

## THE CALENDARS AND THEIR EDITORS, 1856-2006

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**Summary:** Dr Knighton, who created the Calendars for State Papers Domestic for the periods of Edward VI, Mary I and Anne, explains what a Calendar is, the history of Calendars and how they have evolved, and their value as catalogues to the State Papers and for research.

### The Calendar

A catalogue of manuscripts deals with documents as they happen to be arranged; a calendar reassembles the chronological sequence in which they were created. In this context a calendar is generally not just a list but a summary of the contents, and so reduces the need to consult the originals. The format is especially associated with the publication of Britain's public records, though it was not invented for that process, and has been used elsewhere. It is particularly appropriate to the regular archival deposits of central government, and emphasises the long continuity of administrative processes. The official Calendars have become cornerstones of our medieval and early modern historiography. For formal records such as the Chancery and Exchequer rolls they are all that most researchers require, and the originals are hardly ever now opened. That is less true of the State Papers, so much more varied in form and content, and so less easy to summarise comprehensively. Nevertheless, much good history has been written from State Papers (SP) Calendars by those who have no means of accessing the documents, and most scholars who do use the originals commonly begin their research through the Calendars. They show readers where they should look further and (just as importantly) where they need not look at all.<sup>1</sup>

### Before the Calendars

Publication of the nation's archives began with quasi-official works such as Rymer's *Foedera* (1704-13). The printing of *Domesday Book* (1783) was a landmark because it was wholly funded as a public service. Acceptance of this principle led to the establishment of successive Record Commissions (1800-37), which began a massive scheme of publication too expensive to sustain. Separate commissions for printing the State Papers started operations on a similarly ambitious scale. Between 1825 and 1852 eleven volumes were published as *State Papers during the Reign of Henry the Eighth*, grouped as Domestic, Ireland, Scotland and Foreign.<sup>2</sup> Only a selection of manuscripts was included, with no indication of what was omitted. The chosen texts were, however, printed *in extenso*. As with the Record Commission publications they used 'record type' symbols for the various conventional scribal marks of abbreviation. For general purposes this work has been superseded by the complete and more widely available calendar *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*. **State Papers Online** enables the excellent transcripts to be redeployed wherever possible rather than the later published summaries.<sup>3</sup>

### First Calendars of Domestic State Papers

The Calendars began as a by-product of the State Paper Commissions, since it was recognised that in the State Paper Office alone were many more documents than could ever be printed in full. Some 'more eligible channel' was necessary

to make public the outlines at least of the mass of material, and to this end a new Commission in 1840 directed the printing of a supplementary series of ‘calendars of the principal contents of the papers’. This operation was proposed and undertaken by Robert Lemon (d. 1867), Senior Clerk of the State Paper Office. Lemon’s father, also Robert (d. 1835), had been Deputy Keeper of the Office and Secretary to the Record Commissions of 1825 and 1830. Together the two Lemons are largely responsible for the present arrangement of the main collections of the State Papers, which the Calendars reflect. Because the printing of Henry VIII’s papers was still proceeding when the Calendars were authorised, the latter were begun at 1547. Publication was delayed by the incorporation (1854) of the State Paper Office into the Public Record Office (PRO), itself the product of an earlier archival amalgamation (1838). The first *Calendar of State Papers Domestic* finally appeared in 1856 as the inaugural publication of the enlarged PRO.

Lemon’s solution was drastic abbreviation. In 700 printed pages he reached the year 1580, incorporating all 33 volumes into which the Domestic Papers of Edward and Mary are bound (SP 10 and 11), and the first 146 of the 295 volumes for Elizabeth I (SP 12). He included a few items from outside the main series of letters and papers, such as ‘Grants of Arms’ (now SP 9) and ‘Docquets’ (Signet Office books recording warrants for the Privy Seal, now SP 38). Not many entries extended beyond three lines, and a letter of several pages might be condensed to a phrase or two of telegraphese. However, the basic layout is clear, and became the standard for a century. The series and the number of the manuscript volume are printed at the head of each page. Each Calendar entry has a sequence number which is also written in pencil on the first page of every discrete piece among the original papers. So the first entry on Lemon’s p. 2 could easily enough be traced to what is now cited as SP 10/1, no. 12. The dates are set clearly in the margins, and those which are editorially supplied (as no. 17) or conjectured (nos 20, 21) are adequately distinguished. The extra-series papers, however, were identified only by enigmatic signposts such as ‘[Doc., Nov. 10]’ or ‘[Case A. Eliz. no. 5]’. Unsurprisingly this has led to some confusion; but no clearer guide to interpolated matter was provided until the modern call numbers came to be printed after each entry.<sup>4</sup>

The first Calendar was immediately castigated for its brevity, and because it swept in many private papers and documents from other departments which happened to survive among Secretaries’ archives.<sup>5</sup> The miscellaneous and random nature of the State Papers in fact makes it impossible to fillet out extraneous matter, and all subsequent Calendars have retained the mixture as found. But the first criticism was accepted, and Lemon’s second volume (1865) was a little more fulsome, covering just a decade.

### **Editors and editorial policy**

After Lemon’s death the first sequence was taken over by M. A. E. Wood, later Mrs Green, who in forty years edited forty-one volumes. From the outset she determined to improve on Lemon’s practice of ‘*indicating* rather than *describing*’, and her much longer entries set a benchmark. Now all the significant contents of a letter would be mentioned and key phrases might be printed verbatim; the summary of the rest would follow the structure of the original, trimmed of its superfluities. Indexes, through which most readers approach the material, became progressively more helpful. Later volumes dealt with the State Papers Addenda (SP 15), which came to light after the main SP series had been arranged and bound. These were calendared in separate sequences: sometimes in separate volumes, elsewhere as appendices to

the main series. *State Papers Online* brings the SP 15s back into the mainstream.

A separate start had already been made on the papers of Charles I (1858), and the work moved forward on several fronts. Some editors would be on the permanent staff at Chancery Lane, while others would be hired from outside. Many gave lifelong service and were then succeeded by their assistants. This encouraged the development of a distinct house style, reinforced from the more austere conventions of the Chancery Calendars, which began to appear in 1891. To co-ordinate operations the Master of the Rolls, *ex officio* Keeper of Public Records, issued the guidelines printed at the front of each calendar.

### **Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII**

Henry VIII's reign has unique treatment. *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic*, appearing between 1860 and 1932 under the successive editorship of J. S. Brewer, J. Gairdner and R. H. Brodie, covers not just the main State Papers (SP 1), as yet undivided into Foreign and Domestic, but the Patent Rolls and much else from the Record Office. It also includes material from the British Library and other institutional and private collections. The Patent Roll entries are grouped into months, the rest calendared day by day. Only latterly were Record Office documents identified beyond 'R.O.' and for long the only way of tracing originals was a typescript key in the PRO search rooms. The List and Index Society has made a start at publishing the key, updated with modern references. *State Papers Online* eliminates the paper chase. It includes the entire *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic* which remains the essential guide to its many other components.

### **Other areas**

The Commonwealth period needed special attention because the republican regimes created distinct archives. The projected scheme was never realised, but two major series were completed by Mrs Green.<sup>6</sup> Here there was too much material for the revised SP Calendar format, and a greatly abbreviated tabular structure was often employed.

Conversely, the Privy Council registers were so important and relatively concise that they could be published verbatim. The main printed *Acts* run from 1542 to 1631 (1890-1964). The registers for 1631-7 were then issued in microprint facsimile (1962), a pioneering use of imaging media in this field.<sup>7</sup> A conventionally sized facsimile was adopted for the acts of 1637-45 (1967-8). The main series is now being supplemented from recently discovered sources.<sup>8</sup>

Irish, Scottish and Border affairs filled four volumes of the State Paper Commission's Henrician transcripts (1835-8). The PRO's *Calendar of State Papers relating to Scotland* (1858) dealt briefly with all of what is now SP 49-53. This has been largely superseded: by *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic* for Henry VIII's reign, thereafter by publications of the Scottish Record Office,<sup>9</sup> and (to June 1577) entries in *Calendar of State Papers Foreign*. From 1688 Scottish papers are entered in the Domestic calendar. The *Calendar of State Papers relating to Ireland* began publication in 1860 with papers from 1509 onwards (SP 60-5). Like the Domestic Calendar the work went ahead simultaneously in several sequences, but from 1895 the Domestic Calendar, which had reached the year 1671,

began to incorporate the Irish State Papers, and the separate Irish Calendar was therefore concluded at the year 1670 (1910). The first two Irish Calendars, edited by H. C. Hamilton, attracted the same criticism as Lemon's first in the Domestic series, and later volumes were similarly improved. At the end of the last century a complete revision was planned jointly by the British PRO and the Irish Manuscripts Commission (IMC). There was only one product of this partnership;<sup>10</sup> future volumes will be published by the IMC alone.

### **Foreign Calendars**

The *Calendar of State Papers Foreign* begins with Edward VI's reign (1863), from which point the State Papers had been retrospectively split into Domestic and Foreign. This segregation has sometimes hindered a rounded interpretation of events. After reaching July 1589 (1950), the Calendar was discontinued, and its incumbent editor, R. B. Wernham devised an abbreviated format which claimed to give as much information as the full calendar in half the space. The *List and Analysis of State Papers Foreign* (1964- ) now extends to the end of 1596. Each document is identified, and the contents of all are woven into consecutive narratives for each politico-geographical component. Not everyone has been happy with this solution, but it had very nearly completed the guide to the Elizabethan State Papers Foreign when Wernham died, still at work, at the age of 92.

The Calendars known informally as *State Papers Spanish, Venetian, Rome and Milan* are, as their full titles make clear, compiled from items relevant to England in foreign archives. Some of the editors' original transcripts were deposited at the Record Office, but none of these materials is within the scope of the present operation.

### **Historical Manuscripts Commission**

The Historic Manuscripts Commission (HMC) was constituted in 1869 with the purpose of surveying and describing all archives outside the public records; it is not in itself a record repository. It has published a large corpus of reports and calendars, covering municipal and collegiate records as well as acquired collections. For the most part, however, it has been concerned with family papers, often still in the owners' house. The HMC has evolved a calendar format rather different from that of the PRO. Sections of text are more often printed verbatim, which is useful when the manuscripts are not readily accessible.

The Calendar of the Cecil Papers at Hatfield House, published in twenty-four volumes between 1883 and 1976, has been recognised as one of the HMC's finest achievements. It amply demonstrates the chance by which some State Papers remained in the public records, while others were carried home by ministers and joined the family archives.

### **List and Index Society**

Before computerisation the many PRO records not covered by the Calendars or briefer guides could only be located from handwritten or typed lists in the search or reading rooms. The List and Index Society (L&IS) was founded by Sir Geoffrey Elton in 1965 to circulate such lists in a cheap format. That work continues, supplemented by newly composed research aids. The *Calendar of the Patent Rolls* is being continued by this means. The L&IS has calendared much of State Papers Supplementary (SP 46), private papers which none of the printed calendars include (1966-81).

The Society issued a brief calendar of the main series of State Papers Anne (SP 34). This represents only a small part of the material covered by the printed calendars, but from 1707 it remains the primary resource. Other L&IS publications within the range of *State Papers Online* are of SP 5 (Suppression Papers), SP 54 (State Papers Scotland 1688-1782) and SP 80 (State Papers Germany and Hungary 1661-1700).

### Later Domestic Calendars

After the Restoration the State Papers are further subdivided; some classes were artificially created, others are the registers and files actually kept by the Secretaries for different purposes. The Domestic Calendars include all such documents with the SP prefix, and those from the Signet Office (SO), a sub-department of the Secretariat. Gradually the gaps in the Calendar were closed. On completion of the James II series (1972), the sequence ran unbroken from 1509 to 1704. The cost of preparing and printing these volumes had already put the continuing programme in doubt, and much thought was given to cheaper and swifter alternatives. Nevertheless it was decided to return to the start and revise the first Lemon calendar to the standard of later volumes. The chosen editor was wholly inexperienced and given little guidance. The resulting *Calendar of State Papers Domestic of Edward VI* (1992) perhaps went too far in redressing Lemon's brevity. Elton called the treatment 'generous',<sup>11</sup> and some users have mistaken the entries for full transcripts. The revision corrected dating errors, and incorporated much new research. Further improvements came with *Calendar of State Papers Domestic of Mary I* (1998).<sup>12</sup> The Calendar for Anne's reign was then extended to 1706 (2005-6). This was the first chronological advance by the full Domestic calendar for over 80 years, and may well prove its last.

### Caution

The merits and demerits of *Letters and Papers ... of Henry VIII*, and of Calendars generally, were summed up by Elton: 'a splendid aid to historical study ... also, like all abstracts of record material, a trap and occasionally a positive disaster'.<sup>13</sup> Care should be taken in using the older Calendar entries, which contain misdatings and other faults, and lack directions to modern scholarship. Those corrections made to the copies of the Calendars in The National Archives, The Institute of Historical Research, British Library, Bodleian Library, and University of Cambridge Library will be included in *State Papers Online*. Researchers will also be able to submit further amendments and corrections to the project for the benefit of future scholarship, thus building on and furthering the work of the succession of archivists from Robert Lemon onwards.

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## Notes:

### (Endnotes)

- 1 The best way to become familiar with the entire output is to browse in a library where the whole collection is available on open shelves. There is no complete published guide. Record Commission (but not State Paper Commission), and most Public Record Office (PRO), now The National Archives, and Historic Manuscript Commission (HMC) publications up to 1982, covering much more than State Papers, are listed in E. L. C. Mullins, *Texts and Calendars: An Analytical Guide to Serial Publications* (Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks no. 7, 1958), continued as *Texts and Calendars II ... 1957-1982* (RHS Guides and Handbooks no. 12, 1983). The companion *Scottish Texts and Calendars* (RHS Guides and Handbooks no. 14 / Scottish History Society, 4th ser. 23, 1987) has no State Papers (SP) material. Still useful is the briefer but more comprehensive catalogue of government historical publications formerly issued by Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO) as *British National Archives* (Sectional List 24), usually available where the volumes are held. Publications of the HMC and the List and Index Society are listed on the respective websites.
- 2 *State Papers published under the authority of His Majesty's Commission, King Henry VIII* (11 vols, 1830-1852).
- 3 These transcripts will be added with *State Papers Online*, Part II material and linked to their documents and entries of the Calendars, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*.
- 4 The letter/number abbreviations were introduced internally in 1923/4, but the current style did not feature in the published Calendars until 1960, as part of a general modernisation in graphic design.
- 5 See particularly the unsigned review in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, new series 2 (1857), pp. 446-51.
- 6 *Calendar of the Proceedings of the Committee for Advance of Money 1642-1656* (1888) and *Calendar ... of the Committee for Compounding with Delinquents ... 1643-1660* (1889-93).
- 7 The product comprised a box of 200 micro-opaque cards, for which a special optical reader was required. The system was employed for a few other official archive publications, but was soon replaced by microfiche.
- 8 D. Crankshaw (ed.), *Proceedings of the Privy Council of Queen Elizabeth* (Woodbridge, UK, 2006- ).
- 9 *Calendar of State Papers relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots ... 1547-1603* (1898-1969), which also includes documents from the British Library and elsewhere; the *Calendar of Border Papers* (1894-6); and *The Hamilton Papers* (1890-2), which prints transcripts from manuscripts all now in the British Library.
- 10 M. O'Dowd (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Ireland, Tudor Period, 1571-1575* (Public Record Office and Irish Manuscripts Commission, 2000).
- 11 Letter to author, 18 July 1975 (author's archive, D3.72/9).
- 12 This also marked a change in publication arrangements. The first Calendars, though issued officially, were published by private firms (principally Longman). From 1887 to 1992 the volumes carried the imprint of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), the revised *Edward VI* being the last to do so. The PRO/HMSO partnership was then dissolved as both institutions moved towards executive agency status. The revised *Mary I*, the first volume of the revised *Calendar of State Papers Ireland* and the last to date of *L&IS State Papers Foreign* (2000), were produced by The National Archives in-house publications department. Meanwhile the Office had begun collaboration with the firm of Boydell and Brewer, who handled the two latest volumes of *Calendars of State Papers Domestic*.
- 13 G.R. Elton, introduction to A.F. Pollard, *Wolsey* (1965), pp. xvi-xvii, criticising Pollard for reliance on the printed calendar ('an avoidable weakness').