

# Memoranda Rolls

Richard Cassidy and Ben Wild, KCL

The memoranda rolls are a collection of notes, orders, records and inquiries relating to the Exchequer's business, drawn up in the course of each Exchequer year.

Two sets of Memoranda rolls were produced for each year (30 to 29 September). The Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer (LTR) kept one of the rolls (now series E 368 at the National Archives), the King's Remembrancer (KR) the other (series E 159). A few rolls appear to have been assigned to the wrong series, so that, for instance, there are two E 368 rolls for 1246. Two early rolls, from John's reign, are in series E 370.

The LTR was an appointee of the treasurer. The KR was an appointee of the king. They did not copy one another, but compiled their rolls simultaneously, with slight variations which grew as the thirteenth century progressed. By the end of the century, the roll of the LTR is concerned with auditing and accounting, while the roll of the KR focuses on revenue and matters that impinged on royal prerogative. This distinction is not so clear in Henry III's reign, and for the most part the rolls seem to cover much the same topics, with occasional omissions.

Exchequer memoranda were certainly kept from the late twelfth century. The earliest surviving Memoranda roll covers 1 John, and we know that two rolls were being written (presumably by different scribes) from 1208-9. At least one roll survives for most years from 1217-18 onwards. The LTR rolls continued to be produced until 1835, the KR until 1926(!)

## Structure

The memoranda rolls are composed of series of long, narrow membranes sewn together at the head. Unlike the pipe rolls, the memoranda rolls do not appear to have been rolled up. Today, the rolls are stored flat and kept in boxes, which contain several rolls.

The memoranda rolls are made up of a series of headed membranes, each recording a different type of information. Initially, there were only a few headings. The 1232 roll contains only 12 membranes, covering: *communia* for each of the four terms of the Exchequer year; the accounts and views for individual counties; the *Adventus* for Michaelmas and Easter; and the *dies dati* for accounts and views (these terms are explained below). In later years, the rolls were often sewn together in that order – but often the various sections seem to have become jumbled. Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, new sections were added to the rolls, particularly by separating out items contained in the *communia*, thus altering their layout and increasing their overall length. By the late 1250s, rolls had around 30 membranes, by 1300 sometimes over 100. Conway Davies provides the authoritative account of these changes.

## Contents

The headings most likely to be encountered in thirteenth-century memoranda rolls include:

## Communia

Notes accumulated during the course of each term, covering almost anything which the clerks considered worth recording, relating to the Exchequer's business. There are numerous notes of: instructions to sheriffs about debts to be pursued; payments received, including payments in kind; pardons; allowances; activities of local officials; recognizances, recording debts owed; appointments of sheriffs; changes to the audit timetable. There are also many records of decisions made by the Exchequer in its judicial function, particularly concerning the payment of debts.

## Adventus vicecomitum

Records the amount that sheriffs and representatives of boroughs paid into the Treasury twice a year (after Michaelmas and Easter). For example, from 1231-32:

Oxon'. G. de Craucomb', Robertus de la Haye pro eo, venit et tulit lxx li. ut dicit.

By the 1250s, boroughs are listed under the appropriate county, and many counties and boroughs bring only the writs testifying to their expenditure:

Noting' et Derb'. Vicecomes venit per Ricardum Trowell' clericum suum et nichil tulit nisi brevia.

Cives Noting' venerunt per Willelmum Brian et tulerunt xx li. de firma ville sue.

## Dies dati (ad computandum, ad visus faciendum)

A list of dates that had been assigned to sheriffs for the presentation of their account at the Exchequer. Originally, the accounts were meant to be heard early in the year, with views after Easter. For example:

Norh'. Vicecomes habet diem ad computandum in octabis sancti Martini. Postea in crastino sancti Hilarii.

## Compotus

Records decisions and points of interest that arose during the hearing of Exchequer accounts. Each sheriff's account has a *compotus* entry. It generally records the sheriff's name, the date his account was audited, and points worth noting, such as queries over cash still owed; distraints; matters for discussion with the king. For example:

*Scribatur episcopo Lincolniensi.* Thomas persona de Lumbeho debet x m. pro pluribus transgressionibus.

*Distringatur.* Robertus de Hardreshull debet cccc xv li. vij s. v d. de duobus debitis contentis in rotulo ix<sup>o</sup>.

By the 1250s, each compotus ends with the Summa, showing how much the sheriff still owes, and what is to be done about it.

## Visus

In principle, a review of the sheriff's performance half-way through the financial year. Tends to be brief, and by the 1250s is often held for only a few counties, with no record being made. For example:

Milities honoris Lanc' debent xvij li. x s. iij d. obolum de primo scutagio regis et xv li. iiij s. viij d. de scutagio Pict'. Preceptum est vicecomiti quod diligenter inquirat

qui debeant scutagium et facta inquisicione dstringat ita quod habeat denarios in crastino sancti Michaelis.

### Other headings

Later in the century, several other headings appear, such as the rotulus attornatorum, recording the names of clerks who were to attend an Exchequer audit on behalf of the chief accounting officer, enrolled private deeds, and writs to and from the Exchequer. The proceedings of the Exchequer in its judicial role were recorded in a separate series of Exchequer plea rolls.

By the 1280s, (according to Mabel Mills) the divisions of the rolls were: Adventus; Dies dati; Precepta (orders sent to sheriffs after the audit); Brevia (writs sent out by the Barons of the Exchequer); and Communia, for everything else.

### Memoranda rolls in print

*The memoranda roll for the Michaelmas term of the first year of the reign of King John (1199-1200)*, ed. H. G. Richardson (PRS, 1943).

*The memoranda roll for the tenth year of the reign of King John (1207-8)*, ed. R. Allen Brown (PRS, 1957).

*The memoranda roll of the King's remembrancer for Michaelmas 1230-Trinity 1231*, ed. C. Robinson (PRS, 1933).

*Memoranda rolls 16-17 Henry III [1231-33]*, ed. R. Allen Brown (HMSO, 1991).

*Calendar of memoranda rolls (Exchequer) 1326-27*, ed. R. Latham (HMSO, 1968)

In preparation: *Memoranda rolls 2-7 Henry III [1217-23]*, ed. Paul Dryburgh (PRS).

The PRO once planned to publish the memoranda rolls from 1231 onwards, in full or in calendar, and has various abstracts and typescripts. The IHR also has a typescript index to persons and places in memoranda rolls 1272-88, apparently prepared in the PRO.

### Further reading

J. F. Willard, 'The Memoranda Rolls and the Remembrancers, 1282-1350', in *Essays in Medieval History Presented to T. F. Tout* (1925), 215-29.

J. Conway Davies, 'The Memoranda Rolls of the Exchequer to 1307', in *Studies Presented to Sir Hilary Jenkinson*, ed. J. Conway Davies (1957), 97-154.

D. Crook, 'The Early Remembrancers of the Exchequer', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 53 (1980), 11-23.

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