

Pleas, Pigs, and Peascods: Three Unpublished Stonor Accounts

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It seems that at the end of World War One C.L. Kingsford rushed to print his existing transcripts of letters and documents from the Stonor collection, together with the tremendous amount of work that he had done on the legal and genealogical backgrounds, as well as in compiling notes and adding cross-references and indexes.¹ Some four years later he had to issue a supplement of letters and papers which had meanwhile been retrieved and classified in what was then the Public Record Office.² Work on the archives continued long after Kingsford's death in 1926 and this article will examine some of the Stonor accounts that were subsequently found.

1. John Yeme's Account for Thomas Stonor II, 1461-1468

In 1919 Kingsford published an isolated letter to Thomas Stonor from John Yeme, his servant and man of affairs in Devon.³ In it Yeme complained about the expenses he had incurred when he was arrested at the instigation of Stonor's enemy, Richard Fortescu, and imprisoned in the Marshalsea. Kingsford was not to know that in the depths of the Public Record Office lurked a two page account of Yeme's expenditure on Stonor's behalf, relating to the seven years between 18 October 1461 and October 1468.⁴ For his services, in 1468 Yeme claimed a 'pension' of £8, plus £1 due for 1461-62. The years between 1461 to 1468 saw a major dispute between Stonor and the lawyer Richard Fortescu over rights claimed by Fortescu's wife in the Stonors' Devon manor of Ermington and elsewhere, and Yeme's account throws much light on the incidental costs of litigation. In his account he enumerated the expenses over his arrest in London in greater detail. His travel to London cost 8s and 'for my fees when I was arrested by a *capias* (warrant to arrest) at suit of sergeant' 2s 6d. He paid the sergeant 12d and 'entering my plaint' cost 4d and the *supersedeas* (stay of proceedings) 10s. Travels on horseback on Stonor's affairs made up a considerable percentage of Yeme's expenditure. On one occasion 'I paid for my costs to Launceston and from there to Kylcunton (Cullompton??) and for a guide to help me over Moor Forth Water -48d'.

¹ C. L. Kingsford, ed., *The Stonor Letters and Papers, 1290-1483*, 2 vols, Camden Society 3rd ser., vols 29-30 (1919).

² C.L. Kingsford, ed., 'Supplementary Stonor Letters and Papers (1314-1482)', *Camden Miscellany* 13, Camden Society 3rd ser. 34 (1924), pp. i-viii, 1-26.

³ Kingsford (1919), no. 81, from The National Archives (TNA), Ancient Correspondence, SC 1 46/86.

⁴ TNA, Chancery Miscellanea, C 47/37/22/156.

The account reveals that Stonor supported some of Fortescu's tenants in their suits against their lord and his demands. For example, Yeme paid 'for the costs of William Champernoun, Walter Raleigh and others more at Plympton court -14s 6d', and a further 11d to obtain an attorney for some of them. He also bought a dinner, costing 18d, for William Fowell and others at Staverton 'when they fetched their *supersedeas*' at the successful conclusion of a case. The crucial hearing of the suit between Stonor and Fortescu was held at Exeter Assizes on Monday 27 July 1467.⁵ Both Stonor and Fortescu were present, with their attorneys. When Stonor arrived at Brent before his attendance, Yeme bought a gallon of wine for him. The jury disbelieved Stonor's accusation that Fortescu had assembled a band of armed men and beaten and wounded him in May 1462, and found that Stonor should pay Fortescu £12. But they upheld Stonor's case that Fortescu had menaced and imprisoned John Frende and others at Ermington on 20 December 1465 and charged Fortescu with £32 in damages. The following Saturday Yeme bought Stonor a pig at Plympton in celebration of this outcome.⁶ And he charged 5s 'for my expenses riding to John Wynslade's place to fetch the copy of the verdict', while Wynslade received 2s 4d for his fee.⁷ No student of the medieval courts would be surprised to learn that Yeme found it advantageous to pay John Sayer 10s 'to be friendly to my master' when he was the shire clerk.

The Courtneys of Plympton were overlords of Ermington, and Yeme recorded annual payments to Sir Philip Courtney's steward for fees, fines and homage. There was some obscure trouble over sand quarries (which Yeme spelt 'karuellys'). Rights to dig and carry sand were one of the questions which Thomas Stonor's eldest son, William, was called upon to settle with the Courtneys in 1473.⁸

2. Christopher Holland's Accounts for Sir William Stonor, 1479

Typical spellings show that it was William Stonor's trusted servant Christopher Holland who furnished him with an account for expenditure on 7 December 1479.⁹ Kingsford printed excerpts from an account between Holland and William's first wife, the twice-widowed Elizabeth née Croke, which Elizabeth signed off on 9 November 1478.¹⁰ The document of 1479, however, was compiled for William himself. It deals with preparations for Elizabeth's

⁵ Kingsford (1919), no. 82, pp. 82-83.

⁶ Fortescu was far from happy, and brought an attaind of jury, alleging that the jurors had sworn falsely. This prolonged the dispute, but eventually, in early October 1468, Fortescu could not prove his case.

⁷ Wynslade married his father's ward, Agnes Winnard, who would later become William Stonor's second wife.

⁸ SC 1 46/74, Kingsford (1919), no.127. For 'they would ye should not come with sand that way', Kingsford read this nonsensically 'come and send that way'.

⁹ TNA, Chancery Miscellanea, C 47/37/22, no. 71.

¹⁰ Kingsford (1919), no. 233.

departure from Stonor to her house in Friday Street, London, and Holland headed it 'The expenses of the carriage of my lady Stonor to London, the 7th day of December the 19th year of the reign of the king Edward the 4th.'¹¹ This was to be Elizabeth's last sojourn in London: she died in late December or early January.

Holland's account is written on a narrow strip of paper, which is stained and torn at the edges. He divided payments into four groups, each with a subtotal. The first group of entries records payments at Henley church for a large quantity of bread (costing 3s 3d), and the purchase of four dozen gallons [?] of ale, white wine,¹² red wine, 1 lb of comfits and a cheese at 2s 4d. The second group in the account includes three dozen bread at the George,¹³ 36 and 4 gallons of ale, a quarter of beef, salt and oatmeal, eggs and butter, fuel and candles, salt fish and two chevens or chub.¹⁴ Holland also paid 'for the shoeing of 7 horse of my master'; 'for verdigris¹⁵ for the chariot'; and 4d 'for wine for the women'.

The fourth and last group of entries begins with 'paid at the George' for 4½ dozen bread at 4s 6d. Other purchases are four kilderkins of ale costing 10s, beef, mutton, salted and fresh fish, saffron, salt and oatmeal. There follows '6 buckets coals for the church and the poor' at 12d. Various amounts of fuel were also supplied in the kitchen, in the chamber for the poor men; in the women's chamber, and in the chamber of 'Master T' (Thomas Betson, William's partner in the wool trade?). Four pence was paid for poor men's beds, and 2d given to two women in the kitchen. The two final entries in the group account for horsemeat¹⁶ for my master's eight horses and 2s 2d for seven horses for the chaise. The sum total of the whole account is given, correctly, as £3 11s 11d.

The chariot or chaise was plainly to take Elizabeth and her servants to London. Holland does not make it clear whether the rooms to be 'fuelled' were at Stonor or London. In both cases a chamber was kept for Thomas Betson's use.

Of another account written by Christopher Holland only the last page of a whole booklet seems to survive.¹⁷ No date is given. The extant page begins with two entries, which Holland struck through because he got into trouble

¹¹ A TNA cataloguer described the contents as 'Expenses of Elizabeth Stonor's journey to London', but the items show that Holland was accounting for payments made in preparation for her departure from Stonor.

¹² *wette wenne*.

¹³ The George Inn at Henley was a popular resort of travellers. Later a hostess credited her miraculous recovery to the intercession of the dead King Henry VI: quoted Alison Hanham, 'Henry VI and his miracles', *The Ricardian*, vol. 12 (2008), pp. 638-52, at pp. 644, 649.

¹⁴ Spelt *cheffanyys*.

¹⁵ A green pigment.

¹⁶ Provender.

¹⁷ TNA, C 37/47/72, likewise catalogued as 'Expenses of Elizabeth Stonor on a journey to London'.

calculating the subtotal of the second. He then rewrote both, in somewhat different form, before ending with three further entries and a grand total for the whole account.¹⁸

One cancelled entry contains an interesting item that is omitted from the corrected version, so that the original ‘paid to Master [Henry?] Makney for the horse meat at the Castle & hostelry?] in Friday Street –8s 11d’ was changed to ‘paid to Master Makney for [o be] paid for the horse meat in London –8s. 11d’. The corrected version starts with ‘Item, paid on Friday at London for oyster – 11d’. Further purchases are for six couple [?] of salt fish at 11s 10d, three and a half salmon at 3s, seven stockfish at 2s 4d, two pickerels, eels, and a penny-worth of herbs. The next group of entries includes ‘Item for Thomas Carpenter’s horse at the World –9d’,¹⁹ and ends with 20s ‘delivered to Master Makney in money at London’. There follow three items: 2d ‘paid at Henley for the mending of a saddle for John Choutte’,²⁰ ‘for shoeing of your horse at Maidenhead’, and costs of 2s. due to John Mathew and Holland himself. There is no mention of Elizabeth, but most likely the account was drawn up before her death, because she had only a life-interest in the property in Friday Street.

3. Weekly Provisions Bought, perhaps, for Sir William and Anne Stonor, 26 May to 1 September 1482

In 1958 a tantalising document came to light at what was then the Public Record Office. It consists of six folio pages folded into halves and originally sewn into the covers which have protected the contents from damage. An officer at the record office annotated the front cover with ‘C47/37/23. Added from unsorted miscellanea 17/6/1958’, and initialled it n.a.c. Only four entries, all on folio 4v, suggest that the weekly accounts here recorded belong to the Stonor papers, because they mention purchases from a man of Watlington, a local man named Saunder Blackhall, who occurs elsewhere, and large quantities of ale and beer brought from Henley. The name of the poultry supplier, Hobbs, is followed by an insertion which could dubiously read ‘in Stonor’. The rest of the account might well refer to another Stonor residence, perhaps in London, and there is no indication of the year of writing because the accountant gives weekly dates according to the ecclesiastical calendar, so that he starts with Whit Sunday and ends with the heading for the thirteenth Sunday after Trinity. He may have served as a domestic chaplain to the Stonors.

The family whose purchases are recorded in the account were no country dwellers who expected to make their own butter and bread, both of which were

¹⁸ The payments listed on the extant page add up to only £2 8s 7d, whereas Holland gave a grand total for the whole account of £6 6d.

¹⁹ Carpenter is described as a servant of W. Stonor in 1483. Does Holland’s spelling *the wordde* mean an inn?

²⁰ The John Stute who delivered a letter from William to Elizabeth on 7 November 1476? TNA, Ancient Correspondence, SC 1 46/118, Kingsford (1919), no. 175.

bought. Their weekly diet included a large quantity of fish, of many varieties: barbel, chub,²¹ conger, 'fresh fish', gudgeon,²² herring (on only one occasion), a lamprey, minnows,²³ mullet,²⁴ perch, pickerel, pike, plaice, roach, salmon, salt and fresh, sole, tench, and trout. In the last two weeks of the account the scribe records three purchases of what he abbreviated as *cheven pud(d)*, apparently pies or a kind of white sausage made from chub.²⁵ Had a maker of these delicacies set up a stall in the local market? Eels and eggs were regular purchases.

Some of the items that one might have expected are not mentioned, for instance almonds, onions, sugar, milk, cheese and honey, or the expensive oranges and lemons, although dates were bought on four occasions. Beans, apples, cherries and peascods (green peas cooked in the pod) were also bought in season. Who did the marketing – the cook in person? And what dishes were made from the ingredients listed? The Stonor estates would have produced unlisted items like rabbits, venison and boar: in 1476 Elizabeth Stonor, in London, received from William a haunch of venison and 'conies' and a boar, 'very good and well-browned'. She also thanked William for his good 'tynchys', 'very good and sweet'.²⁶ This makes it rather odd that in File 23 no fewer than ten entries refer to the purchase of tench.

Whatever its exact date, the account offers an interesting over-view of the daily food purchases of a well-to-do 'gentry' family of the late fifteenth century. Theoretically the account could have been drawn up for William Stonor's mother, Jane de la Pole, his first wife, Elizabeth, whom he married about March 1475, or his second wife, the widowed Agnes Wydeslade, née Wynard, whose sole extant letter to William was written before their marriage, when she was in the hands of a physician who expected to have her in care for three months.²⁷ Agnes died on 4 May 1481, and it seems doubtful whether she spent much time at Stonor or London. William's third wife was the very well-connected Anne Neville, eldest daughter of John Neville, Marquess Montagu, who had been killed along with his brother, Richard, Earl of Warwick, at Barnet in 1471. Richard, Duke of Gloucester, obtained the custody of the younger children. Anne's marriage to William took place before Christmas, 1481. Her only surviving letter, in which she described herself as 'your new wife', was written on 17 February 1482, when she was staying with Cecily, Marchioness of

²¹ *cheven*.

²² *gogyns*.

²³ *mennyys*.

²⁴ *myletys*.

²⁵ The only 'pudding' mentioned in Maggie Black's admirably practical *The Medieval Cookbook* (rev. edn. Los Angeles 2012, pp. 92-3) consists of the minced liver and heart of a chicken, bound with egg and breadcrumbs, to be served as an accompaniment to a boiled capon. Were chub puddings a fishy equivalent?

²⁶ SC 1 46/121, Kingsford, no. 172; SC 1 46/117, Kingsford, no. 173; SC 1 46/116, Kingsford, no. 170.

²⁷ SC 1 46/122, Kingsford, no. 262.

Dorset, in Taunton Castle.²⁸ She seems to have remained there until at least 15 May.²⁹ A return to Stonor or London would suit an account which started with Whit Sunday, which in 1482 fell on 26 May.³⁰

The entire account is too long to be printed *in extenso*. Extracts will be offered, starting with the initial entries for the weeks from Whit Sunday to the first Sunday after Trinity. 'Item' has been omitted from all entries.

Whitsunday.³¹ Monday. For pickerel 2d.] For 6 chickens 6d. Friday. For eels 10d. For eggs 4d. Sum 22d.

Trinity Sunday. For a pig 5d. For a calf 2s 6d. For a pig 5d. In veal 9d. For a pickerel 6d. For eels 16d. In gudgeons 2d. For 2 trouts 2s 8d. For 2 chub 2s 4d. For a lamprey 6d. For an eel 14d. For a pike 16d. For a trout 12d. For a chub 4d. Item for expenses the same week 4d. For eels 14d. Sum 16s. 11d.

The first Sunday after Trinity. Monday. For washing P] ³² at the lodge 8d. For ale 4½ Tuesday. For butter 3d. In chickens 13d. Wednesday.³³ Eggs 4d. Thursday. In geese 9d. In veal 9d. Friday. In plaices 10d. In soles 8d. For 3 barbel and a tench 6d. In eggs 8½ For eels 8d. In chickens 8d. For a pickerel 6d. Saturday. For butter 4d. In eggs 6d. In chickens 17d. In roaches 2d. In geese 4d. In expenses 1d. Sum 10s 7½

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Fifth Sunday after Trinity.³⁴ A calf 2s. 8d. Monday. A tench 4d. In eels 1d. In peascods 1d. For a pickerel 4d. For 3½ lb candle 4d. For 2 lb candlewick 8d. Wednesday. For eggs 8d. For chickens 6d. Thursday. For chickens 4d. Friday. For a pickerel 1 For eels 8d. A tenc h 3d. A chub 5d. For peascods 1d. For cherries 8d Saturday. In chickens 8d. In apples 1d. In eggs 4d. For butter 3d. For a pickerel 2d. In eels 8d. A pig 4d. For chickens 9d.

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Eighth Sunday after Trinity.³⁵ Thursday. To William Tyler for 4 large capons & 2 pigs 6s. For oatmeal 3d. To John of Kent of Watlington for capons & chickens & pigeons & eggs 7s. For a man's labour 4d. To Hobbs for 4 capons in Stonor(?) 2s. To Saunder Blackhall for 2 large capons 2s. In eggs 5d. In chickens 6d. A calf 2s 4d. A calf [sic] 2s 4d. In 3 capons 10d. In ale from Henley 5 doz. 11s 8d. In beer from Henley 2 kilderkins 4s 8d. Friday. A pickerel 15d. In tenches 8d. In gudgeons 2d. In butter 4d. In eggs 3d. In salt ¼ quarter 4s. 4d. Sum £3 1½

²⁸ SC 1 46/209, Kingsford, no. 306.

²⁹ John Payne to William Stonor from Taunton Castle, 46/195, Kingsford, no. 314.

³⁰ 1482 would also accord with the rather vague estimate of date given by the National Archives cataloguer, of 'c. 22 Edward IV', i.e. 1482-83.

³¹ Folio 1 recto.

³² Word inserted after cancelled 'bread'.

³³ f. 1v.

³⁴ f. 3r.

³⁵ f. 4v.

Ninth Sunday after Trinity.³⁶ In veal 7d. A pig 4d. Monday. In pickerel 8d. In eels 4d. In gudgeons 3d. A tench and a chub pud 4d. Folio 6, the last page in the booklet, ends with the heading '13th Sunday after Trinity' and the total sum of £9 7s 2½

Diverse as are the three main accounts here discussed, each adds to our knowledge of the Stonors and their affairs, and of fifteenth century life in general. John Yeme's return of his expenses in 1468 clarifies in detail the dispute between Thomas Stonor and Richard Fortescu, which Kingsford had to rehearse from the Latin court records which make the course of events hard to untangle.

Christopher Holland's oddly spelt account of preparations for Elizabeth Stonor's return to London in 1479 deals largely with the purchase of provisions for horses and people, including one payment of fourpence worth of wine 'for the women'. Elizabeth's travel to London in the freshly-painted green wagon drawn by a team of eight horses may have had tragic consequences if her death resulted from the plague that was still raging there.

I have tentatively suggested that the third, anonymous, account may have been drawn up for Sir William Stonor and his third wife, Anne Neville, in 1482. It may be unique in covering weekly purchases for a whole quarter year. Notably, it records a diet high in fish and other animal protein, and makes no mention of vegetables, even the herbs, bought for a halfpenny, in Christopher Holland's account. Such fruits as were bought, in small quantities, were probably cooked rather than eaten raw. Was such a diet typical of the 'gentry' at the time?

³⁶ f. 5r.