

TRE

When the commissioners collected data for Domesday Book one of the questions they were to put was who owned whatever it was when King Edward was alive and dead, that is 1066 and the results of this appear in Domesday Book under the heading TRE (tempus regis Edwardi the time of King Edward). Historians seem to have generally assumed that this data did indeed apply to 1066.

However, certainly in some cases, this is not so. For example, in the Southwark entry Godwin is said to have held the Earl's penny TRE though he died in 1053 (Dawson 1999). In the Lambeth entry the head manor is said to have been held by Godiva, more usually known by the shorter form Goda, Edward the Confessor's sister who died before 1049 (Dawson 2005 p5). Does this matter? Well it can certainly alter the narrative in places. It has been suggested by one historian that Lambeth church was erected by Goda to balance her brother's Westminster Abbey as a sign of Edward's power but Westminster Abbey was not started till c 1051 by when Goda was dead (in any case there is no evidence that she built Lambeth church).

But there is another consideration. The earl's penny in 1066 would have been held by Harold, Godwine's son who became Harold II on Edward's death and I did suggest in 1999 that his omission might have been because he became a 'non person' but in fact there are plenty of references to Harold in Domesday. For example the entry for what became the manor of Vauxhall mentions Harold so there must be some other explanation. What happened in Lambeth after 1049 is unknown; in 1086 Domesday Book says it belonged to Lambeth church as did another manor at Aston sub Edge which is also recorded as belonging to Goda TRE. Rochester claimed that Goda gave them Lambeth but Blair dismisses this and the evidence is that they were given it by William II in 1088 (Dawson 2005). There are a number of TRE entries in Domesday referring to Goda so this was clearly not a peculiarity of the Surrey sheriff. So why should the Domesday jury answer the TRE question by giving the owner 13 or 17 years before 1066? I think the answer must be that these answers did not come from oral evidence given by juries but from written evidence.

I would suggest that the sheriff had documents derived from the pre-Conquest sheriffs; could these have been something akin to the later inquisitions post-mortem on the deaths of the last owner to die before 1066. Inquisitions post-mortem in the post conquest period were meant to determine if the deceased held any land in chief of the King to protect the King's feudal rights but this is unlikely to be the function before the Conquest and perhaps they were held to establish what the deceased held and who his heirs were. Despite the aim of post-Conquest inquisitions, juries did also list property not held in chief and in some cases even when the deceased held nothing in chief they still listed his or her property (see for example *Cal Inq Post Mortem* Vol 21 654); they are also punctilious in naming heirs and their ages. Is this a survival of the earlier function of such inquisitions?

In the case of Godwin, his death would be the last occasion for such an inquest since his son Harold died after Edward the Confessor (it is possible that some sort of inquest was held after Harold's death since William would want to know what Harold

held so he could confiscate it but this is not relevant to the argument made here). With Lambeth, as I said above, it is not known who held it in 1066 but if either Lambeth church or Rochester Cathedral, the two most likely candidates (see above), held it then Goda's death would also have been the last occasion for such an inquest. 'Vauxhall' is more difficult but it does not seem to have been in private hands since the early 11th century when it was probably granted to Tovi the Proud by Cnut who gave it to Waltham 'Abbey' so there was probably no later occasion for an inquest. The 'Vauxhall' entry mentioned above must date from after 1062 when Harold gave Vauxhall to Waltham (though that is not straightforward see Dawson 2003) and they did presumably still hold it in 1066. Did this information come from the jury or was that too from documentary evidence (a copy of Harold's charter?).

So can we surmise that the late Saxon state had already created Inquisitions Post Mortem which it contributed to the Norman government machine as with so much else; this is, of course very speculative and wills might be another possible source for such information though they would not explain the features of later inquisitions.

One final point. Why did William want to know this information? Does it suggest that he intended to undo some of the wilder excesses of his barons? Intimations of mortality (he died the next year) may have prompted such ideas and it is difficult to see to what other use such information could be put.

Bibliography

Dawson 199; 'Southwark in Domesday Book' SLAS News 79 (Sept 1999), p4-5
Dawson 2003; 'Tovi the Proud and Lambeth' SLAS News 93 (September 2003) p6-7
Dawson 2005; 'The origin of Lambeth Church' SLAS News 101 (March 2005) p4-6

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