

List of the Household of Cardinal Thomas Wolsey

Parchment. A long roll made from a single hide. Overall: 872mm x 176mm. It is divided into four columns, each bounded in red, of varying widths: 32mm, 92mm, 18mm, 20mm. Writing occurs only in the first and second column, with the second column also divided horizontally by black lines, its top section 47mm high, the central section 640mm, the penultimate 101mm, and the last 84mm. Written throughout in one tiny italic script. Some rust damage at top and bottom, with loss of text; the marks are suggestive of it having been kept rolled in a metal container:

Katerina Powell, 'Restoring Cardinal Thomas Wolsey's Household List', *Christ Church Library Newsletter*, 7 (2011), 19-20. The damage must post-date the insertion of the added text as it too has been eroded at its top.

CONTENTS

Recto: Divided into four sections as follows:

Opening: 'A true note of the order o<f> house who <... ...> one of the Priuie Cha<mber> to the most po<tent> Prince Henry the VIII <L>ord Chancellor of <E>ngland and Ar<ch>Bishop of <Y>ork Bishop of W<inchester A>bbott of St Albons <..> remay<ned ... > the Tower.

Main list: [first column:] 'In the Chappell [second column, items bracketed to left and right:] A Dean<...> Divine | A Subdeane --- [first column:] Officers of the Chuancery [second column, items bracketed to left and right] The Clarke of the Crowne ... A Clarke of the Checke'.

Divided into 24 groups, by location, each group listing the officers and their number, bracketing them and giving, to the right a total for each group: Chapel (total: 51), Privy Chamber (61), Great Chamber (116), 'Officers in the Hall' (13), Hall Kitchen (31), Privy Kitchen (6), Scalding house (3), Pantry (3), 'Buttry' (6), Ewry (6), Cellar (6), 'Chaundry' (3), 'Wafrie' (3), Wardrobe (11), Laundry (35), Backhouse (7), Woodyard (2), Barn (2), Garden (3), 'Porters at the Gate' (4), Stable (24), Almory (2), 'Other Officers' (19), 'Officers of the Chauncery' (5). Though the sections are re-ordered and there is some minor variations in the numbers, this is closely based on the list of officers and servants provided by George Cavendish, *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, ed. Richard S. Sylvester, EETS 243 (1959), 18-21 (for example, compare the first entry under Privy Kitchen – 'A Master Cooke who went daylie in velvet or satten with a chaine of gould' – with Cavendish, 19/4-6). Cavendish himself says his listing is based on the cardinal's 'Chekker Rolle' (21/10); perhaps our scribe was inspired to create a simulacrum of that.

Penultimate: '[title:] The ascending of the saide Cardinall, called Thomas Wolsey a poore mans soone of Ipswiche, in the Countie of Suffolke. [list:] 1. Bachelor of Arte in Oxenforde --- 18. Ambassadour to Charles the f<ir>ste.

Closing section: '[title:] The falling of the sayde Cardinall . [list:] 1. Firste he came in displeasure with K: Henrie --- himselfe not longe before had taken.

Verso: stuck to card, and so unavailable for consultation but reported to be blank

Added text, written in the blank columns, right of the main list, extending 86mm in length:

‘The Learned Sir Isaac Newton was Born <at Wo>olstorpe> in the <coun>ty of Lincoln upon the 2<5>th Dec^r, 1642 his mother being left a widow with Eight Children in but middleing Circumstances Sir Isaac was first Sent to Grantham School and he Soon made very great proficientcy in his Learning My Dear Father Said he was in the garden At his Study one time and some pears Dropt of a tree which Set him to Study the Motion of gravity which made him Soon publish a book upon that Subject and the queen soon after Sent for him knighted him and queen Ann Settled 500^l a year upon him for his Life he very Soon after weighed the World by the Effects of gravity alone and Made its Exact weight appear to be 1000000000000000000⁰⁰ after this he was held in great respect by the Learned in all Nations My father Said that he Livd about Sixty five years and he Died at Lady 1706 and he was Buryed in the Abbey Church Called Westminster near London. My fathers grand-father gave this to him and my father gave it to me when I was at school in the year 1774 Tho. Newton. this very great list of Servants Sir Isaac used to find great fault with he had often been ^heard^ Repromanding Cardinal Wolseysey [*sic*] Number of Servants and used to say No Nobleman in all England Ever had Nor Never would have So many Servants again he Did always believe this List my father was Told was given Sir Isaac by queen Ann [change of nib] But Since I was at the City of Litchfield my Cosin told me that Sir Isaac was 84 years old when he Died and his Last illness of which he Expressd great pain was a fit of the gravel but he Said that he was very penitent and quite gave himself up and resigned his Soul in Agonies of pain to that great being who gave it and Desired all around him to Live a holy Life here and to Look up to our Lorde and Christ for Salvation in a brighter & better world above where Neither pain Sin nor Sorrow Can Ever Come.’

A biography of Sir Isaac Newton by a later and distant relative. It differs from the usual telling of the famous anecdote about Newton’s musing on gravity: in all the early accounts it is an apple, not a pear, that knocks him on the head and into thought: *Early Biographies of Isaac Newton*, ed. Rob Iliffe, 2 vols (London, 2006).

TEXTUAL PRESENTATION The text is marked by the range of colours used. The main text is in light brown (now fading) but the first letter of the first word in the left column is in blue, and the first letter of the main now in red. In the second column, capitals at the start of words are in blue, red or gold, and groups of entries are bracketed in green, with red horizontal lines connecting the bracket to a numeral (the total in each group). The same combination of colours is used in the top and bottom sections, with royal names in gold capitals.

HOUSING The roll is now housed in a guard-box mounted on card. This is a result of a conservation exercise carried out in 2011-12. This removed it from its previous home, a velvet-covered frame with heavy interlace wood carvings; this frame was mounted on the south wall of the Manuscript Room, behind a red curtain. This frame, ‘likely to date from late 19th century’, and the problems it created for conservation are reported by Powell, ‘Restoring Wolsey’s Household List’ (with photo of frame).

PROVENANCE This roll presents the career of Thomas Wolsey in tabular form, concentrating attention on the size of his household. It relies on information drawn from Cavendish’s *Life*,

which was completed in 1558 and circulated in manuscript (for copies at ChCh and for bibliography, see our MS 154). The circumstances of the production of our roll are unclear: why would someone take the trouble to draw up so carefully such a detailed list relating to a bygone figure? The text, and Thomas Newton's later tale of his famous relative's response to it, suggest that it was constructed as a witness to the *de casibus* tradition, demonstrating how the great over-reach and fall. The disapproval that Newton expressed persisted in early twentieth-century historiography; A. F. Pollard (*Wolsey* (London, 1929), 326) gave the example of the three hundred servants he had at the Cloth of Gold, when other leading figures each had seventy, as a manifestation of 'the exorbitant importance he attached to his position' (with thanks to Steve Gunn for drawing our attention to this reference and for advice on this roll more generally).

It is also difficult to know whether to give credence to the claim that this was once owned by Sir Isaac Newton, or that he was given it by Queen Anne. There is nothing in Newton's correspondence to suggest such an interest and the author of the note was clearly at some chronological and familial distance. It would seem unlikely that a royal gift would leave no earlier textual trace, but even if we should dispense with the belief that it was a sign of the favour in which monarchs held Sir Isaac, it remains undeniable that the roll passed through the hands of generations who considered themselves his relatives. It is impossible to reconstruct with any confidence the life of Thomas Newton beyond what he tells us: he would seem not to be the person of that name who was admitted to Jesus College, Cambridge in 1777 and who published *An Illustration of Sir Isaac Newton's method of reasoning ...* (Leeds, 1806), for, though the dates may fit, that Newton was born in Yorkshire, the son of a Westmoreland husbandman (*AC*, part 2, 4:542).

The next known owner was Rev. Francis Hopkinson (1810-98), of Malvern (Worcs.); it is recorded in the *Third Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts* (London, 1872), 262 (where it is said 'the handwriting ... seems to be of the 17th century'). Born at Peterborough and schooled at Uppingham, Hopkinson matriculated at Magdalene College, Cambridge in 1841 (at the advanced age of 31), gaining a LLB in 1848 and LLD in 1856. By that point, he was ordained (deacon in 1844, priest the following year); his clerical career took him to Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Hampshire and London, before returning to Malvern, where he had served a year as curate in 1847-48, as perpetual curate for a decade from 1859 to 1869 (*AC*, part 2, 3:439). He retired and continued to live there, amassing a collection of printed books and of historical documents, some of which (but not our roll) were displayed at the *Exhibition of the Royal House of Tudor* (London, 1890). It was presumably Hopkinson who had the roll taken from its canister and placed in a frame. On his death, his collection was dispersed, with some being sold at auction.

It presumably arrived at ChCh as part of the process of that dispersal. Patently, in contrast to its earlier use, posthumously 'reprimanding' Wolsey, the inspiration for its arrival in Oxford was a sense that it would have an appropriate home in the successor institution to his college, even if this roll makes no mention of the foundation. It, then, shares a rationale with the eighteenth-century donations of copies of Cavendish's *Life* (see MS 154) and with the earlier gift of the resplendent Epistolary, MS 101. We might also relate it to the red hat which sits in the Upper Library in a 'gothick' case provided for it by a previous owner, Horace Walpole, who assumed it had been Wolsey's (*Strawberry Hill, the renowned seat of Horace Walpole...* ([London], [1842]) 17th Day Sale, item 73). It was exhibited as such at the *Exhibition of House of Tudor*, 222 (no. 1185). It re-gained some fame (or notoriety) by being mentioned by Stephen Greenblatt in

his *Learning to Curse. Essays in Early Modern Culture* (New York, 1990), 161-63; he claimed that the display card provided for it in ChCh stated that it had been owned by Wolsey, an error which his critics delighted in noting: John Lee, 'The Man who Mistook his Hat: Stephen Greenblatt and the Anecdote', *Essays in Criticism*, 45 (1995), 285-300. It might be added that research is on-going into the origins of the hat, with interim findings suggesting it is an Italian product of the early sixteenth century (with thanks to Cristina Neagu for informing us of these investigations). However that may be, and however remote from Wolsey both hat and roll may have been, they share a significance in telling us of English culture's enduring fascination with its most magnificent cardinal.

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