not officially) know -- that the city had been taken out of the citizens' hands.

\* The fine appears in the roll for 1262, the pardon in the roll for 1265.

On 16 Nov 1261 the king wrote a letter to the bailiffs and honest men of Rochester.\* They have asked him, he says, to have the city of Rochester taken into his hands "on account of the dissensions among them". What these "dissensions" were is not explained, but the king had passed through the city several times -- most recently in April 1261 -- and may have seen some sign of them for himself. He says, in fact, that the citizens have "frequently" asked him to intervene. On previous occasions he has refused (so we are invited to infer); on this occasion he agrees to their request, because now there is another reason for his taking action. He wants to make sure that the men of Rochester are fully obedient to him "during the troubles in our realm". So he is sending Johan de Grey to Rochester, to arrange for the safe keeping of the city.†

\* The letter is on the fine roll (C 60/59, m 19). Much later, in 1438, this letter is referred to in the new charter obtained by the citizens from Henric VI (RCA\_C1\_01\_04, cf *Calendar of charter rolls* 6:2--4); apparently they had

preserved the original in the city chest till then, but it is no longer extant.

† Johan de Grey (d 1266) was a younger son who had made a career for himself in the king's service. He remained loyal to the king throughout the "troubles". His elder brother, Ricard de Grey (d 1271), was on the opposite side (see below).

The arrangement put in place by Johan de Grey was as simple as could be: the constable of Rochester castle, Willelm la Zuche,\* was given authority over the city as well.† From this point onwards, for a period of four and a half years, the man who was in command of Rochester castle was also in command of the city. The facts were not fully ascertained till 1275 (see below), but the exchequer was finally induced to agree that the citizens should be excused from paying their farm for this period. Instead, the load was redistributed among the men who had been constables of Rochester castle,‡ in proportion to the number of weeks for which each had been in command:

Willelm la Zuche, for 83 weeks (Sep 61--Apr 63 approx)  
Robert Walerand, for 8 weeks (Apr--Jun 63 approx)  
Roger de Leyburne, for 52 weeks (Jun 63--Jun 64 approx)  
Ricard de Grey,§ for 59 weeks (Jun 64--Aug 65 approx)  
Roger de Leyburne, for 32 weeks (Aug 65--Mar 66 approx)

The figures add up to 234 weeks, 4½ years. These retrospective calculations have an artificial look to them, but seem to correspond quite closely with reality, as far as they can be checked against strictly contemporary evidence.

\* Willelm la Zuche (d 1271--2) occurs for the first time as constable of Rochester castle on 20 Oct 1261 (*Close rolls 1259--61*, p 449). Presumably he owed the appointment to Robert Walerand (d 1273), who had been given custody of the county of Kent, with Milton hundred and the castles of Canterbury and Rochester, on 9 Jul 1261 (*Calendar of patent rolls 1258--66*, p 164). A letter from the king to Willelm la Zuche, dated 10 Jan 1263 (*Close rolls 1261--4*, p 194), implies that he was assumed to be answerable at the exchequer for "the issues of the city". Apparently he continued as constable till 13 Jun 1263, when he was ordered to hand the castle over to Willelm de Faukeham (*Calendar of patent rolls 1258--66*, p 264); and apparently Willelm then handed it over straight away to Roger de Leyburne. But there are some inconsistencies here which I do not understand.

† Steps were taken, presumably by Willelm la Zuche, to strengthen the city's defences. We only know about this because four men had timber requisitioned from them for the purpose -- "for the works of Rochester bridge and the town gates, and to make breastworks round the town". On 11 Jul 1162 the sheriff of Kent (this was Thomas de la Weye, Robert Walerand's deputy) was ordered to reimburse them (*Liberate rolls 1260--7*, p 104); a matching entry turns up, as it should, on the exchequer roll for 1262 (E 372/106, rot 10, cited by Brown 1963:809n7).

‡ By 1275, against the actuarial odds, not one of these men was still living. Together with the king who had appointed them, they had all died off in the space of three years, 1271--3. The exchequer cannot have had much hope of

ever recovering this money; but it had to go through the motions.

§ Ricard de Grey (d 1271) was the keeper put in by the baronial regime. Once the king was back in power, Roger de Leyburne (d 1271) was reinstated.

Behind this bare list of names lie various thrilling events -- the siege of Rochester castle (April 1264), the battle of Lewes (May 1264), the battle of Evesham (August 1265) -- but the exchequer has no interest in them. It wants to know just one thing: if the citizens are not required to pay, who is? The citizens, no doubt, took an even narrower view. They did not care who had to pay, just as long as they did not.

Apr 1266--Mar 1272

In February 1266 the citizens obtained a new charter from the king (RCA\_C1\_01\_02b). Much of the wording is repeated from the charter of 1227, but some passages are new. Out of gratitude for their loyal support during the recent "troubles", and in compensation for the losses which they has sustained, the king decided to reduce the farm of the city by £8. Instead of a fee-farm of £20 a year, the citizens were only to pay £12, in the usual half-yearly instalments.

As in 1250, so on this occasion, the king's grasp of the facts was less than perfect. He had never granted the city to the citizens for a fee-farm of £20. He had granted it to them for a fee-farm, but that was for £25; he had granted it to them for a farm of £20, but that was "during pleasure". As in 1250, therefore, it fell to the barons of the exchequer to decide what this charter was going to mean. It seemed to them to make no difference whether the citizens were paying a fee-farm or a farm "during pleasure"; the king had said that he was satisfied with a payment of £12, and that was clear enough. Because the charter was dated before Easter, they took it to cover both instalments for the current year (Oct 65--Sep 66). (In fact the citizens did not regain control till after Easter; but that fact was only discovered in 1275.) The four previous years (Oct 61--Sep 65) remained unaccounted for. In the absence of instructions to the contrary, the barons continued to assume that the citizens were answerable for those years.

The results of these deliberations show up in the roll for 1268. By this time there were seven years unaccounted for, and the citizens started off with a debt of £140. They were allowed a deduction of £8 a year, for the three years since their new charter took effect, and that reduced the debt to £116. Next they were credited with the payments they had made during the same three years, £30 paid into the treasury plus £6 paid directly to the king.\* And the citizens were then left with a debt of £80 -- the arrears of their farm for four whole years, 1261--5, at the old rate, £20 a year.

\* This was the instalment which fell due in Mar 1267. On instructions from the king, the citizens had paid this money into the wardrobe. They had been issued with the proper receipt, a writ of *Allocate* dated 20 Jun 1267 (*Liberate rolls 1260--7*, p 276), and the exchequer made no difficulty about it.

For reasons of its own (it is not clear what they were), the exchequer did not deal with any Kent business in Sep 1269, nor in Sep 1270; so the citizens' next encounter with the barons of the exchequer did not take place till Sep 1271. By this time they owed £36 for three years. On this occasion things did not go as smoothly as before. The citizens were credited with a payment of £18, then with a payment of £12, but ended up still owing £6. Apparently they had failed to pay one instalment -- or had paid it but could not prove that they had done so. In addition to this new debt, the old debt of £80, brought forward from 1268, was carried forward again. The exchequer had still not made up its mind what to do about that.

#### Apr 1272--Sep 1274

During the next few years, the citizens do not appear at the exchequer, and their debt increases by £12 every year -- £18 in Sep 72, £30 by Sep 73, £42 by Sep 74, £54 by Sep 75. In the roll for 1273 the exchequer fines them 5 marks "because they did not send their bailiffs", but no explanation is given.

In the roll for 1275 we discover what has been going on. For a period of 2½ years (Apr 72--Sep 74), the city was "in the king's hands and in the custody of Simon de Creie".\* Again those dates encompass important events -- the old king's death (Nov 1272), the new king's return to England (Aug 1274) -- but the barons simply take note of the fact that the citizens cannot be expected to pay their farm for that period. Instead this amount is charged to Simon de Creie (who later produces a writ from the king saying that he does not have to pay). Similarly, in the roll for 1276, the barons drop their demand for a fine of 5 marks, "because the city was then in the hands of Simon de Creie by order of the king".

\* On 10 Apr 1272 the town of Rochester, "which the king lately caused to be taken into his hands", was granted during pleasure to Edward the king's son, on condition that he should answer for the farm at the Exchequer (*Calendar of patent rolls 1266-72*, p 642, cf originalia roll E 371/36, m 18). There is nothing to prove that this grant ever took effect.

#### Oct 1274--Mar 1277

When Willelm de Valoines was appointed sheriff of Kent, on 17 Oct 1274 (*Calendar of fine rolls 1272--1307*, p 31), he was also, by a separate commission, given custody (during pleasure) of the castle and town of Rochester (which Simon de Creie was ordered to hand over to him). Nevertheless, the citizens regained some degree of control over their financial affairs. In the first year (Oct 74--

Sep 75), they paid their farm to the sheriff, and the sheriff paid it into the treasury on their behalf. In the following year (Oct 75--Sep 76), the sheriff stood aside and the citizens answered for themselves.

During the last fifteen years, for much of the time, the citizens had not had control of the issues of the city. They thought it unjust, therefore, that they should be expected to pay the farm: it was the keepers of the city who ought to be made to pay. The citizens petitioned the king; the king wrote to the barons of the exchequer; and the barons ordered an inquiry to be made on the spot, so that the facts could be properly ascertained.\* The roll for 1275 is where we see the barons of the exchequer trying to sort out the complications surrounding the farm of the city. They had two problems to deal with, one easy, one not so easy.

\* The king's letter is summarized on the memoranda roll (E 368/49, m 2); the results of the inquiry are summarized on the great roll. The report itself does not survive, as far as I am aware.

The first problem was the debt of £54 which the citizens had accumulated since 1271. They have paid their farm for the current year (Oct 74--Sep 75); and their debt thus reverts to what it was the year before, £42. Of that, the barons decide that £30 is to be charged to Simon de Creie, for the time when he had custody of the city, and the upshot is that the citizens are left with a debt of £12 -- the £6 which they already owed in Sep 71 plus the £6 which they ought to have paid in Mar 72, before Simon took over.

The second problem was the debt of £80 which had been carried forward, year after year, since 1265. On the strength of the report of the inquiry which they now have in front of them, the barons are satisfied that the citizens had lost control of the issues of the city, not just for 4 years, but for 4½ years. In accordance with the king's instructions, they divide the farm for those years among the four men who were keepers of the city at the time (see above). The citizens, conversely, get a rebate of £90 -- which wipes out the whole of this old debt and most of the recent debt too.\* All that remains is a debt of £2 (less a halfpenny, a rounding error in the citizens' favour).

\* If I understand things correctly, the exchequer was unduly generous. The instalment which fell due at Easter 1266 had been paid by the citizens; now it was agreed that it ought to have been paid by Roger de Leyburne. So the sum of £10 is debited to Roger and credited to the citizens. But in fact the citizens had only paid £6 -- the reduced rate which they had been entitled to claim, in accordance with their new charter. As for Roger, he had nothing to worry about -- not because he was dead (nobody was dead to the exchequer until the exchequer decided that they were dead), but because he had a letter from the king, dated 8 Oct 1266, remitting "all debts, arrears, accounts, reckonings, and receipts in which he is bound to the king of the time when he was sheriff of Kent and constable of the castle of Rochester" (*Calendar of patent rolls 1258--66*, p 646).

In the roll for 1276 the loose ends are tied up. The citizens pay their farm for the current year (Oct 75--Sep 76); they also pay off their debt of £2. The fine of 5 marks unfairly imposed on them in 1273 is remitted, and once again the future for the citizens looks bright. As long as they keep paying their farm on time, there ought to be no more problems.

Apr 1277--Mar 1280

Once again, disappointment loomed. In 1277 the exchequer rolls fall silent. The same bare entry appears in the roll each year, but no payments are made; so the citizens' debt increases each time -- £12 in Sep 77, £24 in Sep 78, £36 in Sep 79, £48 in Sep 80.

In the roll for 1280, the exchequer addresses itself to this debt. It promptly remits £6, for a reason which will shortly appear. That leaves a debt of £42, equivalent to 3½ years. For most of that time, it turns out, the city was in the hands of Radulf de Sandwico (d 1308),\* who has already accounted for the money which passed through his hands (beginning with the half-year which ended at Sep 77).† At first, the exchequer supposes that he was in charge for 2½ years; so it deducts £30. The citizens now owe £12 -- £6 which ought to have been paid in Mar 77 plus £6 which ought to have been paid in Mar 80.

\* Another younger son who was making a very successful career for himself in the king's service. At the time he was one of the "keepers of the king's domains": the meticulous accounts submitted by him and his colleagues are entered on supplementary rolls attached to the great rolls of the exchequer.

† In 1293, under interrogation by the itinerant justices (see below), the citizens stated that the city had been taken into the king's hands, some time after 1266, because of some "transgression" which they had committed. I suppose that they were speaking of what happened in 1277, but do not know what the circumstances were.

For the next few years, that debt is carried forward from roll to roll, without anything happening. Finally, in the roll for 1284, the exchequer takes another look at it. Consulting its records, it discovers that Radulf de Sandwico has already accounted for the half-year ending in Mar 80 -- that is, he was in charge for three whole years, not just for two and a half -- and the citizens are therefore not answerable for the instalment which fell due then. That £6 is accordingly deducted from their debt. But they do still owe one instalment (the one which ought to have been paid in Mar 77).

This entry in the roll for 1284 is marked with the letter "t" -- which means that the sheriff has been instructed to collect the whole amount before Sep 85. In fact, the sheriff has been excluded from the city since 1280; and that is why, in the roll for 1285, we find this debt transferred from the sheriff to "the bailiff of the liberty of the city of Rochester" (a man named

Ricard le Springere). On the back of the roll, this bailiff pays off this debt, and that is the end of this episode.

Jun 1280 onwards

When Radulf de Sandwico relinquished control of the city, he did not hand it over to the citizens: he handed it over to Johan de Cobbeham, whom the king had appointed keeper of the city and castle of Rochester, on condition that he should answer at the exchequer both for the farm of the city (£12 a year) and for the castle-guard rents payable to the castle (£36 4s a year).\* The transfer was made on 3 Jun 1280. When the next instalment of the farm of the city fell due, in Sep 1280, Johan de Cobbeham made the payment, as is recorded in the roll for 1280.† In the roll for 1281 he accounts for the full amount, £12, and the same entry is repeated in subsequent rolls.‡

\* *Calendar of patent rolls 1272--81*, p 376; *Calendar of fine rolls 1272--1307*, p 128.

† In the roll for 1280 he was also charged with £18 2s for half of the castle-guard rents. That was a mistake. These rents were not paid in instalments, nor distributed over the year. They were paid in one lump, all at once, on 30 Nov; so the rents in question at the time (Sep 80) were the rents which had fallen due on 30 Nov 1279, while Radulf de Sandwico was still in charge. This fact having been ascertained, the exchequer transferred the debt from Johan to Radulf. Johan was quit; Radulf owed the whole amount, £36 4s.

‡ This arrangement continued until 1419: the citizens paid their farm to the keeper of the city and castle, and the keeper forwarded it to the treasury, together with the sum that he was paying for the castle. That, at least, was the theory; I have not looked at the evidence in detail.

For the citizens, in matters of routine, this change would presumably not have made much difference. Another day, another warden. Instead of taking orders from Radulf, now they had to take orders from Johan. And yet, in one respect, the date when Johan took charge was the end of an era. Previously, whenever a keeper was appointed, the appointment was made during pleasure: the citizens could hope that the king might change his mind, might perhaps be persuaded to change his mind by some petition from them. But Johan de Cobbeham was appointed for life -- emphatically *ad totam vitam suam*, "for the whole of his life". What that might mean was anybody's guess. In fact it meant twenty years.

How the inhabitants of Rochester reacted to all this we have no means of knowing. They were not invariably all of the same opinion. By and large, in their dealings with the outside world, they were able to present a united front; but those obscure "dissensions" referred to by the king in 1261 are a hint that there were conflicts within the town which could not always be contained.\* It would, I suppose, have hurt the citizens' pride

that they were no longer allowed to represent themselves at the exchequer. On the other hand, in view of all the difficulties which they had had to face, it may have come as something of a relief that the responsibility now lay with an outsider -- an important man, who, as it happened, was himself one of the barons of the exchequer.

\* Some of this ill-feeling comes to the surface in the "rolls of hundreds" of 1274--5 (Illingworth 1812:224--5). The bailiffs, it seems, were inclined to abuse "the power of their office".

Now that Rochester had a permanent keeper, it became an enclave within the county of Kent, in but not part of the county. The sheriff of Kent was excluded from the city, in the same way that he was excluded from the Cinque Ports. Just as the men of Dover or Sandwich, Hythe or Romney, had to answer to the lord warden of the Cinque Ports, the men of Rochester had to answer to the warden of the city.

Their other privileges -- ample enough, though much less ample than those of the Cinque Ports -- were not adversely affected. In 1293, when the itinerant justices inquired into the liberties of the citizens of Rochester, the citizens produced the charter of 1266, and a summary of its contents was copied onto the justices' rolls.\* Some time after that, they say, the city was taken into the king's hands on account of some "transgression" on their part; and now it is held by Johan de Cobbeham, *nesciunt quo waranto*, "by what warrant they do not know". Of course they knew perfectly well; but they saw no reason why their keeper should not be made to answer for himself. The sheriff was ordered to fetch him. His attorney appeared and produced the king's letter granting the city to Johan de Cobbeham for life. And that was the end of that.

\* The whole passage was printed by Thorpe (1769:544, from JUST 1/376, m 66d).

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C.F. Apr 2014

	year	DR			arrears			
31	1185							
32	1186	11	3	7	11	3	7	? for 2 years
33	1187	5	10	2	16	13	9	
34	1188	5	10	4	22	4	1	
1	1189	6	6	0	28	10	1	written off 1200
2	1190							
3	1191							
4	1192	4	19	0	4	19	0	
5	1193	4	12	2	9	11	2	
6	1194	6	9	4	16	0	6	
7	1195	6	0	2	22	0	8	
8	1196	6	0	0	28	0	8	
9	1197	5	18	0	33	18	8	
10	1198	6	6	7	40	5	3	
1	1199	3	18	0	44	3	3	
2	1200							
3	1201	11	2	0	55	5	3	for 2 years
4	1202	6	10	0	61	15	3	
5	1203	6	4	4	67	19	7	
6	1204	6	4	4				not summed
7	1205	6	4	4	74	3	11	
8	1206	6	4	4	80	8	4	summed as £6 4s 5d
9	1207	6	4	4	86	12	8	
10	1208	6	4	4	92	17	0	
11	1209	6	4	4	99	1	4	written off 1210
12	1210							
13	1211							
14	1212	6	4	4				
15	1213							
16	1214	7	0	0				
17	1215							
18	1216							
1	1217							
2	1218							
3	1219							
4	1220	18	13	0				for 3 years
5	1221	7	0	0				
6	1222	12	0	0				
7	1223	6	0	0				
8	1224	6	0	0				
9	1225	6	0	0				

Table 1. Debts incurred on account of the customs remitted to the archbishop's men, 1185--1225.

	year	CR	DR	arrears	
10	1226		5 13 2	5 13 2	
11	1227		6 0 0	11 13 2	
12	1228		5 18 8	17 11 10	
13	1229		6 0 0	23 11 10	
14	1230		7 3 0	30 14 10	
15	1231		8 0 0	38 14 10	
16	1232		7 6 0	46 0 10	
17	1233		7 0 0	53 0 10	
18	1234		[7 6 0]	60 5 10	(a)
19	1235		8 0 8	68 6 6	
20	1236		7 17 0	76 3 6	
21	1237		8 0 0	84 3 6	
22	1238				
23	1239		16 13 0	100 18 6	(b)
24	1240				
25	1241				
26	1242		28 16 0	129 14 6	(c)
27	1243		16 0 0	145 14 6	
28	1244		6 0 0	151 14 6	
29	1245		[8 0 0]	159 14 6	(d)
30	1246		[8 0 0]	167 14 6	(e)
31	1247		8 0 0	175 14 6	
32	1248		9 0 0	184 14 6	
33	1249	2 0 0		182 14 6	(f)
			6 10 0	189 4 6	
34	1250				
35	1251				
36	1252	130 13 2		58 11 4	(g)
		10 0 0		48 11 4	(h)
37	1253	5 0 0		43 11 4	
38	1254	5 0 0		38 11 4	
39	1255	5 0 0		33 11 4	
40	1256	5 0 0		28 11 4	
41	1257	5 0 0		23 11 4	
42	1258	5 0 0		18 11 4	
43	1259	5 0 0		13 11 4	
44	1260	5 0 0		8 11 4	
45	1261				
38	1262	8 11 4		0 0 0	

(a) entry unfinished, debt summed as £7 5s

(b) for two years, debt summed as £16 15s

(c) for three years

(d) entry unfinished

(e) entry unfinished

(f) allowance deducted from arrears

(g) rebate for 26 years

(h) for two years

Table 2. Arrears of the farm of the city, 1226--49