

The annual account of 1548-1549 by Alderman Thomas Codde, God's House Collector and General Receiver: an introduction.

The Collector and General Receiver

Alderman Codde's post combined two distinct offices of the medieval hospital of St Giles, that of its Collector of Norwich revenues and the other, of the Receiver of all the hospital's country estates' rents and farms. Both offices produced separate series of annual accounts (though by the late fifteenth century, the offices were often held by the same individual). The distinction between each office and account persisted until at least 1528 and possibly through the subsequent gap in coverage affecting both series until the re-founding of the Hospital in 1547. By 1548, the annual accounts reappeared, albeit in a unified form, produced by the single office of the General Collector and Receiver, '*...of all revenues, rents and profits of the possessions of the Hospital of St Giles (later called Gods House, or the House of the Poor People in Holmstreet in the City of Norwich) and of all foreign receipts*'. In effect, although the holders of the newly created post of Keeper undertook the accounting for the daily operation of God's House, Alderman Codde and his successors were its general treasurers.

The Account's format and contents

The account is a manuscript record, written on a rolled file of nine paper sheets, all bar the last, bearing text on both their face and dorse sides. The papers were each filed at their head, then rolled for convenient storage. This roll was also protected with a parchment folio cut from a fifteenth-century church service-book or missal, probably one of the Hospital's own, bearing Christmastide plainsong sequences in red, blue and black inks. The sheets, or rotulets, of this account have now been flattened and cleaned for copying.

This is the first, fair-copy, annual account from the hospital to have survived from after the hospital's Edwardian re-establishment of 1547. It is the first of 370 such accounts to have been preserved. These were stored as rolled files until 1686, and then in volume form (listed under the NRO reference, N/MC 17), from 1687 until 1945.

Our account, like its successors, covers one year, from the feast of the Nativity of St John Baptist, 24 June, 1548 to the same feast in the following year. It details the hospital's annual receipts (in old accountancy terms, the Charge), firstly from its estates in Holme Street (now Bishopgate) and from other city properties, then afterwards from its country manors, rectories and estates. These latter receipts include the profits of manorial courts, and are followed by the so-called 'foreign' or miscellaneous receipts. In this account, these receipts were largely from the sale of church goods and fabric deemed no longer necessary for the operation of the hospital. All these income sources are then totalled.

The second part of the account contains entries relating to payments out and expenses (the so-called Discharge). They include: allowances to the Receiver, 'rents resolute' to be paid to various institutions and which were liable on certain hospital estates, the payment of annuities and pensions to external persons and officials, the expenses of holding manorial courts, the costs and expenses relating to estate maintenance and repair, diets and clothing allowances of the poor, officers' wages (naming for the first time, the four women keepers caring for the hospital's inmates) and allowances and foreign and miscellaneous payments. The account ends with the statement of the total payments and of the arrears or surplus remaining in the receiver's hands.

From the early 1550s, the accounts are signed by auditors, usually at the foot of each account. In this first account, the auditors have not signed their names, but in no fewer than eight places throughout the text, the presence of diagrammatic ‘abacus’ patterns testify that it had been subject to the auditors’ scrutiny.

Acknowledgements

This transcript is the work of three volunteers, Caroline Harbord, Sandra Nichol and Roger Carter, all of whom have attended several palaeographical courses at the Norfolk Record Office, and who worked closely with me on this particular text. They happily threw themselves into this project and I am very grateful for their enthusiasm and skill. Of course, I, as editor, am ultimately responsible for any inaccuracies that may still exist. The account itself was photographed with his usual skill by my colleague, Dylan Read. We are also grateful to the Wellcome Institute, who have provided funds towards the project.

Further Reading

Further details of the history of the Hospital and of the context of the hospital accounts are contained in Dr Carole Rawcliffe’s key work on the Great Hospital, *Medicine for the Soul: The Life, Death and Resurrection of an English Medieval Hospital* (Stroud 1999).

Also see the introductory notes to the hospital accounts by Dr Ellie Phillips and which are published by the Norfolk Record Society in their volume LXXVII, *Health and Hygiene in Early-Modern Norwich* (NRS 2013).

Editor’s notes on the transcription

We have made minor changes to the transcribed text to make the account easier to read. However, we have resisted a wholesale modernisation of the text, for we felt it important not only to keep our rendering of it as accurate as possible, but also to retain the flavour of the way the scribe wrote the original.

Capital letters, spelling and numerals

To improve legibility, we have modernised the use of capital letters beginning proper nouns, including nouns that are titles for such things as quarter-days (e.g. ‘Our Lady’ or ‘Mydsummer’). However, we have retained the scribe’s rather eccentric use of other capital letters, wherever they be. Also, we have rendered the spelling (including those of elided words such as ‘thacompte’ or ‘thospitall’) and punctuation of the transcript as in the original text. The exceptions to this rule, are those words beginning with the letter-forms, ‘u’ or ‘v’, and, ‘i’ or ‘j’. In these cases, we have interpreted the letter-forms according to modern spellings (so, John, not Iohn, but item, not jtem and Underwood, not Vunderwood).

Roman numerals are, in all places, converted to Arabic (modern) ones, and modern ‘£’ signs are used where they apply in monetary sums.

Abbreviations and Latin text

Well-known words abbreviated by contraction (that is, where the middles of words are missed out) have been ‘silently’ extended without brackets (except in the case of modern abbreviations, for which, see below). Such words are extended by analogy with similarly spelt words in the same text.

Note, however, that as with most scribes of his time, the writer of the original account was inconsistent in practice, often spelling the same word differently in the same block of text, sometimes even in the same entry.

Contracted words represented by abbreviations still in use (such as 'St' for Saint, or 'viz' meaning, 'namely') are retained in their abbreviated form, except where they may be open to ambiguous interpretation (e.g. 'Mr' meaning 'Master', not 'Mister').

In this text, there are few, if any, obviously abbreviated English words by suspension (that is, those abbreviated by leaving off their ends). However, there are many suspension marks ('*tildes*') over the latter parts of apparently complete words (those ending with the letters, 'n' or 'm' for instance, and many place-names, especially those ending in 'ham' or 'thorp'). These probably (though not certainly) indicate missing terminal 'e's. For the sake of clarity (and brevity) in the appearance of the text, we have decided to include neither the *tildes* nor the terminal 'e's in this edited transcription.

Plural words which end in the special sign for, 'is' or 'es' have been in all places, extended silently with 'es'. See, for example, the word, 'proufightes' half-way down the first side of the account.

Latin words are retained in Latin, with contracted Latin words being extended without brackets, followed by their translations in italics inside round brackets. We have not attempted to extend suspended Latin words, and their abbreviations are represented in the transcript by apostrophes. The exceptions to this rule, are Latin numerals and fractions, which have been translated.

Note that the original text uses the normal Latin abbreviations for pounds, shillings and pennies, '£, s and d', (though the £ is represented by 'li' for 'libri', meaning a pound). In addition, the text has the abbreviation, 'ob' for the Latin word, 'obolus' meaning a halfpenny. In our transcription, we use '£, s and d' abbreviations and, '½d' instead of, 'ob'.

Explanatory text

Round brackets are also used for any interpretive or explanatory words (*in italics*) supplied by the editors in the text. In particular, especially odd words or spellings in the original may be explained by supplying their modern equivalents in brackets immediately after the word in question. Missing words are also indicated using round brackets with the word, '*blank*'.

Other conventions used

Cancelled (i.e. crossed through) words are represented thus:

Text inserted between lines of writing and above the line to which it refers are represented thus: \inserted text/ and if (rarely) below: /inserted text\.

Lastly, **bold text** is used to indicate words in the original text written in an 'engrossed hand' (ie. in a larger and more formal handwriting).