



the national archives

palaeography

tutorial

Document 4: The answer to a bill of complaint in the Star Chamber

(Catalogue reference: STAC 2/14 folio 10)

Contents

About this document	1
Introduction to transcribing document 4	2
Glossary	4
How to use the interactive transcribing exercise	6
Alphabet	7
Image	8
Transcript	9

About this document

This document is the answer of Nicholas Porter and others to a bill of complaint brought against them in the Star Chamber during the reign of Henry VIII. (Catalogue reference: STAC 2/14 folio 10)

The court of the Star Chamber investigated cases of public disorder, official corruption, municipal and trade disputes, fraud, and disputes over the enclosure of land.

Star Chamber cases frequently allege public disorder, such as riots, forcible entry and assault, but many of them were in fact private disputes about rights to property. The violence would have been exaggerated in order to make the case a matter for the royal courts.

Star Chamber pleadings generally consisted of the bill of complaint, the answer, the replication and the rejoinder. This document is the answer of Nicholas Porter, William Nayler and William Wheler to the bill of complaint which was brought against them before the Star Chamber by John Ed and Edith his wife. It dates from the reign of Henry VIII.

The bill of complaint from this case has also survived, and we therefore know that John Ed complained that he was forcibly ejected from the manor of Freshwater on the Isle of Wight, which he was renting from Sir Nicholas Wadham, by Porter, Nayler and Wheler.

Answers normally begin with a statement claiming that the complaint was inaccurate, followed by the defendant's version of the truth. They generally conclude with an overall denial of the facts in the bill of complaint, and a plea for the case to be dismissed with expenses for the defendant's wrongful vexation. Answers were made under oath.

The document is written in an early 16th-century mixed hand. It is predominantly secretary hand, the style used in document 3 (the examination of James Machary), but it also has some letter-forms from a legal hand.

palaeography tutorial

Introduction to transcribing Document 4

Transcription tips - READ THESE FIRST!

The document is written in a mixed cursive hand which uses letter forms from both secretary [see Document 3] and legal hands.

In this document you should watch for:

- The letter forms more typical of legal hands which are:



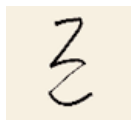
2 compartment
'g'.



2 compartment 'a'.

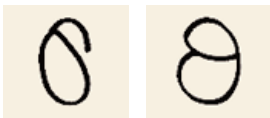


long 'r' (often the
return 'upstroke' is
not visible).

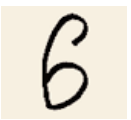


unless the 'r' occurs after round bodied letters, in which case an 'r' like this is used:
(You may see this in other documents looking more like a '2').

- Sigma 's', not to be confused with the cursive 'e'.



- The ascenders of tall letters are looped



'b'



'd'



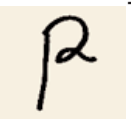
'l'



'h'

- Capitals

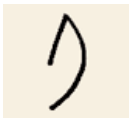
As always, the capital letters can be the most difficult to work out. Try to work them out from the context, and refer to the Alphabet provided. This is particularly the case where the capital 'W' is identical to a lower case 'w'. Also watch out for the capital 'N'. Sometimes capital 'N's can look like an 'R' or 'H' or a large 'h', and sometimes they can look like nothing in particular!



The context will usually give them away. See, for example, *Nicholas*: line 1.

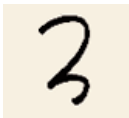
palaeography tutorial

- Abbreviations



'er'

This symbol means that 'er' has been left out. See, for example, *sovereign*: **line 10**.



'r'

In this document this symbol is being used for a terminal 'r' preceded by a missing letter or letters, usually 'o' or 'ou'. See *demeanour*: **line 8**.

- Plural or genitive symbol



This symbol is used at the end of a word to replace the plural or genitive ending. See *defendants*: line 7. Depending on the way the scribe pronounced his plurals, the symbol could be standing in for 'es', 'is' or 'ys', and it might not be clear which one you should use. In this case it is suggested that you expand it as 'es'.

- And finally...

Watch out for squiggles at the end of words which are not abbreviations but merely flourishes. See for example *Wylyyam*: **line 1**, and *byll*: **line 2**. The flourish on the double 'l' of *byll* could make it look like 'byth' or 'bylk'... but having first read the contextual information, which explains that you are dealing with a *bill of complaint*, you won't be caught out!

glossary

Answer	Star Chamber pleadings generally consisted of the initial bill of complaint, followed by the answer, and sometimes further replications and rejoinders. The answer was a written statement by the defendant refuting the complaint.
Bill of complaint	Star Chamber pleadings generally consisted of the bill of complaint, the answer, the replications and the rejoinder. The bill of complaint was a written petition explaining the plaintiff's grievances and the wrong he claimed the defendant had done him and the damages he had sustained. Bills often exaggerated the violence in order to make the case a matter of public disorder (and therefore a matter for the royal courts), rather than a private complaint.
Defendant	A person defending themselves against a complaint or suit in a court of law, as opposed to the plaintiff, who is the person making the complaint.
Freshwater	A village in the west of the Isle of Wight, two miles south-west of Yarmouth.
Henry VIII	Henry VIII was born at Greenwich on 28 June 1491. He was the second son of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York. His elder brother Prince Arthur died in 1502, making Henry heir to the throne, to which he succeeded on 21 April 1509. Desperate for a male heir to secure the Tudor succession, Henry VIII had six wives. During the English Reformation Henry became head of the Church in England, repudiating papal supremacy, and closed down the monasteries. The monastic lands were sold off and the revenues went to the Crown. Henry died at Whitehall in London on 28 January 1547, and was buried in St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle.
Mixed hand	A term applied to styles of handwriting that mix letter-forms from different distinct hands, such as secretary hand and legal hands.
Rejoinder	A document submitted by the defendant to counter the plaintiff's replication. It consisted either of a general refutation of the plaintiff's case or a more detailed pleading countering every point

made by the plaintiff.

Replication

A document submitted by the plaintiff in response to the plaintiff's answer. It consisted either of a short general denial of the defendant's answer, or a more detailed pleading in which the plaintiff countered each point made in the answer. It might introduce new facts and circumstances but it could not alter the basic case.

Star Chamber

The Star Chamber was effectively the king's council sitting as a tribunal to enforce law and order. It was named after the room in the palace of Westminster where the council met, which had a blue ceiling painted with gold stars. The Star Chamber became a separate court of law after 1485. It investigated cases of public disorder, official corruption, municipal and trade disputes, fraud, and disputes over the enclosure of land. Star Chamber cases frequently allege public disorder, such as riots, forcible entry and assault, but many of them were in fact private disputes about rights to property. After the Star Chamber was abolished in 1641 its records were stored in two places. Those kept in the Star Chamber itself are now at The National Archives. Those stored at the Star Chamber Office at Gray's Inn have not survived.

Wadham, Sir Nicholas

Sir Nicholas Wadham (died 1541) was created captain of the Isle of Wight by Henry VIII in 1509. Wadham's second wife Margaret was an aunt of Jane Seymour and the Protector Somerset. His grandson by his first wife was Nicholas Wadham who, with his wife Dorothy, founded Wadham College, Oxford.

how to use the interactive transcribing exercise

Help - using the interactive transcribing exercise

Step 1: Study the line of text from the document image

Step 2: On the document image, use the interactive magnifying glass to zoom in/out of image by clicking on a particular word

Step 3: Using the textbox below the document image, type in your transcription

Step 4: When you have finished the current line of text, click on the Submit button

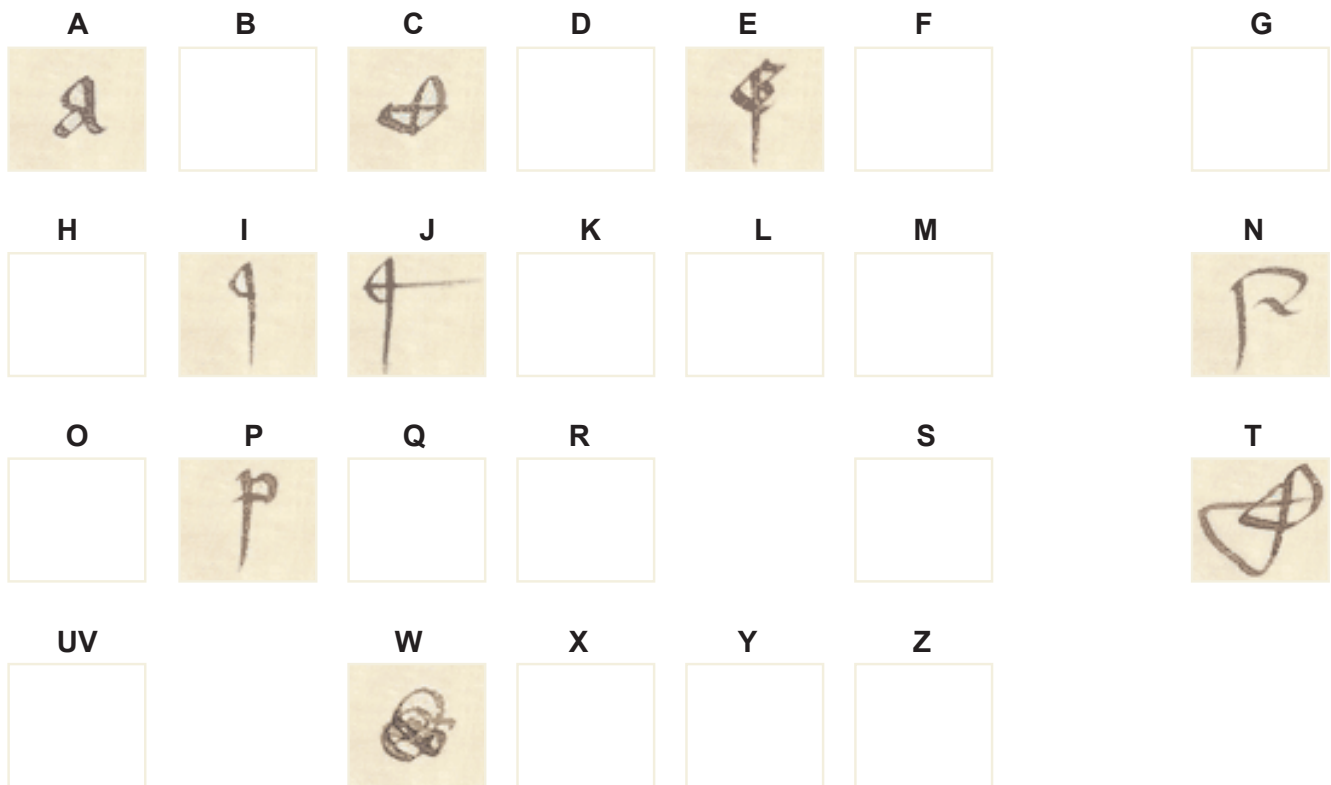
Step 5: The results will be shown and will give you the option to either retry or move onto the next line of the current document.

Help - instructions on typing your transcription

- 1) For every word you cannot transcribe, put in a dash character ' - '
- 2) Every word you transcribe should be separated with a single space
- 3) The transcribing text must match, whether it is in capital or lower case
- 4) Expand abbreviations in square brackets where necessary.

palaeography tutorial

Alphabet



1 The answer of Reginald pozer abbe of Wyke and Thirby and Wyke
 2 agree to the bill of complaint brought in the name of Hugh the first the first
 3 The said Reginald pozer abbe of Wyke and Thirby and Wyke
 4 the said bill of complaint brought in the name of Hugh the first the first
 5 at the time of writing of the said bill of complaint had not yet the said
 6 called the said Reginald pozer abbe of Wyke and Thirby and Wyke
 7 defendant further answer and say of the said bill of complaint may abate and the said
 8 of the said bill of complaint demurrer answered in the said bill of complaint neither of the
 9 party or the said Reginald pozer abbe of Wyke and Thirby and Wyke
 10 nor of any part the said bill of complaint the parts of the said bill of complaint
 11 in which and found the said bill of complaint to be in any the said matter the said
 12 defendant shall say the said bill of complaint shall be the said bill of complaint out of
 13 the said bill of complaint cost and damage in the said bill of complaint
 506

transcript

1. The Ansuer of Nycholas Porter Clerk Wylliam Nayler and Wylliam
2. Wheler to the byll of Compleynt brought in the names of John Ed & Edythe hys wyf
3. The seyde Nycholas Porter Wylliam Nayler and Wylliam Wheler sayn and ev[er]y of them sayth that
4. the seyde byll of Compleynt ys meten and insufficyent in the lawe and that theseyd John Ed
5. at the tyme of exhybytyng of theseyd byll of Compleynt had not nor yet hath any wyf
6. called Edythe Wherefore they prayen that theseyd byll of Compleynt may abate and theseyd
7. defendantes further sayen and ev[er]y of them sayth that they be not nor any of them ys gylty
8. of theseyd ryout or ryotouse demeano[u]r especyfyed in theseyd byll of Compleynt nether of any
9. Iniury or Wrong supposed by theseyd byll to be comytted agenst theseyd John Ed and Edythe
10. nor of any part therof nor of any act don agenst the peace of oure sov[er]eign Lord the kyng
11. in man[er] and fourm as in theseyd byll of Compleynt ys surmytted Whyche matters theseyd
12. defendantes shall averr as thys Court shall award and prayen to be dysmyssed out of
13. the same wyth their resonable cost[es] and damage[es] in thys behalf susteyned etc