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[Documents in Roll Form] Copy of the Letters Patent of the November 18, 1539  
Dissolution of the Priory of St Peter and St Etheldreda at Ely; copy of the September 10,  
1541 Charter establishing Ely Cathedral; Royal Indenture of Elizabeth I  
In Latin, with English, manuscript roll on paper and parchment  
England (Ely?), 1541 and 1574

*17 paper sheets, with horizontally-oriented unidentified watermark, one-handed jug or pot (very common motif in England; Brand, 2010, pp. 26-27), with spout and decorated lid, a quatrefoil extending from the top, letters 'TR' or 'TB' with a trefoil between letters on the jug's belly (63 × 22–21mm., chain lines: 24-25mm.), sheets stitched end to end, using brown-black (sheets 1-2, 2-3) or undyed thread, to form a rotulus, each sheet numbered with an Arabic numeral at upper left margin in an Early Modern hand in brown ink, 5-17 + 1-4, and at upper right margin in a modern hand in pencil, 1-17 [cited in this description], appears mostly unruled (with occasional almost indiscernible horizontal rules), written in one column (c. 210-220 mm. wide), in brown ink in an English secretarial hand with opening and significant words in enlarged textualis in 590 lines (19-41 lines per sheet), with occasional scribal additions and corrections, marginalia in the left-hand border in several hands picking out estate names and similar, some underlining of same in main text in purple and in brown on first four sheets and occasionally thereafter, with loss of text at edges due to damage and repairs, some areas of staining plus fading or flaking ink, overall in good condition. With an outermost parchment membrane, consisting of a 16<sup>th</sup>-century royal indenture, written in brown ink in another English secretarial hand with opening and significant words in enlarged textualis in 35 lines, oriented transversely and sewn to first paper sheet, with tears and losses at extremities, and areas of fading or flaking ink, remnants of a parchment tab (20-25 × 33-36mm.) sewn to dorse at head, ONE ILLUMINATED COAT OF ARMS on dorse (described below). The whole within a wrapper of thicker paper with losses at edges repaired, in a modern custom burgundy clamshell box, label on the lid, stamped "ELY PRIORY – LETTERS PATENT ETC." in gilt. Dimensions 6763-6663 × 285-302 mm.*

This is an important English document in roll form, directly bearing on the religious history in England during the sixteenth century. It contains an exceptionally rare copy of the Letters Patent of the Dissolution of Ely Abbey, unedited and perhaps surviving only in this copy, together with an important early copy of the foundation Charter of Ely Cathedral, perhaps copied for Ely's last Prior and first Dean, Robert Steward (d. 1557), the whole augmented with a hitherto unattested Elizabethan indenture. Included together in this very long roll (approximately 22 feet long), they offer an invaluable primary source for scholars of the dissolution of the monasteries in England.

## PROVENANCE

1. Roll (*rotulus*) copied in Latin, in England, likely in Ely, dated September 10, 1541 at the head and within the text (sheet 13 at line 56 ['13.56'], 17.17), and signed "Ashton" by the scribe (13.58, 17.19). The hand is consistent with 1541. This copy may have been produced for Robert Steward (d. 1557), last Prior of Ely Abbey and first Dean of Ely Cathedral.

2. Copy of an indenture in Tudor English, dated September 24, 1574, stitched to end of the paper roll and wrapped around it. The hand is consistent with 1574. Henry Doyle named in the document was likely the brother of antiquary Thomas D'Oyly (c. 1530-after 1598) (Betham, 1802, vol. 2, pp. 338-339). Steward to Archbishop Matthew Parker (Blatchly, 2004) – himself an appointee to the second prebend at Ely (Crankshaw and Gillespie, 2020; Brook, 1962, pp. 20-21) – Thomas may have acquired the roll from Parker, adding the indenture as a protective measure, and painting the arms on its dorse (see discussion below).
3. The roll, which initially opened with sheets 14-17, was reorganized likely sometime after the addition of the indenture; note the heavy soiling on sheet 13's dorse; the presence, at sheet 17's base, of needle holes still containing traces of thread; and the disrupted sequence of early numeration (5-17 + 1-4).
4. An additional thick paper wrapper enclosing the roll bears several late 19<sup>th</sup>- or early 20<sup>th</sup>-century inscriptions and other marks including: "Mr. <Tymns?>" (in faded brown ink) and "<J082?>" (in flaked black ink).
5. Sold, London, Christie's, June 20, 1990, lot 38.3.
6. Schøyen Collection (acquired at Christie's), London and Oslo, their MS 682. On the thick paper wrapper enclosing the roll, a pasted-on white paper label (34 × 32mm.) bears their seal in black ink.
7. Private collection.

## TEXT

Outer parchment wrapper, incipit, "This Indenture made the \_\_\_\_\_ Daie of <damage> [se]vententh yer of the Raign of the Soueraigne Ladie Elizabeth by the grace of god Quene of England Fran[ce] Ireland defender of the faith Betwene henry Doyle gentelman ... made in þe said eighth yer of hir [damage] vertue of the said <...> patente & to either of them due belonging & aperteyning In[damage]";

Copy, in Tudor English, of a royal indenture from Queen Elizabeth I to Henry Doyle, dated September 24, 1574 (line 7), permitting him to examine offences against the statute "for the killing of rookes crowes and choughes daylie" (line 10).

sheets 1-13, incipit, "Henricus octauus dei gracia Anglie & Francie Rex fi[dei] Defensor Dominus hibernie et in terra supremum Caput Anglicane Eccl[esie] Omnibus ad quos presentes littere prevenerint Salutem. Sciatis quod nos de g[ratia] nostra speciali ac ex certa scientia et mero motu nostris dedimus et concessimus ac per presentes Damus et concedimus Decano et Capitulo ... In Cuius Rei Testimonium has literas nostras ~~patentes~~ fieri fecimus ~~patentes~~ Teste me ipso apud Westmonasterium x<sup>mo</sup> die septembris Anno regni /nostri\ xxxiiij<sup>tio</sup> Per breve de priuato sigillo et de Data predicta auctoritate parlamenti. Finis Ashton"; [1<sup>st</sup> added header], "x<sup>mo</sup> die Septemberis anno Regni henricis .8. xxxiiij<sup>tio</sup>. 1541"; [2<sup>nd</sup> added header], "domino octavo die Nouembris Anno Regni Regis henrici octaui tricessimo primo 1539. monasterium de Ely <s.. sum.. d...> fuit in manus domini Regis";

Copy, in Latin, of the Letter Patent of the Dissolution of the Priory of St Peter and St Etheldreda at Ely, specifying the Priory's holdings, and listing those former monks (8.25-30) appointed as the new Cathedral's Dean and Chapter of prebendaries or major canons. Dated, within the text, 10 September 33 Henry VIII, i.e., 1541 (13.36) and signed at foot by the clerk "Ashton" (13.38). Headers added to the first sheet give the dates 10 September 33 Henry VIII (glossed "1541") [1<sup>st</sup> header], and 8 [sic.] November 1539 [2<sup>nd</sup> header]. Although the Ely Dean and Chapter records came to Cambridge University Library in 1970, the latter institution reports no copy of this document among their holdings. To the best of our knowledge, this appears to be the sole known extant copy of the Letter Patent of Ely Priory's Dissolution, which has never appeared in print.

sheets 14-17, incipit, "Henricus octavius dei gratia Anglie et Francie Rex fidei Defensor Dominus hibernie et in ter[ra] supremum Caput Anglicane Ecclesie Omibus [sic.] ad quos presentes tuo pervenerint Salutem Cum [nuper] Cenobium quoddam siue monasterium quod dum extitit prioratus siue monasterium Ecclesie sancti Petri et sancti Etheldrede Eliensis Eliensis vulgo vocabatur ... In cuius Rei Testimonium has litteras fieri /fecimus\ patentes Teste me ipso apud westm[onasterium] Decimo die Septembris Anno Regni nostri xxxiiij<sup>to</sup> Per Breve de privato sigillo et de priuato sigillo et de data predicta auctoritate Parlamenti Ashton"

Copy, in Latin, of the September 10, 1541 foundation charter of Ely Cathedral, naming the continuing Bishop of Ely (14.33) – pro-Reformation iconoclast, Thomas Goodryck (1494-1554) (Heal, 2005) – and confirming appointment of the Dean and Chapter (15.04-10). Dated, within the text, 10 September 33 Henry VIII, i.e., 1541 (17.17), and signed at foot by the clerk "Ashton" (17.19).

The original charter and an early copy are preserved in Cambridge, University Library, Ely Cathedral Archives, MS EDC 2/1/1 and MS EDC 2/1/2 (*Chapter Book 1660-1729*). Edited in "Ely. Carta Fundacionis. Hen. VIII. A.D. 1542," *Appendix to the First Report of the Cathedral Commissioners Appointed November 10, 1852 ... to Inquire into the State and Condition of the Cathedral and Collegiate Churches in England and Wales*, London, 1854, vol. 2, pp. 59-61.

On the dorse of the outer parchment wrapper, there is a coat of arms (65 × 53 mm.) in black ink with yellow, blue, red, and brown paint with some flaking and loss of pigments: *Or, a Fess chequy Azure and Argent, surmounted of an escutcheon Argent charged with a Lion rampant Gules debruised by a Staff raguly in bend proper*. As noted in the accompanying inscription ("Rob· Stewarde detanus / nuper prior Eliensis:"), these arms were used by Robert Steward (or Styward) (d. 1557), Wells, last Prior of Ely Abbey and first Dean of Ely Cathedral; compare his drawing in one of the Ely manuscripts: British Library, Cotton MS Caligula A.viii, f. 168v. Originally arms of Scotland's Hereditary High Stewards (Brooke, 1777, pp. 183-185), they were assumed by Robert Steward's family despite a lack of familial connection with the Scottish clan (Cockerill, 2021, pp. 63-67; Heal, 2008; Round, 1907, pp. 115-146; Rye, 1885, pp. 34-42).

Initially founded by Æthelthryth (c.636-679) in 672 as a mixed community of men and women, then re-established as a Benedictine Abbey in 970 and granted cathedral priory status in 1109, the Priory of St. Peter and St. Etheldreda grew to become one of England's most powerful monastic houses (Keynes, 2003, pp. 3-58; Salzman, 1948, vol. 2, pp. 199-210). Yet this wealth could not protect the Priory. In the wake of the first Act of Supremacy [26 Hen. VIII, c.1 (1534)] – which made Henry VIII Supreme Head of the Church of England – and the First and

Second Suppression of Religious Houses Acts [27 Hen. VIII, c. 28 (1536); 31 Hen. VIII, c. 13 (1539)], royal commissioners seized and dissolved Ely, expropriating its income and properties, at the General Dissolution of November 18, 1539. Nearly two years would pass before Ely's eleventh-century Romanesque church – known as “the Ship of the Fens” – was reestablished as the Cathedral Church of the Holy and Undivided Trinity of Ely (Atherton, 2003, p. 170). The final Prior, Robert Steward (d. 22 September 1557), became the first Dean of the Cathedral (Heal, 2008) with a handful of the community's monks named prebendaries (Horn, 1992, p. 3).

At the Dissolution, Steward removed some of the priory's books for “safe keeping,” and subsequent provisions permitted him to retain them. Displaying “close personal interest in these records,” he rebound the codices, a number of which still survive in institutional collections, and devoted himself to continuing the priory's chronicle (Heal, 2008). The documents comprising our original (paper) roll would have been pertinent to his project: Ely Cathedral's foundation charter (sheets 14-17) – confirming appointment of Steward and eight monks as the first Dean and Chapter (15.04-10) – and especially the Letter Patent of the Priory's Dissolution (sheets 1-13), which reiterates these appointments, but consists almost entirely of a meticulously detailed list of the former Priory's many properties and other holdings, spanning not merely the Isle of Ely and surrounding Fenlands, but much of Cambridgeshire and East Anglia. Steward might have had the roll copied with his chronicle project in mind, or for aid in managing the former Priory's estate, activity for which “[e]vidence ... is fragmentary” (Heal, 2008). Many of Ely's muniments were lost – alienated by Steward and others – and confusion reigned over the surviving documents, with losses continuing until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (Owen, 1976, pp. 171-173).

However, neither the indenture sewn to the roll, nor the arms on its reverse, or dorse, could have been added by Steward, who died in 1557 (Heal, 2008), nearly two decades before the date of the 1574 (line 7) indenture. This added document licensed Henry Doyle to examine offences against the statute “for the killing of rookes crowes and choughes daylie” (line 10) – that is, the 1532 Act Made and Ordained to Destroy Choughs, Crows, and Rooks [24 Hen VIII, c. 10 (*Statutes of the Realm* [SR] 3:425-426)], later bolstered in the 1566 Preservation of Grain Act [8 Eliz I, c. 15 (SR 4.1:498-499)] (lines 9, 8). This Henry was probably Henry D'Oyly (1530-1597), esq., of Shottisham, Norfolk, brother of the antiquary Thomas D'Oyly (c.1530-aft. 1598) (Betham, 1802, vol. 2, pp. 338-339). In 1559, Thomas had become steward to Archbishop Matthew Parker (1504-1575) (Blatchly, 2004), himself second prebend at Ely and a noted manuscript collector (Crankshaw and Gillespie, 2020). An active member of the Society of Antiquaries, Thomas shared Parker's keen interest in antiquities, penning at least one work on heraldry (Doyle, 1771; Blatchly, 2004). Our roll perhaps passed to Parker after Steward's death, and thence to D'Oyly, who likely appended his brother's old parchment indenture as a protective measure, painting the arms of its late owner on the dorse.

The result is an extraordinary collection of sixteenth-century administrative documents: a copy of a previously unattested Elizabethan Letter Patent – one linked to recently-spotlighted Tudor environmental legislation (Lovegrove, 2007; Hill, 2007) – a rare early copy of Ely Cathedral's foundation charter, and what may be the sole known extant copy of the yet unedited (and indeed unprinted) Letter Patent of Ely Priory's Dissolution, one of very few such records to appear on the rare book market.

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