

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-01449-6 - Feudal England  
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TERRITORIAL STUDIES

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PART I  
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*DOMESDAY BOOK*

THE true key to the Domesday Survey, and to the system of land assessment it records, is found in the *Inquisitio Comitatus Cantabrigiensis*. Although the document so styled is one of cardinal importance, it has, from accident, been known to few, and has consequently never succeeded in obtaining the attention and scientific treatment it deserved. The merit of its identification belongs to Mr. Philip Carteret Webb, who published in 1756 a paper originally read before the Society of Antiquaries, entitled, *A Short Account of Danegeld, with some further particulars relating to William the Conqueror's Survey*. It is difficult to speak too highly of this production, remembering the date at which it was composed. Many years were yet to elapse before the printing of Domesday was even begun, and historical evidences were largely inaccessible as compared with the condition of things to-day. Yet the ability shown by Mr. Webb in this careful and conscientious piece of work is well seen in his interesting discovery, which he announced in these words:—

In searching for the *Liber Eliensis*, I have had the good fortune to discover in the Cotton Library a MS. copy of the Inquisition of the jury, containing their survey for most of the hundreds in Cambridgeshire. This MS. is written on vellum in double columns and on

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both sides of the page. It is bound up with the *Liber Eliensis*, and begins at p. 76a and ends at p. 113. It is written in a very fair but ancient character, not coeval with the Survey, but of about the time of Henry II. It was given by Mr. Arthur Agard to Sir Robert Cotton, and is marked Tiberius A. VI. 4. Your lordship and the Society will be of opinion that this is a discovery of importance, and what had escaped the observation of Sir H. Spelman, Mr. Selden, and other antiquarians. A part of this valuable morsel of antiquity is already transcribed, and in a few weeks I hope to be able to communicate the whole of it to the Society (p. 26).

Mr. Webb's discovery was known to Kelham, and duly referred to by him in his *Domesday Book Illustrated* (1788). It was also known to Sir Francis Palgrave, strong in his acquaintance with manuscript authorities, who alluded (1832) to the fact that "fragments of the original inquisitions have been preserved,"<sup>1</sup> and described the MS. Tib. A. VI., of which "the first portion consists of the *Inquisitio Eliensis*, extending, as above mentioned, into five counties; it is followed by the inedited *Inquisitio*," etc.<sup>2</sup> It is, however, undoubtedly ignored in Ellis's *Introduction to Domesday Book* (1833), and "even the indefatigable Sir Thomas Duffus Hardy," writes Mr. Birch,<sup>3</sup> "has omitted all notice of this manuscript in his *Descriptive Catalogue of Manuscripts relating to the History of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. ii. (1865)." This however, is not strictly the case, for in his notice of the Domesday MSS. he observes in a footnote:—

The Cottonian MS. [Tib. A. VI.] has also a second and unique portion of this survey, which was not printed in the edition published by the Record Commission in 1816. It commences "in Grantebreggesira, in Staplehouhund.," and ends imperfectly "et vicecomiti regis v. auras."

These words prove that Sir Thomas had inspected the MS., which duly begins and ends with the words here given.

It is certain, however, that Mr. Freeman, most ardent of

<sup>1</sup> *English Commonwealth*, II. ccccliv.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Domesday Book*, p. 42.

*Discovery of the Inq. Com. Cant.* 5

Domesday students, knew nothing of this precious evidence, and remained therefore virtually unacquainted with the *modus operandi* of the Great Survey. The pages, we shall find, of the *Inquisitio* afford information that no one would have welcomed more eagerly than himself. Perhaps, therefore, it is not surprising that Mr. N. E. S. A. Hamilton, when editing this document for the Royal Society of Literature (1876), should have supposed that it had been overlooked till then, or that he was "the first to bring its importance to light" (p. iv.). It is, however, much to be regretted that Mr. De Gray Birch should have strenuously insisted that Webb (whose paper he actually names) and Kelham "appear to have been strangely ignorant of the true and important nature of this manuscript,"<sup>4</sup> and should have repeated this assertion<sup>5</sup> after I had shown at the Domesday Commemoration (1886) that the honour of the discovery really belonged to Mr. P. C. Webb. One may claim that Webb should have his due, while gladly expressing gratitude to Mr. Hamilton for his noble edition of the *Inquisitio*, which has conferred on Domesday students an inestimable boon.<sup>6</sup>

The printing of the document in record type, the collation throughout with Domesday Book, and the appending of the *Inquisitio Eliensis*, edited from three different texts, represent an extraordinary amount of minute and wearisome labour. The result is a volume as helpful as it is indispensable to the scholar.

I propose in this paper to take up anew the subject, at the point where Mr. Hamilton has left it, to submit the text to scientific criticism, to assign it its weight in the scale of authority, and to explain its glossarial and its illustrative value for the construction and the contents of Domesday Book.

<sup>4</sup> *Athenæum*, 1885, I. 472, 566-7; *Domesday Book*, 1887, p. 44.

<sup>5</sup> *Domesday Studies* (1891), II. 488.

<sup>6</sup> *Inquisitio Comitatus Cantabrigiensis*. Cura N. E. S. A. Hamilton, 1876.

## I. NATURE OF THE "INQ. COM. CANT."

Exact definition is needful at the outset in dealing with this document. The *Inquisitio Comitatus Cantabrigiensis*, which is entered on fos. 76-113 of Tib. A. VI., must be carefully distinguished from the *Inquisitio Eliensis* on fos. 38-68. Mr. Hamilton doubted whether any one before him "had distinguished between" the two, but this, we have seen, was a mistake. The distinction however is all-important, the two documents differing altogether in character. One would not think it necessary to distinguish them also from the so-called *Liber Eliensis* (which is not a survey at all) had not Mr. Eyton inadvertently stated that our document has been printed under the title of *Liber Eliensis*.<sup>7</sup>

The *Inquisitio Comitatus Cantabrigiensis* (hereafter styled "the I.C.C.") deals with the county of Cambridge alone, but, in that county, with the lands of all holders. The *Inquisitio Eliensis* (which I propose to style the "I.E.") deals with several counties, but, in these counties, with the lands of the abbey alone. The latter was duly printed, with Domesday Book, by the Record Commission; the former remained in manuscript till printed by Mr. Hamilton.

Mr. Hamilton describes his record at the outset as "the Original Return made by the *Juratores* of the county of Cambridge in obedience to the Conqueror's mandate, from which the Exchequer Domesday for that county was afterwards compiled by the King's secretaries," and as "the original source from which the Exchequer Domesday for that county was derived." Mr. Birch here again repeats the words, insisting "that we have in this very precious Cottonian MS. *the original source* from which the Exchequer Domesday of Cambridgeshire was compiled."<sup>8</sup>

Such a description is most unfortunate, being not only inaccurate but misleading. All that we are entitled to pre-

<sup>7</sup> *Notes on Domesday* (1877), reprinted 1880, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> The italics are his own, *Domesday Book*, p. 42. Cf. *Domesday Studies*, II. 486-7.

*The Inq. Com. Cant. a Transcript* 7

dicating of the document is that it is *apparently a copy* of the original returns from which Domesday Book was compiled. For "the original source" of both we must look to the now missing returns of the jurors, the primary authority from which Domesday Book and the *Inquisitio Com. Cant.* are independently derived. This distinction is all-important, reducing, as it does, the *Inquisitio* from the rank of an "original" to that of a secondary authority on the same level with Domesday Book.<sup>9</sup> Mr. Hamilton, like Mr. Webb before him, assigned the handwriting of the *Inquisitio* to about the close of the twelfth century. The copy of the returns which it contains, therefore, was made about a century later than the returns themselves.

The problem then that we have to solve is this: "Is the I. C. C. an actual transcript of these original returns, and if so, is it faithful?" I will not, like Mr. Hamilton, assume an affirmative, but will attempt an impartial enquiry.

The two paths which we must follow in turn to arrive at a just conclusion are (1) the construction of the I. C. C., (2) collation with the *Inq. Eliensis*. For I hope to show that the latter record must have been derived from the same source as the *Inq. Com. Cant.*

Following the first of these paths, we note at once that while *Domesday Book* arranges the Manors according to fiefs, the *Inq. Com. Cant.*, on the contrary, arranges them by hundreds and townships. Its system is regular and simple. For every hundred it first enumerates the principal jurors who made the return, and then gives the return itself, arranged according to townships (*villæ*). These townships are thus the units of which the Manors they contain are merely the component fractions. This is precisely what we should expect to find in the original returns, but it only creates a presumption; it does not afford a proof. For instance, it might be reasonably urged that these copies may

<sup>9</sup> It is not even *proved* that the I. C. C. is copied from the original returns themselves. There is the possibility of a MS. between the two. See *Addenda*.

have omitted certain items in the returns, just as Domesday Book omitted others.

To reply to this objection, we must turn to the second path; that is to say, we must collate the *Inquisitio Eliensis* with the *Inq. Com. Cant.* I shall prove below that the latter cannot have been taken from the former, which only covers a portion of its field, and that, on the other hand, the former cannot have been taken from the latter, because the *Inquisitio Eliensis* is accurate in places where the *Inq. Com. Cant.* is in error. Consequently they must both have been derived independently from some third document. This being so, if we should find that their versions agree closely, we may fairly infer that each is intended to be a faithful reproduction of the above "third document." In other words, if neither version omits items which are given in the other, we are entitled to assume that the copy is in each case exhaustive, for two scribes working independently are not likely to have systematically omitted the same items from the document before them.

What then was the "third document" from which they both copied? Obviously it was either the original returns of the Domesday jurors, or a copy (exhaustive or not) of these returns. Now we cannot suppose that two scribes, working, as I have said, independently, would both have worked, not from the original returns themselves, but from a copy, and that the same copy of these returns—a copy, moreover, of the existence of which we have no evidence whatever. Moreover, in this hypothetical copy, there would, we may safely assert, have been some clerical errors. These would have duly re-appeared in both the *Inquisitiones*, and collation with Domesday Book would enable us to detect them. Yet in no single instance, though each of them contains errors, have I found a clerical error common to both. We are thus driven to the conclusion that in both these *Inquisitiones* we have copies of the actual returns made by the Domesday jurors.

One of the postulates in the above argument is that the

*The "Inquisitiones" Compared* 9

*Inq. Com. Cant.* and the *Inq. Eliensis* "agree closely" in their versions. Here is an instance in illustration<sup>10</sup>:—

I.C.C.

Meldeburna pro x. sol[idis] se defendebat T.R.E. et modo pro viii. Et de his x. hidis tenet predictus abbas ii. hidas et I<sup>am</sup>. virgam. v. carrucis est ibi terra. Una carruca et dimidia, et una hida et una virga in dominio, et dimidia carruca potest fieri. iii. carucæ villanis. vi. villani, ix. bordarii, iii. cotarii, dimidium molendinum de iii. solidis, et viii. denariis. Pratum v. carrucis. Pastura ad pecora villæ, ccc. oves iii. minus, xxxiiii. porci. Inter totum valet c. sol., et quando recepit totidem. T.R.E. vi. lib. Hæc terra jacet et jacuit in ecclesia sancte Ædel. de eli in dominio.

Et de his x. hidis tenet Wido de Reb' curt de rege, &ca., &ca.

I.E.

Meldeburne pro x. hidis se defendebat in tempore R.ÆD. et modo pro viii. Et de his x. hun[dredis] tenet abbas de eli ii. hidas et i. v[irgam]. v. carucis ibi est terra. I. caruca et dimidia, et i. hida et dimidia, in dominio, et dimidia caruca potest fieri. iii. carucæ hominibus. vi. villani, ix. bordarii, iii. cotarii. Pratum v. carucis. i. molendinum de ii. solidis et viii. denariis. Pastura ad pecora villæ. oves ccc., iii<sup>es</sup>. minus, et xxxiiii. porci. Inter totum valet v. lib. Quando recepit v. lib. T.R.E. vi. lib. Hæc terra jacet et jacuit in ecclesia sancte Ædel' ely in dominio.

In eadem villa habet Guido de Raimbecurt de rege, &ca., &ca.

These extracts are typical and instructive. They leave, in the first place, no doubt, upon the mind that both are versions of the same original. This, which proves my postulate, will be shown below to possess a further and important bearing. But while these versions closely agree, we notice (1) independent blunders, (2) slight variants in diction. As to blunders, we see that the I.C.C. has "sol[idis]" where the I.E. has the correct "hidis," while, conversely, the I.E. reads "hun[dredis]" where the I.C.C. has, rightly, "hidis." Again, the I.C.C. allots to demesne an assessment of a hide and a virgate, but I.E. a hide and a half (*i.e.* two virgates). Collation with Domesday Book confirms the former version. Conversely, the I.C.C.

<sup>10</sup> These extracts are *extended* and *punctuated* to facilitate the comparison. Important extensions are placed within square brackets.



assigns to the mill the value of three shillings and eightpence, but the I.E. of two shillings and eightpence. Collation with Domesday Book confirms the latter. Turning now to the variants, we may express them more clearly thus :—

I.C.C.	I.E.
	T.R.E. = in tempore R.ÆD.
predictus abbas	= abbas de eli.
	villanis = hominibus.
dimidium molendinum	= i. molendinum.
	c. sol. = v. lib.
	totidem = v. lib.
de his x. hidis tenet	= in eadem villa habet.

These prove that verbal accuracy was not aimed at by the transcribers. The same freedom from its trammels is seen in the transposition of the "mill" and "meadow" passages, and, indeed, in the highly abbreviated form of the I.E. entries (in which a single letter, mostly, does duty for a word), which shows that the original version must have been either extended in the I.C.C., or (more probably) abbreviated in the I.E.

We are now in a position to advance to the criticism of the text of the *Inq. Com. Cant.*, and to inquire how far it can be trusted as a reproduction of the original returns. In other words, are its contents more or less trustworthy than those of Domesday Book?

It might, no doubt, be fairly presumed that a simple transcript of the original returns was less likely to contain error than such a compilation as Domesday Book, in which their contents were (1) re-arranged on a different system, (2) epitomised and partly omitted, (3) altered in wording. Mr. Hamilton, indeed, who was naturally tempted to make the most of his MS., appears to have jumped at this conclusion; for he speaks in his preface (p. xii.) of its "superior exactness," and gives us no hint of omissions or of blunders. There are, however, plenty of both, as will be seen from the lists below, which do not profess to be exhaustive.

*The Inq. Com. Cant. Criticised*

11

But we will first examine the instances adduced by Mr. Hamilton. Out of ten examples in proof of its value, five are cases in which "the want of precision in Domesday" leaves the identity of the tenant-in-chief "undefined." It is difficult to comment on these statements, because in all five cases the name is as carefully recorded in Domesday as in the I.C.C. Mr. Hamilton's error can only, it will be found, have arisen from comparing the I.C.C. not with Domesday Book, but with the extracts therefrom printed in his work, which, being torn from their place, do not, of course, contain the tenant's full name, which in Domesday itself is given at the head of the list from which they are taken. Moreover, as it happens, this test demonstrates not the inferiority, but (in one instance at least) the superiority of Domesday, the I.C.C. (fo. 97, col. 2) reading "Hanc terram tenuit comes alanus" (*sic*), where Domesday has (rightly) "Hanc terram tenuit Algar comes." The former must have wrongly extended the abbreviated original entry.<sup>11</sup>

Another of Mr. Hamilton's examples is this:—

"Hæc terra fuit et est de dominio æcclesiæ" (Domesday) is abbreviated from a long account of the holdings of Harduinus de Scalariis and Turcus homo abbatis de Rameseio in the Cotton MS.

But, on referring to the passage in question, we find that the Domesday passage: "Hæc terra fuit et est de dominio æcclesiæ," has nothing to do with that "long account," but corresponds to the simple formula in the I.C.C., "Hanc terram tenuerunt monache de cet'ero T.R.E. et modo tenent." The example which follows it is this:—

At pp. 38, 39 we see a curious alteration in the value of the land, which had risen from xv. lib. "quando recepit" and T.R.E. to xvii. lib. at the time the return was made, and dropped again to xvi. lib. in the Domesday Survey.

<sup>11</sup> Curiously enough, the cases in which the I.C.C. does really supplement the Domesday version, that is, in the names of the holders T.R.E. and of the under-tenants T.R.W., were left unnoticed by Mr. Hamilton.