

***HOSPITALITY AND HOUSEHOLD***

***BISHOP METFORD'S HOUSEHOLD ACCOUNTS***

***October 1406-June 1407***

Submitted for the Degree of M.A.(Hons.)

Macquarie University, 2002  
Division of Humanities  
Department of Modern History

by

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Frontispiece: Bishop Richard Metford's tomb in the south choir aisle of Salisbury Cathedral

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# C O N T E N T S

	Page
Contents	i
List of illustrations	ii
List of tables	iii
List of charts	iv
Acknowledgments	v
Summary	vi
Introduction	1
Chapter 1. Hospitality and Richard Metford	7
Chapter 2. The form of Metford's household accounts	17
Chapter 3. Salisbury diocese and its episcopal manors: the physical setting	31
Chapter 4. The bishop's residence at Potterne	38
Chapter 5. The bishop's domestic household	45
Chapter 6. Visitors to Bishop Metford's manors	57
Chapter 7. Commodities obtained locally	70
Chapter 8. Commodities from distant places	90
Chapter 9. Feasts and festivals	102
Chapter 10. Sickness, death and the funeral	110
Chapter 11. Household expenditure and the cost of hospitality	118
Chapter 12. Conclusions	123
Appendix A Extracts from the wills of Richard and Walter Metford	127
Bibliography	135

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

		Facing page
Frontispiece	Bishop Richard Metford's tomb, in the south choir aisle of Salisbury Cathedral. Courtesy of Salisbury Cathedral archives	
Fig. 1.1	Metford family relationships	10
Plates 1-4	Four folios from Richard Metford's accounts	
	<i>The Plates are between pages 18 and 19</i>	
Fig. 3.1	Part of south-east England, showing the counties	
Fig. 3.2	The area around Salisbury, Wiltshire	
Fig. 3.3	Devizes and Potterne, Wiltshire	
Fig. 3.4	Part of Christopher Saxton's map of Wiltshire, 1579	
Fig. 3.5	Part of Thomas Moule's map of Wiltshire, 1830	
	<i>The maps are between pages 32 and 33</i>	
Fig. 3.6	Aerial photograph of the village of Potterne	34
Fig. 4.1	The excavation site at Potterne	38
Fig. 4.2	a. Fragment of encaustic tile excavated at Potterne b. Encaustic tiles of the Wessex school, Clarendon Palace	40
Fig. 4.3	Tile fragments excavated from the Bishop's Palace, Sonning	40
Fig. 4.4	Plan of the Bishop's Palace, Sonning	42
Fig. 5.1	Average household size	55

## LIST OF TABLES

	Facing Page
Table 5.1     Richard Metford's household	46
Table 6.1     Frequency of visits - days present	58
Table 7.1     Servants' meat	76
Table 7.2     Gentles' meat	78
Table 7.3     Poultry and game birds	80
Table 7.4     Ale sellers and merchants	82
Table 7.5     Minor food items	86
Table 8.1     Fish in the household accounts	90
Table 8.2     Exotic 'spices' bought for the kitchen	98
Table 8.3     Summary of maintenance and running costs	100
Table 9.1     Menus for three feasts	
Table 9.2     The festival days of Christmas	
Table 9.3     Bishop Metford's gifts	
<i>Tables 9.1 to 9.3 are between pages 104 and 105</i>	
Table 10.1    Medical expenses for Richard Metford	110
Table 10.2    Funeral expenses	111
Table 10.3    Cost of food for the funeral feast	114
Table 10.4    Funeral feast for Bishop of Bath & Wells, 1424	116
Table 10.5    Cash bequests in Richard Metford's Will	117
Table 11.1    Projected annual expenditure	120
Table 11.2    Comparison of household expenditure	121

## LIST OF CHARTS

		Facing Page
Chart 5.1	Metford's household, meat days	
Chart 5.2	Metford's household, fish days	
Chart 5.3	Metford's household, guests vs servants	
Chart 5.4	Metford's household, all diners vs servants	
	<i>Charts 5.1 - 5.4 are between pages 48 and 49</i>	
Chart 7.1	Bread production	72
Chart 7.2	Distribution of allowances	73
Chart 7.3	Reward bread consumption	74
Chart 7.4	Consumption of dogs' bread	75
Chart 7.5	Consumption of meat animals	79
Chart 7.6	Ale consumption per servants' portion	83
Chart 7.7	Horses at Woodford and Potterne	86
Chart 7.8	Riders and mounts at Woodford and Potterne	87
Chart 7.9	Horse feed at Woodford and Potterne	88
Chart 8.1	Preserved fish consumption	91
Chart 8.2	Seasonal fish consumption	93
Chart 8.3	Daily wine consumption	96



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the expert advice and continuing support of my supervisor, Associate Professor John F.R. Walmsley, who did so much to stimulate my interest in mediaeval studies, and my associate supervisor, Dr. John Koenig. I thank Dr. Neil McGlashan, formerly of the University of Tasmania, who at one time lived in the village of Potterne, for the loan of field notebooks and the lively discussions which illuminated my mental picture of the village. I am indebted to the following people who courteously and quickly answered my requests for information, photographs and reprints:

Dr. C.R.J. Currie, Institute of Historical Research, London; Dr. M.M. Stansfield, Archivist, Canterbury Cathedral; Miss Suzanne Eward, Librarian and Archivist, and Mr. R.O. Spring, Keeper of the Fabric Records, both of Salisbury Cathedral, and Mr. Peter Smith, Archivist of the Salisbury Cathedral School; and Ms. Jillian Greenaway of Reading Museum.

I thank the Research Committee of the Department of Modern History, Macquarie University, for a grant which allowed me to purchase the photographs of the original manuscript of the Accounts.

My thanks are also due to the following organisations for permission to use their copyright to various documents:

The British Academy - the transcription of the Accounts from the original manuscript, which appears in *Household Accounts from Medieval England, Parts 1 & 2*. British Academy Records of Social & Economic History (New Series) XVII, pp. 261-430, edited by C.M. Woolgar, whose glossary was so useful.

The British Library - the photographs of some folios of British Library MS Harley 3755.

The British Ordnance Survey - the aerial photographs of the village of Potterne.

The Dean and Chapter, Canterbury Cathedral - the original manuscript of Richard Metford's Will, which forms part of an unpublished portion of the register of Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury.

The Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office - the 1647 and 1670 surveys of the manor of Potterne, which are included in Church Commissioners Records, Bishopric 468.

I would also like to thank the library staffs of the University of Sydney, the New South Wales State Library, and especially of Macquarie University, who have been unfailingly helpful to a student who at times made difficult requests.

Finally, to my husband who supports my enthusiasms, and who helped me check my translation of the Accounts, my sincere thanks and affection.

## SUMMARY

To date very little work of a quantitative nature has been devoted to hospitality in the Middle Ages. Statements and assumptions have been made as to the level and quality of hospitality, but they have seldom been supported by hard data. The recent publication of the household accounts of the bishop of Salisbury for October 1406 to June 1407 provides a rare opportunity to determine not only the quantity of material goods and services involved in the provision of hospitality in the context of a late medieval household, but also the proportion of household expenditure and annual income devoted to the fulfilment of that obligation. Bishop Metford's household accounts relate to the episcopal manors of Woodford and Potterne in Wiltshire, both some distance from Salisbury itself, where the dean and chapter held sway in the cathedral. Despite this apparent isolation in the countryside, which was not uncommon with bishops of secular cathedrals, the accounts reveal an extraordinarily active programme of hospitality. By analysing the data using EXCEL 2000, this study shows that about fifty percent of annual income was expended on maintaining the bishop's household and twenty percent of that - or ten percent of annual income - was spent on hospitality.