

FOURTEENTH-CENTURY ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE WINCHESTER PIPE ROLLS

By MARION MEEK

THE pipe rolls of the bishops of Winchester¹ contain the annual accounts of the income and expenditure of the bishops' 40 manors. They survive with few gaps from 1208 to the 18th century.² Historians have found them an invaluable quarry for details of estate management, prices and incomes for property as far east as Farnham and as far west as Taunton.³

Since the pipe rolls are a fair copy of individual accounts, they are very neat and well set out, but the scribe rarely felt inspired to illuminate his records. An exception was the man who transcribed the accounts from 1334-8, who added a number of humorous and lively illustrations in the margins and amongst the titles (pls. V-VI). They are contemporary with the fine 'East-Anglian' illuminated manuscripts, the most famous of which is probably the Luttrell psalter. But whereas the psalters were exhibition pieces with separate craftsmen for the painting and the writing, the pipe roll illustrations were done with the same pen and ink as the accounts and were scarcely meant to be seen. There is no colour applied and the work is little more than casual cartooning.

The most detailed were those built round the first word of the rolls, *Computus*. This was treated like an initial of a psalter, only the psalmist is replaced by a portrait of a medieval king, presumably Edward III (1335, Eccl. II, 159347m1) or even a beast playing David's harp (1336, Eccl. II, 159348m1), the letters being fringed with leaves, dragon heads and calligraphic tendrils. Both have chequered backgrounds which in a psalter would have been richly coloured. Edward III appears as a bust comparable to a coin portrait, only with a thin beard and an unkind squint - at the time Edward was 24 years old, 'strong, brave and handsome'.⁴ The music-playing beast is a popular medieval conceit; goats like the one playing the trumpet are often found in church sculpture, as far back as Canterbury crypt or in the contemporary work in Bristol cathedral lady chapel, or indeed on the misericords of Winchester cathedral as well as in manuscripts. The central beast is clearly taking the place of King David; quite apart from the harp, the arcaded bench is a familiar part of such scenes.⁵ The 1337 initial is filled in with 'Tudor' roses and surrounded by oak and vine leaves. Although less attractive this too has parallels with *Beatus* pages of medieval psalters.

The illustrations on other pages are free and gay. A number of male heads with bonnets (pl. VIc, 1334, Eccl. II, 159346m11) may be self-portraits or portraits of the bailiff. By far the most popular subject was dragons with dog-like heads and calli-

¹ Deposited in the Hampshire Record Office. I am indebted to Mrs. E. Cottrill and her staff for their help with this note.

² Two are published, H. Hall, *The Pipe Roll of the Bishopric of Winchester 1208-9*, 1903, and N. R. Holt, *The Pipe Roll of the Bishop of Winchester 1210-11*, 1964.

³ E. Robo, *Medieval Farnham*, 1935, is perhaps the largest single study.

⁴ M. McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century*, 1959.

⁵ cf. *Beatus* pages in the Peterborough and Luttrell psalters in the Grenville library, British Museum. M. Rickert, *Painting in Britain: The Middle Ages*, 1954, pls. 120 and 131.

graphic details similar to those of the Luttrell psalter, perhaps sparked off by the name Drokensford in the same way that the name Warren inspired a picture of a rabbit crouching in the roots of a tree (1338, Eccl. II, 159349m21). The illustration beside the Wolvesey account of 1338 (Eccl. II, 159349m21d) is castle-like, but more in the nature of a chess piece than any attempt to give an impression of the actual place.

Although these ornamented accounts are somewhat sketchy, their style conforms well with the 'East-Anglian' manuscripts, suggesting that such art was widespread in the 14th century.