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0521620570 - The English in Rome, 1362-1420: Portrait of an Expatriate Community

Margaret Harvey

Excerpt

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

It was the original intention of this study to describe a group of Englishmen who founded and then gathered round the English hospices of S Thomas and S Chrysogonus (later S Edmund) in Rome. The dates 1362 to 1420 were chosen because the first was the year when S Thomas's was founded and the second when the papacy under Martin V returned to Rome at the end of the Great Schism, in effect refounding the papal curia, and so making considerable changes in Rome itself. The scope of the study soon had to enlarge, however, to include the whole resident English community in Rome in the period, involving members of the papal curia not concerned in the hospices, because from 1376 they constituted an important element in the English group in the city.

There is no history of an English expatriate community in this period, though there were similar English groups in other places, for instance Bruges and Danzig. There are excellent studies of the Germans in Rome, for example by C. W. Maas for the whole group in the later Middle Ages and by C. Schuchard specifically for the Germans in the papal curia from 1378–1447.¹ But though the English founded what proved to be a significant centre in the hospice of S Thomas, which has an excellent archive, its early history has not been considered in depth by recent historians. In 1962 the students of the Venerabile Collegio Inglese, the successor of S Thomas's hospice, produced a volume of their house journal, *Venerabile*, devoted to the history of the hospices themselves up to 1579.² This remains the most authoritative account of earlier history of the institutions, superseding all that preceded it. But it

¹ C. W. Maas, *The German Community in Renaissance Rome, 1378–1523* (=Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und für Kirchengeschichte, Supplementheft 39), Rome 1981; C. Schuchard, *Die Deutschen an der päpstlichen Kurie im späten Mittelalter (1378–1447)* (=Bibliothek des deutschen historischen Instituts in Rom 65), Tübingen 1987.

² *Venerabile: The English Hospice in Rome, Venerabile* (Sixcentenary Issue), 21 (1962).

Cambridge University Press

0521620570 - *The English in Rome, 1362-1420: Portrait of an Expatriate Community*

Margaret Harvey

Excerpt

[More information](#)*The English in Rome, 1362–1420*

is very much an institutional history, not very concerned with the wider scene nor with the standing of the founders or their successors and the writers had limited access to archives beyond their own. There is also an excellent account of the later history of S Thomas's, as a college for clerical students, by M. E. Williams, which, however, sketches the early history only briefly.³

Readers will realise, however, how much the present work is indebted to the labours of the students in 1962, who, for instance, compiled chronological lists of officers of the hospices and of names of English people present in Rome found in the deeds (*membrane*) and other manuscripts of the College. This work, however, needed redoing in the light of modern historical research, particularly on notaries' archives and on the history of Rome in the period.

The history of the city of Rome is inextricably linked with the presence in it of the relics of S Peter and therefore with the papacy.⁴ But for a large part of the fourteenth century the papacy was not resident in the city. The pope had moved to France in 1309 and from then onwards Avignon was the centre of papal administration. The whole papal court, with its armies of bureaucrats and resultant trade, moved also. The fate of Rome thereafter seemed uncertain. It had no industrial specialism but had relied on the commerce resulting from the many people coming to do ecclesiastical business as well as on pilgrimage and so it suffered without the popes. With its famous shrines, however, especially S Peter's and S Paul's outside the Walls, it remained a pilgrim centre, though frequently its papal overlords did not control it, so that it became neglected. The city and the area around it, the papal states, were largely in the hands of great lords, ostensibly under papal over-lordship exercised usually by a papal legate who could seldom control them. Pope John XXII (1316–34) famously quarrelled with one of the aspirants to the throne of the Empire, Ludwig IV of Bavaria, who supported against him a schismatic group of Franciscans who objected to the pope's attitude to Christian poverty. Ludwig entered Rome in 1328. Though he could not hold it and failed to sustain his own anti-pope, he ravaged the papal states and John's successor Benedict XII (1334–42), spent money attempting restoration. Pope Clement VI (1342–52) even considered controlling Rome with the help of a strange charismatic local demagogue, Cola di Rienzo, who led an attack against the local nobles in 1347. But Cola had very little practical sense and in

³ M. E. Williams, *The Venerable English College, Rome, 1579–1979. A History*, London 1979.

⁴ For what follows, E. D. Thesider, *Roma dal commune di popolo alla signoria pontificia, 1252–1377* (=Storia di Roma 11), Bologna 1952; P. Partner, *The Lands of St Peter. The Papal State in the Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance*, London 1972.

Cambridge University Press

0521620570 - The English in Rome, 1362-1420: Portrait of an Expatriate Community

Margaret Harvey

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

any case frightened the pope by proclaiming a commune independent both of the nobles and the papacy. The short-lived attempt at complete independence failed, but not without local damage from the resultant fighting. The pope proclaimed 1350 a 'Year of Jubilee' or of special indulgences for pilgrimage to Rome, celebrated in the aftermath of Rienzo's fall, and seems to have attracted large crowds to the still very unsettled city. The pilgrims found a ruinous place, ill-equipped to house the thousands seeking lodgings. This may have been one reason for the foundation of hospices; several seem to have been begun in the aftermath of the Jubilee.⁵

Pope Urban V (1362–70) made the first serious attempt to bring the papal curia back from Avignon and actually succeeded briefly (1367–August 1370) with the aid of Cardinal Gil de Albornoz, his legate, who cajoled, bribed and fought the various local magnates and the mercenaries in their pay, re-organising local government in an attempt to bring the unruly magnates under papal control. But by late 1370 a local revolt, which the Romans joined, accompanied by a renewal of the Hundred Years War between France and England (the pope and most of the cardinals were French), convinced Urban that Rome was too unsafe and he returned to Avignon, leaving the citizens considerably disappointed. His successor Gregory XI (1370–8) spent the majority of his pontificate attempting to produce the local and international pacification which would allow him to return to Rome in safety, but he did not succeed until 1376. Gregory returned to Rome but even then the papacy was facing serious opposition from the Florentines, who were trying to persuade the Romans to join a revolt. There was also considerable scepticism about living in Rome among the members of the papal court itself, especially the largely French college of cardinals.

Against this background a question arises about the attraction of Rome to anyone who did not have to live there. The opening chapter of this study therefore considers the physical and social setting for the hospice of S Thomas and includes discussion of why an English group would have wanted to found institutions in 1362 in the apparently unpromising city of Rome. It concludes that the care of pilgrims and of English residents, with a desire to expand commerce to the Mediterranean, were among the motives.

The study then continues with a sketch of the history of Rome and of the papacy between 1376 and 1418 to explain what happened after the papal administration returned to the city. The death of the returned

⁵ See below p. 21.

Cambridge University Press

0521620570 - *The English in Rome, 1362-1420: Portrait of an Expatriate Community*

Margaret Harvey

Excerpt

[More information](#)*The English in Rome, 1362–1420*

pope Gregory XI in 1378 led to a disputed election and the resultant Great Schism, with two and later three rival popes, each with his own administration, one section remaining in Avignon. The ‘Roman’ papacy, which is the one of concern here, was not always in Rome and its bureaucrats often had to follow its journeyings. When the papacy returned in 1376 the predominantly lay group of Englishmen which had founded the new hospice in 1362 was joined by men serving the papal curia and from then on the English group became more and more clerical.

Having outlined the history of the city and of the papal curia, the study then traces to 1420 the story of the hospice of S Thomas and follows with that of S Chrysogonus and of other unsuccessful attempts to found English hospices. It then describes the lay group up to 1420. A further chapter discusses English women who lived in Rome from 1362 to 1420. I know of no other study of an expatriate group of women in Italy.

The original English lay group (of merchants and artisans) was not replenished after 1400, or at least not visibly round the hospices of S Thomas and S Chrysogonus. The papal curia became more and more important in attracting Englishmen to become resident in Rome. I have therefore explored the careers of major English members of curia from 1376 to 1418, whilst noting how far, if at all, they played any part in the English hospices. I have studied in detail the careers of one high-ranking English curial, John Fraunceys, and that of Adam Easton, the last resident English cardinal for one hundred years, to show the problems facing such people during the schism and in Easton’s case to discuss what a curial career might mean to a scholar.

This is not a history of the city of Rome; the city’s history is included only so far as needed to understand the lives discussed. It has also been necessary to give an account of the curia, not synonymous with Rome, since many members of the English group worked for it, even though it was often not in Rome in this period. In all cases I have attempted to link the people with their English background, to discuss patrons and career patterns and to ask whether a stay in Rome helped or hindered a career in England. I have tried to describe the economic background, not merely because some of the Englishmen were merchants but also because some of the most bitter complaints about the curia were prompted by prevailing economic conditions.

Events in England would have had an influence on any expatriate English group. For laymen such as those who first began S Thomas’s hospice a predominating factor must have been the state of the English economy, which in the fourteenth century was itself dominated by

Cambridge University Press

0521620570 - The English in Rome, 1362-1420: Portrait of an Expatriate Community

Margaret Harvey

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

relations with France and by the Hundred Years War. From the outbreak of war with France in 1337 the English crown needed to raise unprecedented sums and did so by loans largely from Italian merchants who recouped themselves from trade in English wool. Tensions were caused in England by the manipulation of trade for money-raising; besides, from 1360 onwards, even though the English looked victorious they began to be less so. The king, Edward III, who had been very successful at first, grew old and his son, the Black Prince, was increasingly ill from 1371. As the papacy returned from Avignon the English were facing a minority. In June 1376 the Black Prince died, followed the next year by Edward III, leaving the eleven-year-old Richard II as ruler. As the old king was dying, intrigue and accusation gathered momentum; the so-called Good Parliament of 1376 was marked by accusations about government corruption and attacks on 'aliens', thought to be making vast sums at English expense. The Avignon papacy was included among the institutions and persons accused of corruptly milking England of money. The pope needed money too, for the control of the papal states and the return to Rome. Papal bureaucracy, particularly when appointing to benefices, charged large sums for its services and taxed benefices both directly and when they changed hands by its intervention. The loss of money out of England and the litigious quarrels which the papal benefice system was thought to entail, had already by 1351 involved English legislation by statute (against papal appointees, provisors). The English government regularly refused to allow direct papal taxation of the clergy and shared anything the pope was allowed to collect; statutes against provisors (1351) and praemunire (1353) were intended to control litigation in the papal court and to regulate the flow of papal bulls into the country as well as the flow of English money out. The clergy, being asked for money both by crown and pope, tried to resist constant demands but were in no position to do so, and many of the laity were convinced that the rich church was not paying its fair share to the needs of the country. John Wyclif, the reformer, was employed by the English government from 1371 to complain about clerical and papal greed and to resist the claims of the pope to collect money or to appoint to benefices, even taking part in a mission to Bruges in 1374 to discuss papal appointments. In the circumstances it was not surprising that to one Englishman in Avignon, Adam Easton, Wyclif appeared as the latest in a long line of persons attempting to undermine the whole basis of ecclesiastical power. Nor is it surprising that it became more and more difficult for Englishmen to evade the statutes against provisors. By 1420, although the English group in Rome was much more clerical, English or foreign clerics were much

Cambridge University Press

0521620570 - The English in Rome, 1362-1420: Portrait of an Expatriate Community

Margaret Harvey

Excerpt

[More information](#)*The English in Rome, 1362–1420*

less likely than their predecessors to be able to obtain from the pope, and to keep, notable English benefices as a reward for faithful service.

The sources for this study were in the first place the early deeds or *membrane* of the Venerabile Collegio Inglese in Rome, the successor of the two English hospices, together with a few of its manuscripts (indexes and early lists of properties owned for instance). These were supplemented from notaries' protocols, some printed and some in manuscript in Rome in the Archivio di Stato and the Archivio Capitolino, as well as in the Vatican Library.⁶ In medieval Italy notaries were employed to record in writing a multitude of everyday transactions: buying, selling and letting property, making loans, buying wine or planting a vineyard, seeking arbitration, making a will, organising the whole transaction of marriage, from the agreeing of a dowry to its investment in property, but also the actual exchange by the couple of 'words of present consent' which were, in the eyes of the church, the actual marriage. The notary advised the client on the form of the document (Roman law was the basis). The client took an original and the notary kept books with his copies. The archive of a dead notary could therefore be consulted, if documents got lost, to confirm that a transaction had occurred. When a house changed hands all the existing deeds about it were transferred too, including any documents concerning arbitration about its environs, documents about alterations which had been allowed by the street magistrates (*magistri stratarum*) and information about which members of the families of past owners had consented to the change of ownership. Rome is only unusual in having preserved less of this information for the fourteenth century than many Italian cities. But deeds such as those of the Venerabile Collegio Inglese exist also for other foundations, so that for example the archives of the German hospice of S Maria dell'Anima, situated on its original site just off the present Piazza Navona, proved unexpectedly interesting from an English viewpoint too.⁷

The *membrane* largely concern houses bought and sold, but also describe repairs agreed and include wills. Deeds of sale of houses always included a description of the kind of house: *domus terranea* for a basic house built on the soil, *domus solarata* for a house with an upper storey, and often have descriptions of marble steps, porticoes, gardens, wells and so on. The deeds also gave the names of the property-owners on all sides: 'on one side holds so and so, on the other the heirs of so and so,

⁶ Below note 8.

⁷ Inventory by F.-X. Nagl, *Urkundliches zur Geschichte der Anima in Rom* (= Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Alterthumskunde und für Kirchengeschichte, Supplementheft 12), Rome 1899.

Cambridge University Press

0521620570 - The English in Rome, 1362-1420: Portrait of an Expatriate Community

Margaret Harvey

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

behind is a vacant space and before is the public street', thus allowing one to reconstruct the setting for some houses. Documents also often contained the names of guarantors, friends and supporters who pledged that the seller would truly sell or that the money would truly be produced. Transactions also involved named witnesses, with as the minimum the witness' name and the district of Rome in which he lived, but often with an occupation and sometimes a place of origin. These documents therefore are excellent sources for tracing persons and reconstructing neighbourhoods.

Some of the documents belonging to the College are duplicated in existing notaries protocol books but these last are more useful for the extra documents they have concerning the individuals occurring in the *membrane* and in adding a very few other English names to the lists compiled by the student historians for *Venerabile* in 1962. Most of all, however, protocols can be used to trace further the Italians whose names appear in the *membrane*. In recent years some of the earliest Roman protocol books have been printed and these have proved most useful for this study.⁸

The history of Rome in the period is still to be written but apart from the sources described above there are two main chroniclers after 1400: Antonio Pietro dello Schiavo and Stefano Infessura.⁹ These main sources of names of laymen in the early years of the study could be followed up, sometimes, in England; some problems involved are discussed in the chapter on Laymen.

One topic however needs emphasis here, that of surnames. In any Roman notarial document men were identified as their father's son followed by the city district in which they were now living and sometimes the area from which they had come. Hence English names emerge as *Robertus olim Roberti olim de Anglia nunc de urbe de regione Pineae*¹⁰ (Robert, son of the late Robert, late of England now living in the city in the Pigna district). This identifies Robert de Pigna, one of the founders of the English hospice of S Thomas, Robert atte Pine as John Stow later called him.¹¹ Such methods of naming indicate that one was identified as one's father's son or daughter, or, if a woman, as

⁸ For the fourteenth century the material is surveyed in I. L. Sanfilippo, 'I protocolli notarile romani del trecento', *Archivio della società romana di storia patria*, 110 (1987), pp. 99–150, with lists. The printed volumes used can be found in my bibliography under the names: Astalli, P.; Caputgallis, F. de, Goioli, A.; Johannes Nicolai Pauli; Staglia, L.; See also Paulus Nicolai Pauli; Nicolaus Johannis Jacobi and Johannes Paulus Antonii Goyoli.

⁹ A. P. Schiavo, *Il diario romano di Antonio di Pietro dello Schiavo*, ed. F. Isoldi (= *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* 24/5), Bologna 1917; S. Infessura, *Diario della città di Roma di Stefano Infessura, scribasenato*, ed. O. Tommasini (= *Fonti per la storia d'Italia* 5), Rome 1890.

¹⁰ m. 38. ¹¹ J. Stow, *Annales or General Chronicle of England*, London 1631, p. 335.

Cambridge University Press

0521620570 - The English in Rome, 1362-1420: Portrait of an Expatriate Community

Margaret Harvey

Excerpt

[More information](#)*The English in Rome, 1362–1420*

someone's wife as well as a daughter. Only in the case of the upper classes would a family name be certainly included. Hence Italian notaries had problems with English names and one cannot always be sure what they meant. Robert atte Pine for example may have been called Robertson but probably was not. The 'founder' of the hospice of S Thomas, whose surname we do know, appears as *Johannes Petri Pecorarii paternostrarius dudum de Anglia et nunc habitator Urbis in regione Arenula*. That is 'John son of Peter Shepherd seller of beads lately of England now dwelling in the city in Arenula district'.¹² In his will however he was called simply John, son of Peter. He was certainly not known as Peterson.¹³ The problems of tracing many of these individuals in the English records, when so many share Christian names and they were certainly identified in England with surnames, are insurmountable. Fortunately the curia identified people by surnames in its documents and the only problem there usually is making sense of Italian and other scribal versions of English names. In the case of Italians I have used the Latin version of their name unless they are well known under an Italian version; hence Cola di Rienzo is not called Nicolaus Laurentii, whereas Johannes Nicolai Pauli the notary is not referred to as Giovanni di Nicola di Paolo, though he may have been known as that.

Clerics can also be traced in the Vatican Archives and then followed up in England. The main problem there is the relative lack of sources for the schism period, partly caused by loss of archives in the Napoleonic era but partly because during the schism curial bureaucracy was in disarray.¹⁴ The Vatican archives contain almost no supplication registers for the period¹⁵ and the records of the Penitentiary begin only in about 1411 and then very scrappily. The letter book of William Swan (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Arch. Seld. B 23), who was a proctor in the curia from about 1404, in contact with many laymen and clerks, is extremely illuminating.¹⁶ This can be supplemented a little with other letter collections and formularies but there still remain annoying gaps in the careers of individuals. The *De scismate* and *Nemus unionis* of the

¹² *Venerabile*, p. 40; m. 37. ¹³ *Venerabile*, p. 42 (Johannes Petri).

¹⁴ The best introduction to the archives is now F. X. Blouin et al., *Vatican Archives. An Inventory and Guide to Historical Documents of the Holy See*, New York and Oxford 1998. For the losses mentioned here, see pp. xx–xxi. For the disarray see for instance J. Favier, *Les finances pontificales à l'époque du grand schisme d'occident, 1378–1409* (= Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 211), Paris 1966, pp. 136–7.

¹⁵ Exceptions are BL Cotton Vitellius F II, a formulary, with some supplications from the period; ASV Reg. Suppliche 104A, for Boniface IX, formerly in Eichstadt.

¹⁶ His second volume, BL MS Cotton Cleop. C IV covers the period after 1420 for the most part.

Cambridge University Press

0521620570 - The English in Rome, 1362-1420: Portrait of an Expatriate Community

Margaret Harvey

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

leading curial, Dietrich of Niem, gives considerable insight into the experience of following the curia.¹⁷

An introductory chapter ought to admit what has not been attempted. The modern historian might suppose that this study of many individuals would lend itself to statistical analysis. I have attempted no such thing, partly being temperamentally unsuited to such a task, but largely because gaps in the records mean that the results would almost certainly be fatally distorted. Information on most of the careers I looked at was scrappy, that for laymen even scappier than for clerics. Many individuals are merely names who appear only once. The result has had to be impressionistic rather than rigorously scientific. Nor have I attempted to trace the coming and going of all Englishmen known to have been in Rome; Édouard Perroy did this in 1933 for the diplomats up to 1399 and in 1983 I studied diplomatic relations from 1399–1409.¹⁸ This is not a history of Anglo-papal diplomacy, so diplomats paying fleeting visits are encountered only as they meet the resident English group. The emphasis has been throughout on residence in Rome for some length of time.

To see the English group in their setting one must begin with a sketch of Rome about 1362, with the papal curia still in Avignon and the numbers of Englishmen very small, to place the first English enterprise in a context and ask why anyone would have thought of founding a hospice in the city.

¹⁷ Niem, *De scismate* ed. G. Ertler, Leipzig 1890; *Nemus unionis* was published as volume IV of *De scismate. Historiae Theodorici de Niem qua res suo tempore durante gestae exponuntur*, ed. S. Schardius, Basel 1566.

¹⁸ E. Perroy, *L'Angleterre et le grand schisme d'occident. Étude de la politique religieuse d'Angleterre sous Richard II, 1378–1399*, Paris 1933; M. Harvey, *Solutions to the Schism. A Study of Some English Attitudes, 1378–1409* (=Kirchengeschichtliche Quellen und Studien 12), S Otilien 1983.

Cambridge University Press

0521620570 - The English in Rome, 1362-1420: Portrait of an Expatriate Community

Margaret Harvey

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Chapter 1*THE SETTING I: ROME IN THE LATER
FOURTEENTH CENTURY, 1362–1376

This study begins in Rome in 1362 largely because that year a significant English institution was begun. It is also, however, a reasonable starting point because the year afterwards the city of Rome received a new constitution, intended to mark a decisive shift from the aristocratically dominated politics of the previous period; a new era was about to begin, dominated by the *popolo*.

Nowadays if one wanders along the via Monserrato from the direction of S Peter's, one comes eventually to a large building on the left side, not far from Piazza Farnese. There is a sizeable church and two large entrances, with inside a complex of buildings of different ages, including a courtyard and a garden, with a smaller chapel. All this and formerly much more is now the Venerabile Collegio Inglese, once the site of the English hospice of S Thomas, now in rione Regola, then called Arenula. The object of this chapter is to answer a few questions about the physical and economic setting in which the new enterprise was undertaken in 1362 and to sketch the background to its first fifty years. By 1420 the enterprise was important and the English had even founded a second hospice, in the Trastevere district, both operations involving substantial ownership of property and a considerable turnover of money.

The documents which record the first foundation of 1362 concern John Shepherd, beadseller (*paternostrarius*) of England, resident in Arenula district in Rome, buying a house from Antonio Smerucci, woolman (*lanarolus*) formerly of Camerino now of the same Roman district. He very shortly sold it again to William Chandler of York who received in his own name and for the community and *universitas* of the English of Rome.¹ Alice wife of John Shepherd then renounced her claims on the house; William Chandler was invested with it and Alice

¹ *mm.* 34, 36, 37, printed *Venerabile*, pp. 37–41.