

# JOHN SUMMERS DREW (1879-1949): A NEGLECTED HAMPSHIRE HISTORIAN

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## ABSTRACT

*John Summers Drew was a gifted amateur historian who in retirement dedicated the last twenty years of his life first to the translation, study and interpretation of monastic and manorial documents of the Priory of St Swithun, Winchester (now held in Winchester Cathedral Library) and later, documents elsewhere in England. Although much of his work shows the precision and competence of a professional, he is not widely known since so little of it was ever published. This paper aims to provide a brief biography of Drew, to describe his work, and to attempt a critical assessment of his achievements and their value to other historians.*

## INTRODUCTION

John Drew could be considered to be among the foremost local historians in Hampshire this century. He devoted over sixteen years to working steadily in the Library of Winchester Cathedral under the tutelage of Canon A W Goodman, translating and studying the medieval records of the Priory of St Swithun, and (to place his earlier work into a wider perspective), the last two or three years of his life were spent scrutinizing manorial rolls throughout England, studying variations in the methods of manorial administration, and tracing the technical evolution of the implements of medieval agriculture.

Drew was born on 8 July 1879 and grew up in the Highgate area of London, but his education throughout childhood was often interrupted by poor health. He attended Highgate School from 1889 to 1891, went on to private school in Bournemouth, and later to New College, Eastbourne. At the age of 17 (after spending a year in France), he joined the family business of Drew & Sons, manufacturers and merchants of high grade travel goods and silver in the City of London and Piccadilly Circus. He never went to university,

but his general schooling must have left him with an excellent knowledge of Latin, which was to serve him well in his later researches. Interested in the army, he became a 2nd Lieutenant in the Volunteers in 1898, and by 1911 had been promoted to Major. In August 1914, at the outbreak of the First World War, he reported for duty, was given the rank of Lt Colonel and ordered to raise a new battalion - the 2nd 7th Middlesex Regiment. He saw service in Gibraltar, Egypt and France, was awarded the OBE, and in 1919 the Territorial Decoration for valuable service.

In the meantime, Drew had married his first wife in 1902, by whom he had two children, a son and a daughter. Tragically, only a few months after his return to civilian life, his wife died of Spanish Influenza during the epidemic which swept through England after the end of the Great War. He himself was very ill, being left for the rest of his life with a tendency to bronchial pneumonia. He married again in 1921, another daughter was born, and he decided to move with his family to Hampshire in 1923, at first taking up residence in Chandlers Ford, and then in 1930 at Compton. He soon became actively involved in local activities, subscribing to a number of archaeological and historical journals, and joining local societies including the Hampshire Field Club. His name is recorded in the list of members for 1926/7 in volume 10 of *Proceedings* when his address was given as 'Hiltingbury Lodge, Chandlers Ford (now demolished), and in 1930 and 1931 at 'Yew Tree Cottage' in Compton village, which he rented temporarily while his new house 'Shepherds' in Shepherds Lane was being built. Another severe attack of ill health forced a move to Bournemouth in 1938, but a year later he returned to the Winchester area and in 1941 eventually settled at 'Colden Manor', Colden Common, where he died in August

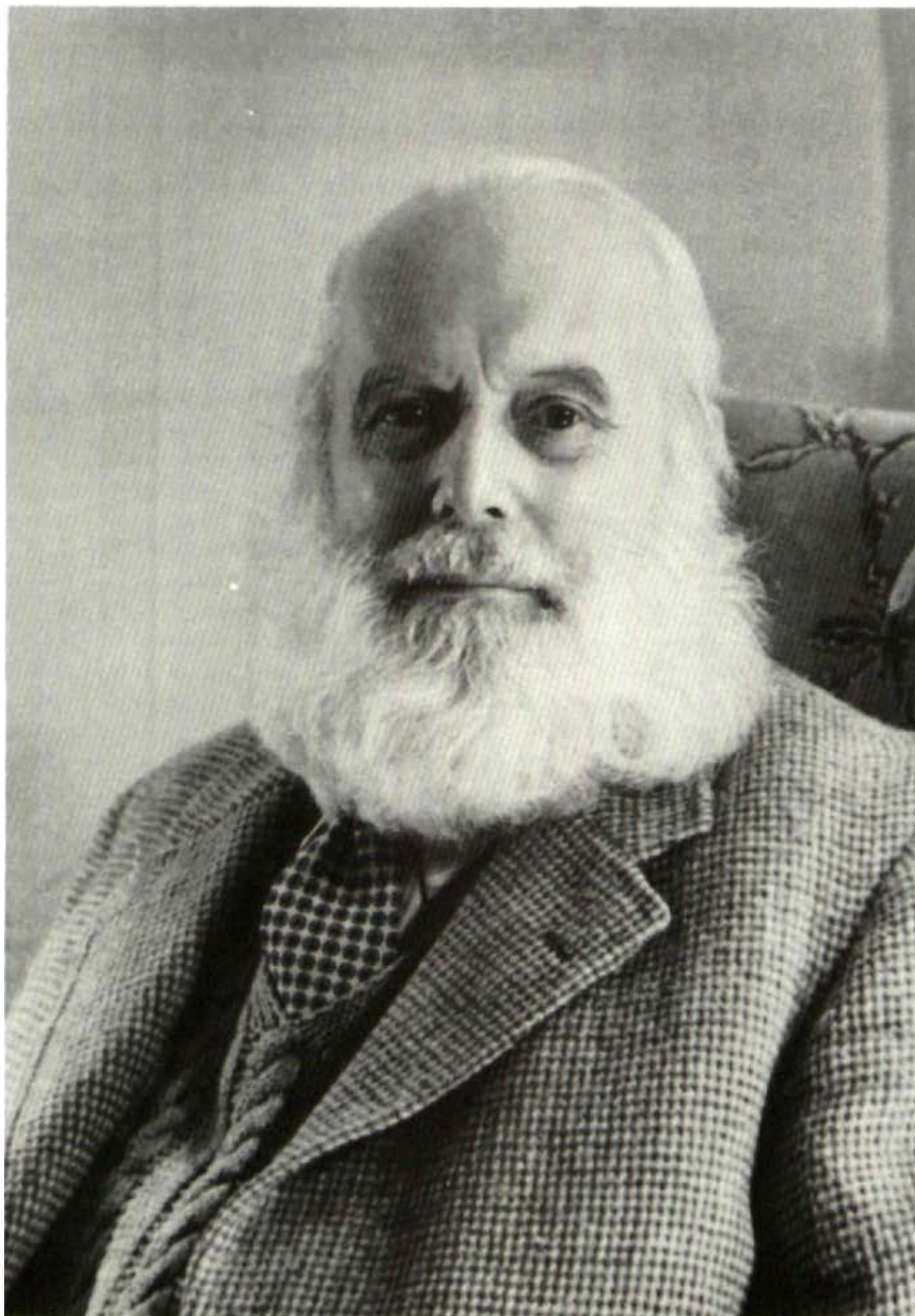


Fig 1. John Summers Drew (1879-1949).

1949. His ashes were interred in the graveyard of Compton church.

It was during the 1920s and early 1930s that John Drew's interest in and knowledge of the history of Hampshire gradually developed and came to focus on local history and the study of medieval monastic and manorial documents. He was fortunate in having family connections with similar interests to encourage and assist him. In 1930 his son, Charles E S Drew (1908-1952), had joined the staff of the Public Record Office, London, and in 1940 undertook the editing of Lambeth church wardens books (1504-1645) for the Surrey Record Society which led him into further research into the history and origins of that office. John Drew's brother, Lt Col C D Drew, was curator of Dorchester museum and was responsible for the reorganisation of the museum; he was also involved in the excavations at Maiden Castle near Dorchester which were undertaken by Mortimer Wheeler in the mid-1930's. Lt Col Drew conducted the Hampshire Field Club on their excursion to see recent work there in September 1935 (reported in the *Hampshire Chronicle* on 7 September 1935 and in the *Proceedings* of the HFC volume 13, 235).

John Drew's membership of the Hampshire Field Club, during a period when the society was taking an active role in the development of archaeology and history in Hampshire, was undoubtedly instrumental in introducing him to a number of influential people who were officers of the society at that time, including Dr J P Williams-Freeman, O G S Crawford, Frank Warren, G W Willis and Canon A W Goodman (the latter Vice-President in 1930). In the years between 1928 and 1931 Canon Goodman was engaged in the major task of examining, sorting, labelling and preparing an index for the Winchester Cathedral collection of St Swithun's Priory manorial rolls, which had previously been transferred from the Chapter Room to the Cathedral library. For the first time in many years these documents were thus made more accessible to readers, and John Drew, along with others, including Florence Goodman (a scholar in her own right), were

able to make use of this opportunity.

#### THE MANORIAL RECORDS OF ST SWITHUN'S PRIORY

The collection of medieval rolls in Winchester Cathedral is a large one. There are 133 compotus rolls of the 13th century, the earliest being of Wyke Regis, Dorset, of 1243. From the 14th century 441 have survived and in addition there are many other rolls covering the proceedings of manorial and hundred courts, a total of over 3000 manuscripts. That so many have survived the vicissitudes of history is in itself almost miraculous. Following the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII, whose letters patent dated 28 March 1541 replaced the Priory administration with that of the Dean and Chapter, the old St Swithun's Priory records were stored but rarely consulted and later scattered by Puritan soldiers in two raids on the Cathedral in 1643 and 1646. Some were rescued from the streets of Winchester by the diligence of the Chapter Clerk, John Chase, and then left largely neglected until the late 19th century when they were at last examined by such scholars as G W Kitchin and F J Baigent. The result was the publication of some compotus rolls and court rolls, but thereafter interest in the Winchester collection waned (Baigent 1891, Kitchin 1892; 1895).

Inspired and assisted by Canon Goodman, John Drew set to work in the Cathedral Library and between 1930 and 1947 he translated, analysed and commented on 150 compotus rolls, 77 court rolls, a total of 227 in all, as well as some of the rolls of the Barton manor court and the Buddlesgate Hundred. This was a remarkable achievement by any standards. His work, all in typescript, covers four of the Priory's Hampshire Manors, Thurmond, Houghton, Michelmersh and Chilbolton, together with the three volumes in Compton Parish, and six on the Silkstead demesne farm. In addition he translated and studied the beautiful volume of the early 14th century Winchester Customal, and at the end of his life produced perhaps his most remarkable work, a study of medieval agricultural implements and the medieval

Latin terms describing them.

After his death in 1949 John Drew's brother Charles and, later, other members of the family took over the responsibility of disposing of his various manuscripts; letters written at that time show that there was some difficulty in finding suitable institutions willing to accept and preserve them for posterity. The result was that no one institution obtained a complete collection of his research notes. Fourteen volumes of typescript were presented to Winchester Cathedral Library, and in 1951 eight duplicate copies were sent to the Institute of Historical Research in London, although the 'Custumal' study was not listed in the Institute's accession register until 1973. The large folder of loose typescript sheets, entitled the 'Study of Medieval Agricultural Latin Terms', appears to have remained for some time in a private collection at the Public Record Office in London. Dispersed in this fashion Drew's legacy seemed in danger of being squandered. Then quite by chance an acknowledgement by J S Titow (Titow 1969, 100) in his study of wool prices in the first half of the 14th century unearthed Drew's unpublished studies of five manors of St Swithun's Priory, which Titow had studied in the Institute of Historical Research, and also led to the discovery in the Institute of the hitherto forgotten 'Custumal' Study. Similarly, the bibliography in P D A Harvey's *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village, Cuxham, 1240-1400* (1962, 178) cited as privately owned [a] paper of J S Drew, containing extensive extracts from manorial accounts from southern England, thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, with notes on words for parts of carts, implements, etc.; a clue which enabled the 'Study of Medieval Agricultural Latin Terms' to be traced, eventually, to the British Academy in Oxford.

Locally at least, John Drew is best known for his first published work, *Compton near Winchester* (Drew, 1939), a book now long out of print and becoming increasingly rare. It was written for the benefit of the people of Compton, published privately, and as he says himself in his foreword:

This history of a Hampshire parish makes no claim to erudition or literary merit. The notes on which it is based began, as a matter of fact, in a penny account book, and nobody was more surprised than the writer when eventually fourteen files were required for their reception.

On the face of it, this small book is essentially a collection of historical data gleaned from a variety of sources, presented in twelve chapters beginning with the prehistoric and Roman periods, and ending in 1938 with the celebration of the hundredth birthday of Mrs Sarah Olive Fitt, who died in 1946 at the remarkable age of 108 years at 'Uplands' in Compton. The chapters dealing with the 13th century onwards all follow a similar pattern; a brief introduction is followed by a date by date report on items of interest. It records the lives and activities of the people of the parish, the squabbles of tenant farmers, and the troubles of the manorial courts and local officials trying to keep them in order. Some of the information is amusing, but always interesting and relevant. Nevertheless, there is also a great deal of accurate, factual data and a useful appendix which provides a Latin transcription of the Compton section of the original 14th century Winchester Custumal, inventories of the wills of Edward Smythe of Silkstead Farm dated 1577, and of Philip Taylor of Silkstead Manor House dated 1684, and other notes. That this unpretentious little book was cited by R A L Smith (Smith 1947, 65) in connection with the dubious activities of the sergeant of Silkstead, as revealed in the 1378 Silkstead roll, shows that *Compton near Winchester* reached a wider circulation than might have been expected.

In fact, the book gives little indication of the vast amount of research which went into its preparation. There are in Winchester Cathedral library three volumes of notes ('Compton Rolls & Lands', 'Compton Families' and 'General Notes'), as well as six volumes on Silkstead. Drew began his extensive researches into the Compton district in the later 1920s and it was during this early period that he was introduced to the great collection of documents in the Cathedral library, which was to

become an absorbing interest for the rest of his life. He studied the fragile court rolls of the great manor of Barton, of which Compton parish formed one of many tithings, those of the court of the Buddlegate Hundred, and the relevant sections of account or computus rolls of the Benedictine Priory of St Swithun, which then held some thirty manors scattered over a wide area of southern England. Data for later centuries was collected from a wide variety of sources; Cathedral lease and minute books, quarter sessions records, parish records, hearth tax records, wills, Hampshire Chronicle reports and so on — information which was no doubt harder to find then than it would be today, when so many historical documents are conveniently held in one place at the Hampshire Record Office.

*Compton near Winchester* was favourably reviewed in the *Hampshire Chronicle* on 12 August 1939, and also in the *Genealogists Magazine* in March 1940. Indeed, the Compton volumes and, in particular, the volume of 'Compton Families', if taken in conjunction with information provided by other parish records in the locality, could form the basis of a useful demographic survey. Drew's early research in the 1930s almost certainly provided the rigorous training which was to change his outlook from that of a purely local amateur historian to the historian with wider perspectives of the 1940s.

The 'Early Account Rolls of Portland, Wyke and Elwell', the second of Drew's papers to attain publication, appeared in the *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History & Archaeology Society* in two parts, part 1 in vol 66 in 1944 (31-45) and part 2 in vol 67 in 1945 (34-54). These account rolls are among the earliest in the Winchester Cathedral collection and date to the mid-13th century when the Dorset manors still formed part of the St Swithun Priory estates. Part 1 in vol 66 begins with a short introduction discussing the rolls themselves, their physical appearance and their respective dates between 1242 and 1249. Drew considered them all to be exceptionally well-written, that of Wyke (the earliest of the

three) unusual in being inscribed on one side of the skin only, while the others consisted of a bundle of seven skins stitched together. He thought the Wyke roll may have been a show-piece in its day, with few corrections or the usual marginal scribbles of the auditors, and the work of a highly skilled scribe rather than one of the ordinary clerks in accounts.

Drew continues with a full transcription of the Latin followed by a translation, with no further comments. The article reveals Drew himself as a skilled translator from medieval Latin text to a modern form, and one with the confidence to edit the text in the interests of clarity. In a note concerning his translation he says (Part 1, 38):

In the following translation two phases which recur in the original have been omitted. In the text almost all paragraphs begin with the formula 'The same render account of'. This has been retained only in a few special cases. Secondly, in rolls of this period, when any creature, from a horse to a bee, has died a natural death, its decease is almost invariably attributed to 'murrain'. This is a purely conventional expression, of no medical significance, and has been omitted throughout.

It was during his study and translation of the Priory's many account rolls throughout the War years that John Drew attempted to unravel the mysteries of medieval accounting; devious in the extreme, and revealed in many marginal notes and crossings out on the original parchment rolls. The method was simple. Accounts for transactions had to be rendered to the accounts department of the Priory bureaucracy, but responsibility rested on the reeve or sergeant alone. Hence if the auditors considered that some sheep, for example, had been sold too cheaply, or a cart had been repaired at too high a cost, they crossed out the reeve's figure and substituted their own choice between the lines. They also applied their own cash interpretations on grain and stock returns, finally adding up the new auditing figures in the margin and holding the unfortunate reeve answerable for the losses. The result

was that the reeves became increasingly expert at making excuses while the monk accountants became increasingly canny in their dealings with the reeves. The whole system, standard practice at the time, is particularly well demonstrated in the Michelmersh Roll of 1326, when the auditing system was generally tightened up.

This study of medieval financial practice was later to be elaborated into the 'Manorial Accounts of St Swithun's Priory', the third of Drew's works to be published and the most important. Published in 1947 in the *English Historical Review* (vol 12 1947, 20-41), it was the first to reach a wider audience and won acclaim among professional historians in the academic world. It was a tribute that Professor Eleanora Carus-Wilson reprinted the piece in her *Essays in Economic History* (vol 2 1962, 12-30) prepared for the English Historical Society.

Drew's essay is essentially a case-study confined to the Winchester priory archive, and concerned entirely with the accounts themselves. He certainly knew his accounts, was obviously familiar with both medieval and modern methods of book-keeping, and put great effort into the preparation of his tables, ensuring complete accuracy throughout. His introductory remarks describe the background of the Benedictine Priory of St Swithun, then Lord of about 30 manors (mostly in Hampshire), the hierarchy of officials from auditors at headquarters in Winchester to the reeves and sergeants at local level; and emphasise the wide gap which exists between modern and medieval mentality, attitude and practice in estate management. He says quite clearly that his purpose is to study the existing position on one large monastic estate between the years 1248 and 1400. He cites Walter of Henley and the Gloucester cartulary as medieval writers, although as his notes in 'A Study of Medieval Agricultural Latin Terms' show, he was in fact more aware of other sources than his 'Manorial Accounts' suggest.

At the time, the importance of Drew's paper

was that it tackled a new territory in historical research. Until then, no-one else had investigated the technical side of medieval accounting, and it retains its value in this field. P D A Harvey in his *Manorial Records* (Harvey 1984, 34) an extensive survey of manorial accounting in England, in mentioning how the system of fictitious sales worked in general use by the early 14th century, pays Drew a posthumous compliment when he says:

It was not understood by historians until J S Drew's exposition in 1947 from the accounts of Winchester Cathedral Priory.

Most recently, 'Manorial Accounts' has been cited by J N Hare in his article 'The Monks as Landlords' published in *The Church in Pre-Reformation Society* (Hare 1985, 83, 86), indicating that Drew's work is still of value to recent historians, nearly 40 years after his death. The importance of the Winchester Priory archive itself has been pointed out by R A L Smith in his article 'The Regimen Scaccarii in English Monasteries' (Smith 1947, 54-73) as being the first centralised and regular audit system to be established in an English monastery, and Dorothea Oschinsky also refers to the specifically Winchester method of estate management and accounting (Oschinsky 1971, 224). While the latter deals with the manors of the Winchester bishopric, the same applies to those of the Priory, the new methods in both cases probably inaugurated under Bishop Henry de Blois.

The 'Account Rolls of Portland, Wyke and Elwell' and the 'Manorial Accounts' perhaps give a misleading impression that Drew's interests were limited to the technicalities of medieval accounting and do not take account of the agricultural society the rolls depict between the lines of the closely written medieval text. In fact his unpublished typescripts, the volumes on the manors of Thurmond, Houghton, Michelmersh, Chilbolton and Silkstead, show this was not true. The great value of compotus rolls, manorial and court records, and the Winchester Custumal, all of which were translated and studied by Drew are that they can

be used to produce a picture of the everyday lives of the humble and illiterate peasantry of the time who have left no records of their own, either in the archaeological record of important surviving houses, or in the papers of state which record the doings of the great and famous. It is this aspect of medieval archives which has the greatest appeal to modern social historians, and there is no doubt that Drew was aware of the increasing interest displayed between the wars in monastic and episcopal estate papers by William Beveridge (later Lord Beveridge) and others. The notes included in all his manorial studies reflect Drew's own interest in social as well as economic history.

The study of the 'Manor of Thurmond', described as an English translation of the *Comptus Rolls 1325-1428*, is dated 1941/2, but for some reason was not finished at the time. There is a note in the volume:

There is no doubt had it not been for the translator's death, he would have written an Introduction and compiled an Index, similar to those in the translation of the rolls of Silkstead, Michelmersh, Houghton and Chilbolton.

It may be that John Drew chose to follow his research on Compton with the Manor of Thurmond since it lay near to Compton parish, being situated on the north side and to the west of St Cross. The name survives today in Thurmond Road and Thurmond Crescent in the Stanmore estate, and probably originated with an Adam Thurmond who witnessed the letting of a plot in Gar Street in November 1287, and a Henry Thurmond who held 5 virgates of land in Compton in 1287. This manor, transferred with others to the Dean and Chapter after the dissolution, was leased in 1683 to Robert Badger (hence the recent Badger Farm Estate) and was later to be included in the park of the new palace which Wren was building for Charles II in Winchester. Charles died before that lease was completed, the matter lapsed, and the Dean and Chapter regained possession in 1691 when the work was cancelled.

The 'Manor of Houghton', whose typescript volume is dated March 1943, lay near

Stockbridge. This work is a comprehensive translation of rental, custumal, *compotus* and manor court rolls, 1248-1331, complete with introductory notes and tables; a beautifully prepared volume with foreword and index. The introductory notes and tables cover 53 points of interest, ranging from topography to cider production, an analysis and summary of the complete text covering every aspect of manorial management in the 13th and 14th centuries. In particular, this work shows that John Drew avoided falling into the trap which can afflict local historians; that of amassing vast quantities of evidence for its own sake, without any clear aim or purpose. Aware that the chances of publication of his works were remote in his lifetime, he made the aims and principles guiding his researches clear in the foreword:

This typescript has been made in the hope that, from time to time, it may be found useful by workers on manorial, agricultural, or local history. The translation of the documents under review has followed the text as closely as possible, but words and phrases of doubtful meaning or of special significance have been left in the original Latin, and the same course has been taken in the case of words for which there seems no modern equivalent, or of which the dictionary interpretation seems to be inadequate. The introductory tables have been designed to set out clearly, and with indexes, to enable the student to trace quickly, the varied material which these documents contain. In this, as in previous work, the writer owes much to the never failing kindness and help of the Rev Canon A W Goodman FSA, Librarian of Winchester Cathedral.

The volume of the 'Manor of Michelmersh' near Romsey, dated December 1943, follows a similar pattern to that of Houghton and is likewise a translation and study of rental, custumal, *compotus* and manor court rolls of 1238-1331, but in some ways is unusually interesting. Drew noticed that Michelmersh was conveniently placed near other St Swithun's manors in the district. It was closely associated with Houghton, Nursling lay seven miles downstream on the River Test, Chilbolton

nine miles upstream, and the demesne farm of Silkstead only seven miles to the east. Other manors abutted onto that of Michelmersh: to the north the royal manor of Somborne, with the small one of Elledon; to the south-east the great manor of Merdon held by the Bishop of Winchester; to the south the manor of Romsey held by the Benedictine Abbey of Romsey; to the southwest the small manors of Stanbridge Earls and Ronville; and to the northwest, Mottisfont. The Roman road from Winchester to Sarum crossed the River Test at Horsebridge, and while much of it later fell into disuse, at the time it provided the priors with an easy 12 mile ride along a good road from Priory headquarters in Winchester. Consequently, the buildings of the manor court were much used, as a comfortable country house for visiting priors, who stayed there frequently, as well as for passing royalty with their vast retinues of men and horses. Drew remarked that the expenses of the priors steadily increased (as shown in the Account Rolls), and the lavish scale of entertaining no doubt contributed to the financial problems which beset St Swithun's from time to time. He adds with his typically dry sense of humour:

In the famine year of 1315-1316, the accounts show that whoever else went short, it was not the Prior's household.

Certainly, no expense was ever spared to provide for the comfort of the prior; in 1270 the relatively enormous sum of £4 6s 8d was paid for a horse for his use (perhaps a large horse for a portly man), and this at a time when wages for manorial workers averaged 3 shillings a year. Up to 1299, shepherds and cowherds earned 3 shillings per annum, dairywomen 2 shillings and carters 3s 6d. In 1270 the cost of foodstuffs can also be compared, or rather contrasted, with that of the horse; half an ox carcass cost 4 shillings, geese 3 pence each, fowls a penny each and eggs were cheap at 250 for 8 pence.

In 1318 it appears that the auditors of the accounts obviously felt that the expenses of the holiday jaunts of the priors of St Swithun's were

getting somewhat out of hand, and embarked on what amounts to an economy campaign. Horses, at least, were not to be entertained with free fodder without the express permission of the Lord Prior. Visits of the 'Kings Men' (of Edward II) were also an expensive nuisance. In 1325 it is recorded that 60 of the King's war horses stayed three nights, with the King's oxen as well, and both ate a vast amount of the manor's forage. In the same year, more visits involved paying substantial bribes to the King's men to go away, the carters being given 2 shillings lest they put their cart horses on the manor.

There are, too, as Drew comments, other fascinating glimpses of the life of the time, particularly in the 'extrer expendes' sections of the compotus rolls. In 1307 32s 6d was paid by the Manor for 8,900 tiles, ridge tiles and paving tiles to be sent to Winchester, an indication that a thriving tile industry was already established at Michelmersh. Goods and people were travelling long distances; carters in 1311 carried the wool clip to London, and in 1316 made a six day journey with a cask of wine for the notorious Hugh Despencer from Southampton to La Vesterne. Between the lines can be read the rising living standards and expectations, between 1248 and 1325, of the rural peasantry who ate at the lord prior's table, whether servile tenants doing their customary work at harvest, or paid craftsmen. In 1248 the food supplied was simply bacon and wheaten bread, but in 1325 food was more varied and expensive; wheaten bread, mutton, cheese, pigeon, geese, ale and cider. Once more the auditors must have considered that eating at the lords prior's table was becoming too much of a good thing, and abolished the custom, substituting a 2 pence in cash instead. Similar action was taken in the other Manors of Houghton, Chilbolton and the Silkstead demesne farm.

Michelmersh is unique among other manors studied by Drew, in that it still retains as a standing building part of the two-storey 13th century wing of the original grange; the timber roof, formerly hidden by a later structure,



has been restored and can be seen today. The records in the compotus rolls 1248-1282 provide invaluable documentation for archaeological research; costs of buildings and individual items are listed in detail. There was a chapel, a hall, a pantry (a bread cupboard was added in 1311), kitchen and butler's cellar, chambers for the priors and guests. A garderobe is also mentioned, as well as a full range of farm buildings.

The two volumes on 'Chilbolton,' dated December 1945, are similar in style and pattern to the earlier studies but have a distinctive feature in that the records survive up to 1433, virtually a century later than those of Houghton, Thurmond and Michelmersh, and therefore as Drew points out in his foreword to vol 1, the demesne farming system can be studied, with its rise and fall, over a longer period. By 1444, the demesne land had been let to a farmer, John Williams, the former reeve, on the usual stock and land lease. The Chilbolton administration seems to have been very conservative in its attitude to changing circumstances; the new lease of 1444 came almost fifty years after that of Silkstead, and the manor continued to operate an unnecessarily complicated system of double bookwork more than a hundred years after the two separate manors of Chilbolton and Chilbolton Camerarii had been amalgamated. In the Chilbolton roll of 1339 there is an interesting example of the heights of absurdity which could be reached in the complicated auditing system. In one case when a cow proved barren, judged to have been an avoidable misfortune, the unlucky reeve was charged both for the hypothetical calf, and for the 65 lbs of imaginary cheese which had been lost.

Chilbolton, Drew found, was unusual as far as sheep farming (the mainstay of the local economy) was concerned, in that it seems to have been run as an independent unit, in contrast to Michelmersh and Houghton, which were run in combination, all the breeding being done at Michelmersh, while the wethers were kept at Houghton. In 1348, just before the Black Death, there was a comparatively rare attempt to improve the breeding stock by buying five

rams, at three times the usual price. Once more great political events are reflected in the records. In 1346 one of the King's archers (presumably bound for Crecy) made off with some sheep, and in 1415 (the period of the Agincourt Campaign) one Sir James Haryngton, with retinue, stayed for seven weeks while waiting to embark for France; an expensive visit, especially as his men broke open the locked doors of the store rooms.

Drew's researches on the Manor of Chilbolton reveal his increasing competence as an historian, with the ability to tabulate, index and analyse items of interest extracted from the great mass of detail contained in the medieval account rolls and to deduce from these evidence of the social and economic changes which were taking place between 1248 and 1433 in what he considered to be a good example of an average Hampshire Manor. One of these trends, the move away from the cumbersome system of reliance on customary work by servile labourers, is explored in greater depth in Drew's research on Silkstead which follows his work on Chilbolton.

The Silkstead volumes, which translate 66 compotus rolls (1267-1399), are dated May 1947 and are concerned with the demesne farm (probably established between 1215 and 1243), the food farm which supplied the Priory at Winchester. While other priory manors show minor variations in relation to each other, Silkstead is in a class by itself. The other manors were of ancient foundation, their boundaries largely inherited from Saxon times, and all contained servile tenants owing feudal dues and customary services. Where there was a demesne farm serving the priory's own needs (as in Chilbolton), it was worked by servile tenants providing unpaid labour in return for their holdings. Silkstead was quite different. It was deliberately created from a thinly populated part of the parish of Compton, within the great Manor of Barton, with the existing tenants being compensated by reduced rents on their lands elsewhere. No doubt a model in its day, the whole of this highly efficient demesne farm was managed and worked almost entirely

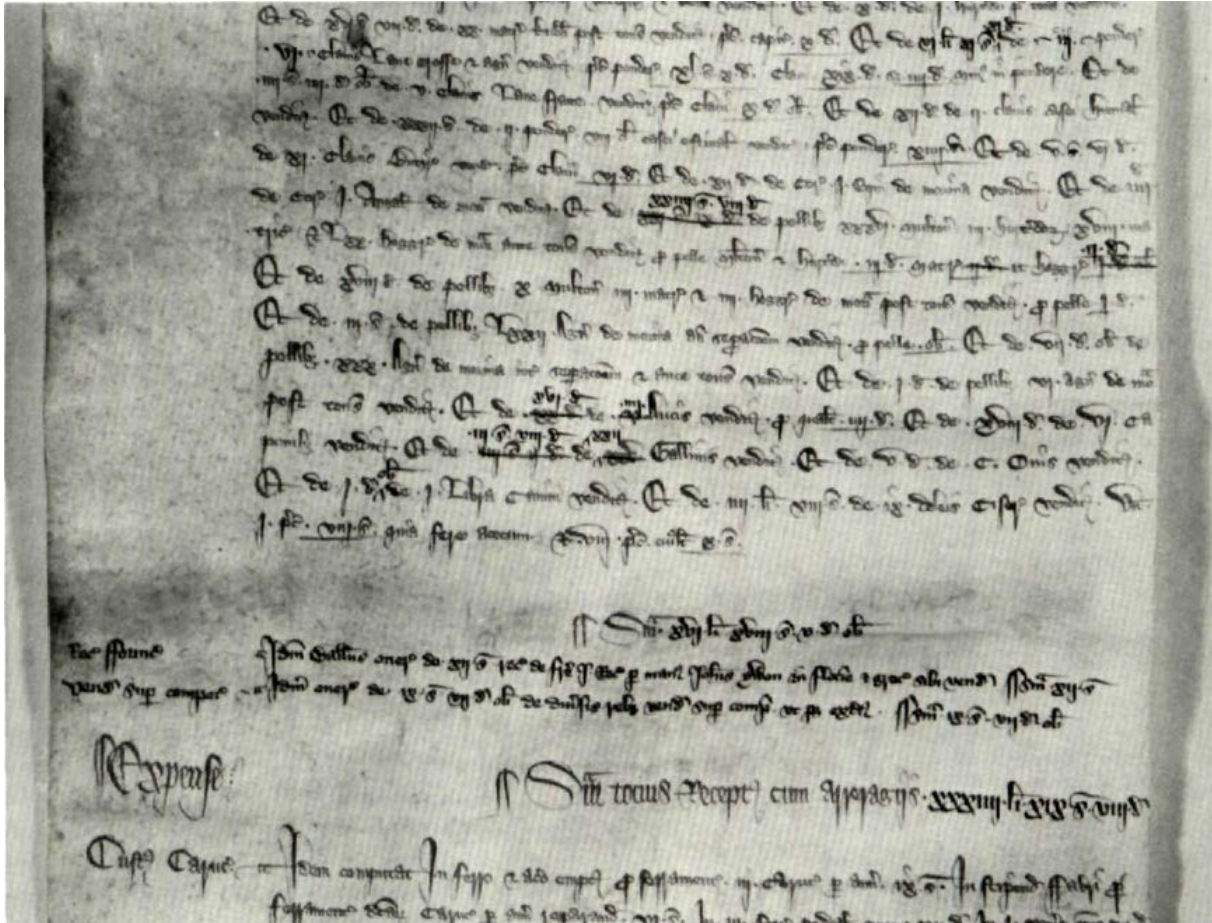


Fig 2. Comptus Roll 1335, Silkstead. (Photograph by John Crook, by permission of Winchester Cathedral Library.)

by hired labour. This, as Drew points out, gives Silkstead a special interest as a field for economic research, since the rolls are uncluttered by feudal dues and duties, and the profits and losses of 13th and 14th century farm management can be clearly analysed and judged.

The detail of acreages sown in various crops (which Drew explains in tabulated form), reveals a slow decline in arable production from 1280 onwards, long before the catastrophe of the Black Death in 1348 brought temporary ruin to all the Hampshire manors. In Silkstead there is a gap in the surviving rolls from 1348 to 1355, suggesting a reduced staff at headquarters, and since the quality of the accounting is noticeably poorer after 1355, probably one which was less skilled. The prior himself was one of the victims of the plague. Silkstead was and still is within the parish of Compton, so that the relevant extracts from manor court rolls, giving family names and

changes of tenancies, provide some clues to the death rate resulting from the Black Death. There appear to have been 31 families in Compton before 1348, and only 25, including 11 newcomers (presumably filling dead men's shoes), afterwards. This indicates that out of the original 31, 17 families had died out, rather more than half. To draw fixed conclusions from Drew's analysis of these figures may well be dangerous since other factors could be involved; nevertheless, since these Compton families would have provided most of the permanent and part-time staff at the demesne farm, it is clear that the farm management must have suffered severely. The decline in production there is obvious; between 1348 and 1355, arable acreage declines from about 241 to 150 acres, the sheep flock from 763 to 413, cattle from 41 to 19, so that the loss amounts to something like 40%. A number of field names vanish, and recovery was slow. The loss of

cash income was serious, for while (as Drew remarks) the Priory had great possessions, it also had great expenses. In the roll of 1387 he shows that prices were falling for agricultural produce, while wages had risen. Ploughmen were now paid 5 shillings instead of 4 shillings a year, dairywomen 4 shillings instead of 3 shillings in previous years, a rise of about 25%. In 1396 the Priory gave up the struggle to farm the demesne land themselves, and it was let to a Thomas Hanytone on a 'stock and land' lease for £4 per annum, the tenant being required to replace live and dead stock taken over to its equivalent value at the end of the agreement. The advantages on both sides were obvious; for the Priory, farming rents were more profitable than farming land as they provided a fixed income instead of fluctuating receipts, and the complicated accounting system (which was written up in great detail on long parchment rolls), could be replaced by simple rent transactions, while the tenant had the freedom to cultivate his land as he wished, with the security of a fixed tenure.

The buildings of the once great Silkstead grange have, unlike those of Michelmersh, left little trace, apart from odd piles of carved stone incorporated into later buildings. Drew was aware of the site, and while no written evidence survives that he attempted an archaeological survey of its extent, he had in the course of field walking in the area, realised its importance. In his translation of the roll of 1267 he records in detail the material used in the construction of the building, and in the roll of 1307 that used for the building of the dovecote, probably now incorporated in an existing house, reconstructed in the late 19th century (Turnbull 1986). One interesting feature of the Silkstead Estate is that 59 rolls (from 1404-1566) have survived, and these, with information recorded in the later lease books of the Dean and Chapter, enabled Drew to trace and list the tenancies of the farmers at Silkstead through the centuries, until the old demesne farm was eventually absorbed into the Heathcote Estate in the 19th century.

## THE WINCHESTER CUSTUMAL

In the course of the years spent working in the Cathedral Library, John Drew had already examined the beautifully written and illustrated manuscript of the Winchester Custumal, and relevant extracts had already been included in his studies of Compton, Houghton, Michelmersh and Chilbolton. However, his folder of over 300 unbound sheets of typescript (now placed in the Institute of Historical Research in London) is a translation from the Latin of the complete work, probably put together about 1947. The medieval volume, still held in Winchester Cathedral Library, consists in its present form of a series of folios preceded by an additional eleven folios, which are simply rentals for Hurstbourne Priors and Sparkford and seem to have no direct connection with the custumal itself, probably bound in to the volume at a later date. Drew's translation, therefore, begins with folio 12, Chilcombe (Chiltcumbe), and ends with folio 184, Wonston (Wonsyngton). Folio 180, being the original coronation oath of Edward II 1037/8, has been omitted. With the exception of folios 177-180 (which appear to be in a different hand and written on smaller sheets), the custumal was copied during the 1320s in its entirety by a monk of the Priory, one John of Guildford, from at least 25 earlier documents. These had been compiled at different times during the period 1221-1310 and listed rents, services and customs in each manor. Drew considered the Winchester Custumal to be equal in importance to the well-known one of Glastonbury, but only two small sections had been published (Baigent 1891, 83-109, and Smirke 1851, 182-211).

The first 32 sheets of John Drew's study of the Custumal contain a summary of the contents. He lists 26 manors controlled by the Priory of St Swithun, 14 in Hampshire, 10 in Wiltshire, and one each in Berkshire and Somerset. Parish churches are listed together with the numbers and types of tenants, with additional analytical notes and tables on acreages, rents, churchscots and so on. Mills working in Hampshire

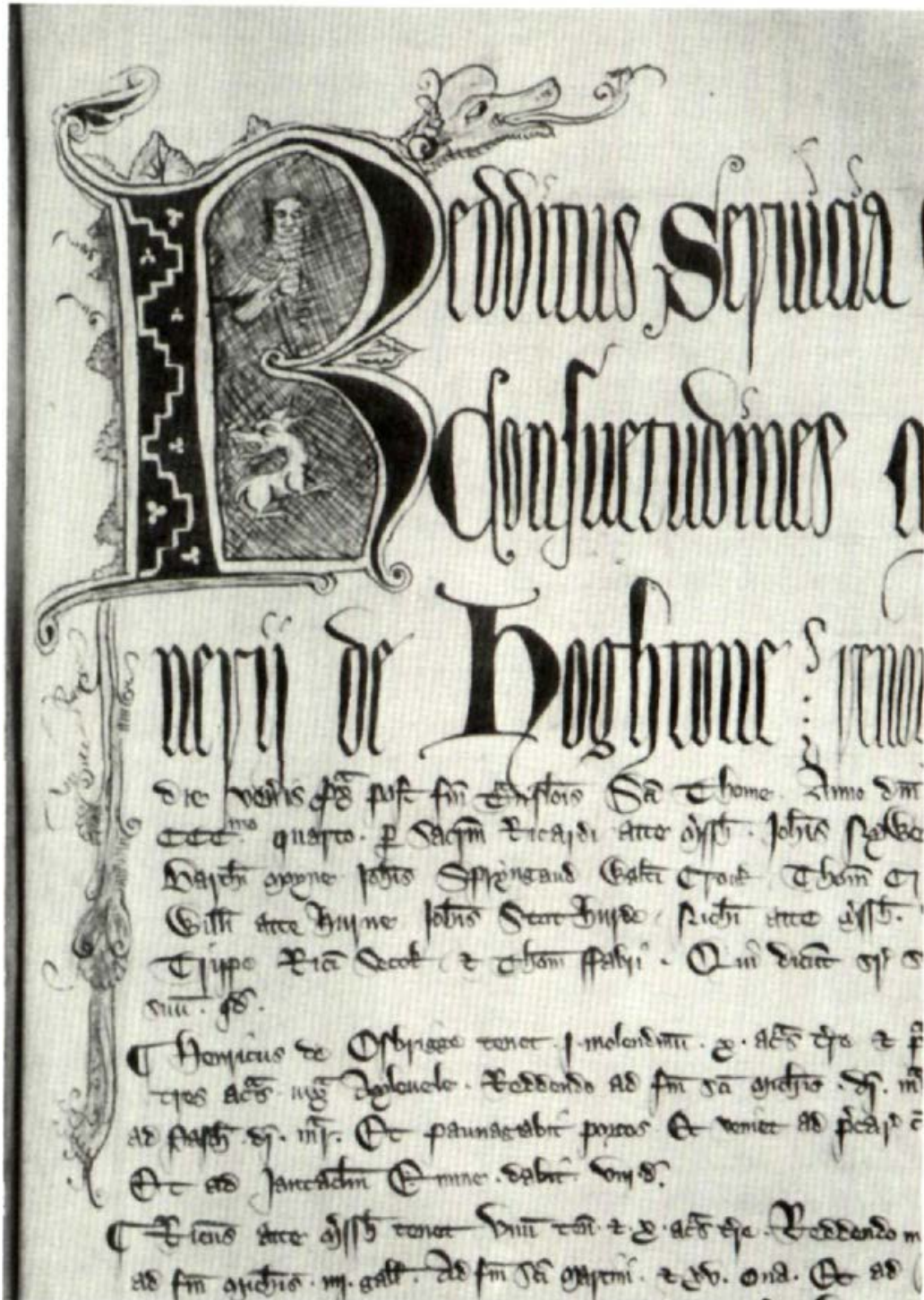


Fig 3. Winchester Cathedral (circa 1320s). Folio 173. (Photograph by John Crook by permission of Winchester Cathedral Library.)

are given with their rents, and all the various restrictions on villein tenants, their sons, daughters and animals listed, together with the customary taxes, heriots (death duties), tallage and so on, inflicted upon them. In fact, the summary deals with all aspects of medieval life and land management, and concludes with an evaluation of the problems raised by medieval

land measures and the archaic Latin terms used to describe them. The record part of the study (sheets 33-174), provides translations in note form of the information contained in the custumal of each manor in alphabetical order, beginning with Aulton (Alton Parva or Alton Priors), Wilts, and Berthona (Barton, the home manor of the Priory), and ending with

Wonston, Hants. In each case the translation is followed by a 'Points to Note' section, comparative tables, notes on words used, and any unusual features of rents, or customary services required. The remaining sheets are devoted to the complete although not necessarily verbatim translation of the folios of the 14th century manuscripts, in the order in which they have been bound, with the exception of the section on Compton.

This translation and study of the 14th century Custumal makes interesting, and often entertaining reading. The Jews of Winchester in the parish of St James (folio 28r, sheet 190 of the translation) held their cemetery for a rent of 2 shillings, and also held 1 curtillage formerly of the brothers of the Hospital of St John Winton for a rent, on St John Baptist's day, of 9 pence. The wide variety of 'payments in kind' required, all presumably fossilised through hundreds of years of tradition, includes horse-shoes, with and without nails, strawberries from Compton and Morestead, eels from Nursling Mill, incense, fowls, eggs, beer and silver spoons. The equally wide variety of customary work also demanded from each villein tenant was obviously the end product of many disputes and compromises through the years. It is hardly surprising that by the 1320s some formal and clearly written statements were necessary to avoid more time-wasting and devious arguments with tenants. There are references to forests and wild beasts; at Overton one tenant holds half a virgate for guarding two plough teams of the Lord's oxen from wolves. Christmas festivities, gifts, feasts with and without candles, exact descriptions of the food and drink to be provided on table or carried away, all are carefully recorded in detail so that everyone knew exactly what to expect.

This translation of the Winchester Custumal (whose original medieval manuscripts, although in surprisingly good condition, are too precious and fragile to be handled by large numbers of research workers), provides a mine of information for genealogists tracing the names of land holders, and for social historians studying medieval work practices and

attitudes. Whitchurch (the only borough held by St Swithun's Priory) records a named list of all its burgage tenants, drawn up in the time of King Henry III (1251 AD), complete with the streets in which they lived, their land holdings and rents — a useful basis for a study of medieval Whitchurch. Given the value of the vast amount of information in the Custumal, it is surprising that it has been so little used by local historians; as far as I know, John Drew's English translation is the only complete one which has been made to date, although the Custumal has been studied and an accurate Latin transcript of its contents given in modern typescript by Katharine Hanna (Hanna 1954).

Drew's last major work (which I have called 'A Study of Medieval Agricultural Latin Terms') was compiled during the last two years of his life. The fruit of his 20 years of diligent research into manorial records, it consists of a large file of loose papers left on his desk, untitled and unfinished when he died in August 1949, after a long struggle against ill-health. The file is in two parts. The first section is organised under headings such as carts, harness, harrows, agricultural implements, ropes, ploughs and so on. The discussion of the plough is particularly thorough, extending to some 156 pages. The second part consists of translated extracts from manorial account rolls, organised by county and place, and arranged in alphabetical order. The study covers many counties apart from Hampshire, ranging over the southern half of England, with references to places further afield.

Over the years, John Drew had become increasingly interested in the technical aspects of medieval agricultural practice, building up a vocabulary of medieval Latin words, and indexing clues to the constitution and the parts of implements used in the 13th, 14th and early 15th centuries. He now turned his attention to the study of other manors, outside those of St Swithun's, to learn more about the administration of estates in other parts of England, to analyse differences between them, and to place his earlier studies in a wider context. To this end, although hindered by bouts



Fig 4. The Winchester Custumal (circa 1320s). Folio 22. (Photograph by John Crook, with permission of Winchester Cathedral Library.)

of illness, the problems of travelling in a post-war England, and enduring petrol shortages, he managed to read in the muniment rooms of Gloucester Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, Exeter Cathedral and Canterbury, examined archives held in various counties, and in the Library of the British Museum and the Public Record Office in London. He traced and read early treatises of agriculture and searched for details about ploughs, carts, sheep and manorial accountancy. He found this extensive reading stimulating; each new estate contributed new knowledge, since different scribes, by using different words, could give clues to the explanation of hitherto unresolved problems. His skill in reading medieval rolls appears to have reached a rare peak of perfection, by now able to scrutinise for relevant information up to 30 rolls a day. He found the British Museum rule that no student could take out more than 10 rolls a day somewhat irksome.

Fortunately his published article on manorial accounting had made his name and his work

known outside Hampshire, and this provided a useful introduction to lecturers and research workers in universities throughout Britain with whom he was able to correspond. The Librarian of Canterbury Cathedral, W P Blore, who was also working on similar studies, and had compiled an elaborate set of card indexes in the 1920s and 1930s, was particularly helpful. All the evidence gathered for the 'The Study of Medieval Agricultural Latin Terms' was meticulously indexed and tabulated to reveal the patterns of technical developments through time. He worked out the evolution of the draught tackle of the medieval plough, how ropes of homegrown hemp succeeded ropes of twisted withies, themselves to be succeeded by iron chains. The origins and evolution of the plough, and the metal ploughshares, which were fixed to the wooden frames, were of particular interest to him. He noticed that most manors bought their ploughshares ready made, and devised a method of calculating their weights in different areas. East Anglian

ploughshares, costing only a third of those in other counties, must have been much lighter than usual. He observed how new methods, and new designs, tended to appear first in a particular district, for example East Anglia, and gradually spread throughout the country. The dating of these changes he considered to be of importance, especially, as it seemed to him, they had not been worked out before. The whole work is organised for quick reference. Each section in the first half provides a list of Latin terms, with a note of words of unknown or uncertain meaning, giving their references in the various rolls, with dates.

The 'Study' could well provide the basis for a substantial work on the evolution and distribution of the medieval plough, and everything associated with it. It is a tragedy that Drew did not have the time to write and get published another article of the quality of his 'Manorial Accounts of St Swithun's Priory'.

## CONCLUSION

John Drew's 20 years of work on medieval documents illustrates a problem which has afflicted historical research in all fields. So much excellent and valuable work like his has been written up in manuscript form, only to languish unpublished and often unknown in archive rooms not normally accessible to the public. Inevitably, this must lead to the duplication of particular aspects of study, and much wasted time and effort that would have been better employed elsewhere on new themes.

Drew understood only too well that his accumulated notes, owing to cost considerations, would probably never be published. His aim was the altruistic one of furthering our knowledge of medieval agriculture and manorial administration, attempting to explore facets of these subjects which he believed had not hitherto been dealt with. His service to posterity and future research workers was very great. In the 1930s and 1940s, when the pace of research was less than it is now, he had access to the great private collection of documents in the Winchester Cathedral Library, and was

able to transcribe and translate fragile parchment rolls which can never be made available to large numbers of readers today.

That John Drew was aware of the importance of the Winchester Priory archives is self-evident. The great strength of the St Swithun's records is that they include the three major types of manorial records; account rolls, court rolls, and custumals, whereas other collections, such as those of Durham, Ely, Norwich, Canterbury and Worcester, often lack one or more of these. The St Swithun's records also provide quite a reasonable series, in spite of the severe losses suffered in the past, and are particularly good for the period before the Black Death. Drew himself considered the collection to be the equal of that of Glastonbury, a view endorsed personally by Jan Titow. It is difficult to explain why the Priory records have not been used as extensively as their quality suggests they should have been. One reason is that the pipe rolls of the Bishopric of Winchester offer an equally good series, perhaps give a greater coverage, and overlap geographically. Nevertheless, if both Priory records and Bishopric records were taken in conjunction with each other, they could produce a more comprehensive study than either taken singly, and over a wider area.

John Drew, with the help and encouragement of the Goodmans, was the first scholar to make a really substantial contribution to the study of the great collection of St Swithun's Priory documents held in Winchester Cathedral, and to date no-one has followed his example. He belonged to a generation who had been given an essentially classical education and an excellent knowledge of Latin, which enabled him to translate with facility. The quality of his translations can hardly be faulted given that his aim was clearly to extract information as accurately as possible, rather than to render a word for word translation including every alteration, scribble and standard repetitive phrase written by the medieval scribe. He was always scrupulous in retaining the Latin word or phrase when not entirely clear about its meaning, and while in some cases a



Fig 5. The Winchester Custumal (circa 1320s). Folio 113. (Photograph by John Crook, by permission of Winchester Cathedral Library.)

personal name may occasionally be misread, it is hardly surprising when one tries to read the original oneself. For example, the name of John Cornifer (Drew) a virgater of Freefolk (folio 64v in the Witchurch section of the Winchester Custumal), could equally be that of John Corveser, a shoemaker. A sidelight on the many personal names given in the Custumal is that they could provide useful material for

the study of the development of the surname in Hampshire.

Given that few people today can equal Drew's competence in reading Latin medieval script, his translations are most helpful, particularly to amateur historians. That he had a rare capacity for long and patient study of medieval manuscripts is also self-evident. His self-appointed task amounted to an unpaid but



virtually full-time job for the last 20 years of his life, working both in the Cathedral Library and his study at home. Some might ask 'why did he do it?' The answer, given by those who knew him well, was that he enjoyed doing it and was convinced he was doing something worthwhile. Ill-health had forced him into early retirement in his mid-forties, but fortunately his family background had provided him with private means to make the most of his enforced leisure and turn it to profitable use in the field of historical research.

His work has been used and acknowledged by a number of distinguished historians, including J S Titow and P D A Harvey, as well as by many university students whose own theses remain unpublished such as J G Greatrix (1978) and K Hanna (1954). He understood that the writing of social and local history was becoming more important, and that these histories could often be written more easily if less well-known documents in public and private ownership could be discovered and preserved. To this end, in May 1947, he was present at a meeting convened in Winchester by the Hampshire Field Club under its then President, O G S Crawford, with the aim of setting up a National Register of Archives,

and a County organisation to discover, record and preserve archives in this area. He was appointed to the Committee where his expertise and knowledge of local archives was invaluable. The meeting was reported at length in the Hampshire Chronicle of 24 May 1947, and briefly in the report of HFC Council for 1947 (Proceedings, vol 17, p 239).

John Summers Drew, at least at the end of his life, had the satisfaction of being recognised as a serious historian outside his own immediate circle. He may have begun his researches as an amateur, without the benefit of university training or contacts which university life can bring, but he undoubtedly ended his career with the status of a professional historian who had made a unique contribution to the study of local history.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- HFC Hampshire Field Club & Archaeological Society  
 WCL Winchester Cathedral Library  
 HRO Hampshire Record Office

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*We reflowed the text to fit an A4 page size. Page numbers have been preserved from the original but, because of the different page aspect ratio, page breaks occur at different points in the text.*

*Automatic text recognition software was used, with manual proof-reading. Despite the care taken, it's possible that some errors were introduced.*

*We corrected obvious mistakes in the original type-setting (for example, "Forset" for "Dorset"). Other words which would be considered misspellings in 2018 ("cemetary" and "curtillage" for example) we left unchanged in case they faithfully represented Drew's words as quoted by Turnbull.*

*Barbara Turnbull passed away in September 2013, having spent her last few years living in Old Parsonage Court, Otterbourne.*