

**A PORTRAIT OF A TUDOR USURER: THE LIFE OF ALDERMAN
SIR JOHN GRESHAM (c.1496-1556) AND THE FOUNDATION
OF HIS GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

by M.J. Crossley Evans

SUMMARY

Until recently, little was known of Sir John Gresham's life. The Gresham family was long settled in Norfolk. Merchant and usurer, Sir John used his fortune to found a free Grammar School in Holt. Despite the financial difficulties which ensued after his sudden death, the school's future was secured by Sir John's choice of Trustees, the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers.

If Sir John Gresham is remembered at all today, it is in the bidding prayer enunciated at the annual Howson Commemoration held each June in the chapel of the school he founded in north Norfolk in 1555. Until recently little was known of his life, except that he was one of a number of Norfolk gentry and merchants associated with the court of Henry VIII. His fame amongst his contemporaries was eclipsed by that of his elder brother Sir Richard Gresham, and subsequently swallowed by that of his nephew, Sir Thomas Gresham, the founder of the Royal Exchange. Although Sir John Gresham merits a few paragraphs from Charles Welch in the pages of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, only the bare outlines of his life and work were traced and recorded. To Stowe, the London historian and topographer (1603), Sir John Gresham was noted for his opulence. To the eighteenth-century Norfolk historians, Blomefield and Armstrong, it was for the foundation of a free grammar school in the small market town of Holt. Yet so little of his character and achievements had descended to posterity that in the seventeenth century one of the clerks to the governing body of his school confused him with his nephew, and the scholarly, antiquarian, headmaster of Holt Grammar School, John Holmes (1702-1760), found nothing recorded about Sir John Gresham at the school. The visits made by Holmes to the public repositories in London yielded little material, either to feed his curiosity about the life of the founder of the school, or to form the basis of a history of the school itself which he projected in the 1730s. The plan was allowed to lapse in the 1750s, following the appearance of John Ward's book, *The Lives of the Professors of Gresham College* (1740), which included material on Sir John Gresham that Ward and Holmes had exchanged in their correspondence in the 1730s. Nothing was published about Sir John Gresham until J.W. Burgon wrote his *Life of Sir Thomas Gresham* (1839), and the article in the *Dictionary of National Biography* appeared in 1890.

This article is an attempt to redress this lack of a biography, and to provide both a pen portrait of Sir John Gresham and an account of the foundation of his free grammar school.

Sir John Gresham, like many educational benefactors of the Tudor and Jacobean age, made his money in a way that many of their more Biblically-minded contemporaries found unappealing. Gresham's fortune was not, like that of Edward Alleyne, founder of Dulwich College, augmented by rents from brothels, nor was it based on blood money, like the fortune amassed by Sir Richard Rich, the betrayer of Sir Thomas More and founder of Felsted School in Essex. Gresham's money, and that of his friend Sir Andrew Judde, the founder of Tonbridge School, owed much to less spectacular means; systematic, and carefully husbanded usury to the crown.

Usury was the trade of the Mainz Jews and their successors who financed, often unwillingly, the Norman and Plantagenet Kings between 1089 and 1290. Following their expulsion, their rôle had been generally filled by gentiles, often merchants from the capital and the major boroughs who desired and welcomed crown patronage. Sir John Gresham may not have filled the rôle of friend and confidant to Henry VIII that men such as Sir Frederick Cassel were to perform for Edward VII, but Sir John's sound financial basis, his ability to undertake difficult financial negotiations and to provide loans to the crown, were just as vital to the attempts to realise the threads of crown policy¹ as Cassel's were for Edward VII's pursuit of pleasure without recourse to money-lenders.

Many of the crown's usurers were of obscure origin, but Gresham was descended from an ancient, though minor, armigerous family long settled in Norfolk.

The Gresham family took their surname from the village of Gresham in north Norfolk, where the family were resident from at least the 1360s until the first decade of the fifteenth century. They came from the ranks of the minor armigerous gentry, and intermarried with other Norfolk families of a similar station in society to themselves.² The first of the family to be associated with the small market town of Holt was John Gresham of Gresham and Aylmerton, who together with his fellow trustees of the manor of Holt Pereers, was given permission in 1407 to grant the reversion of the manor, then held for life by Katherine Bacon, to the Augustinian Priory of Beeston Regis. By 1414 his son John Gresham the Younger (c.1390-1460), had settled in Holt. It has been suggested that he became the Priory's tenant of the manor of Holt Pereers, and dwelt in the manor house there,³ but a careful search of the court rolls of the manor between 1433 and 1460 gives no evidence to support tenancy during this period. His son James Gresham (c.1420 - post 1497), of Holt, was the first member of the family to achieve importance. In 1442 he became Lord of the Manor of East Beckham in Norfolk, but after the death of his father made his father's house in Holt his chief seat. James Gresham was a cousin to both William Paston (1378-1444), one of the Justices of the Common Pleas, known as 'the Good Judge', and to his son John Paston (1421-1466), to both of whom Gresham served as a clerk. Eleven of the letters written by James Gresham in this capacity are to be found amongst the corpus known as the Paston letters. Many of them are sealed with his crest, the grasshopper. He was the first of the family known to have used this symbol, which has become so closely associated with both the school and the family. This effectively disposes of the legend that Sir Thomas Gresham, the founder of the Royal Exchange, was a foundling, abandoned by his mother in a water meadow and discovered by a washerwoman who was attracted to the spot where the abandoned infant lay concealed by the chirping of a grasshopper.⁴ The legend goes on to relate that the gratitude of Sir Thomas Gresham was such that he adopted this lively and perceptive insect as the family badge.

John Gresham III (c.1455 - post 1526), was one of the sons of James Gresham, and divided his time between Holt and London. Tradition states that his four surviving sons were born between 1480 and 1496 in their grandfather's house in Holt, which is stated to have been the manor house of Holt Pereers.⁵ The first, second and fourth sons, William Gresham (c.1483-1548), Sir Richard Gresham (c.1486-1549), and Sir John Gresham (c.1496-1556), all became prominent London mercers, and the third son, Thomas Gresham (c.1490-1558), became one of the chaplains to Henry VIII.⁶ The eldest son, William Gresham, was the Governor of the English merchants at Antwerp from before 1533 to 1542, when he fled the town from fear of some people from Ghelders, abandoning his post and his countrymen without making provision for their persons, their property or the privileges of the English merchant community. On his return to England he was arrested and imprisoned by the order of Henry VIII. No doubt he

would have merited a worse fate for his dereliction of duty had his brothers, Sir Richard and Sir John not reached positions of eminence at court.⁷

The two brothers, Sir Richard and Sir John Gresham, were closely associated with each other in their business interests. Sir Richard was the more prominent and served in various influential capacities including Master of the Worshipful Company of Mercers of London in 1532/3, 1538/9 and 1548/9, Sheriff of London and Middlesex 1531/2, Alderman of London 1536-1549, Lord Mayor of London 1537/8, and Justice of the Peace for Norfolk (1538), the East and West Ridings of Yorkshire (1540), and Suffolk (1543). From an early stage in his career he was associated with the court, and lent money to Henry VIII as early as 1511. His services were recognised by his appointment in 1516 as Gentleman-Usher Extraordinary in the Royal Household, and he became closely attached to Cardinal Wolsey. In 1520 he arranged the supply of tapestries at Hampton Court and in the 1520s supplied the King with arras, velvets and satins. Most of his trade was with the Low Countries, and Sir Richard Gresham soon amassed a sizeable fortune. His most attractive feature was his loyalty to his old patron, Cardinal Wolsey, in his disgrace. Wolsey called him 'his fast friend' on his death bed and Sir Richard Gresham provided the money for the funeral of the Cardinal in Leicester Abbey. This was in contrast to his own description of himself as a man 'conformable in all things to His Highnesses (the King's) pleasure'. He subsequently sat in 1534 as one of the Commissioners for London to enquire into the value of benefices prior to the suppression of the monasteries, attended the execution of Ann Boleyn in 1536, and enriched himself considerably in the despoliation of the monasteries, dissolved Walsingham Abbey, brought the Prior to submission and acquired Fountains Abbey in 1540. By the early 1540s his landed estates alone yielded over £800 p.a. Sir Richard Gresham acted as an advisor to Thomas Cromwell, but following his fall in 1540 took a less prominent rôle in politics, and lived in semi-retirement from 1547 until his death in 1549.⁸

Sir John Gresham is a much more shadowy figure. He was apprenticed to John Middleton, a London mercer, about the year 1510, and was admitted a member of the Worshipful Company of Mercers in 1517.⁹ In December 1519 he was elected to the livery of the company with his elder brother William.¹⁰ In his early years he was closely associated with his brother Richard in the textile trade in the Low Countries, principally with Antwerp, and in 1527 both were importing grain to London from Germany. Subsequently we find him trading with the island of Candia or Crete in 1530, importing wine from Bordeaux and trading with the Levant and with Portugal in 1531.¹¹ Sir John Gresham acted as an agent both for Cardinal Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell.

Like Sir Richard, Sir John was closely involved in the running of the Mercers' Company, acting as Warden in 1533 and on two subsequent occasions,¹² and serving as Master in 1538, 1546, 1553 and 1556.¹³ He was Sheriff of London and Middlesex in 1537/8 during the mayoralty of his brother and was in the same year knighted and granted an achievement of arms which was later used until the 1950s by his school conjoined with those of the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers as a double coat of arms. He was elected as a member of the Court of Aldermen on 25 October 1540, and served successively as Alderman of Aldgate Ward from 1540 to 1547, of Dowgate Ward from 1547 to 1553 and finally as Alderman of Bassishaw Ward from 1553 to 1556.¹⁴

Sir John Gresham was principally known in his day as a financier, and like his brother he was hated and feared. The Tudor money-lenders or usurers were regarded with the same loathing, envy, malice and fear as their Jewish counterparts during their brief sojourn in England between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. Sir Richard's death resulted in a series

of ribald Latin verses circulating through the city attacking his life, his work and particularly his money-lending.¹⁵ Sir John Gresham had been accused of crafty business practices as early as 1526, and by 1528 a German merchant accused the brothers of practising 'Jewish arts' in their dealings with others.¹⁶ Shortly afterwards, c.1530, one Master Gresham, possibly John, attempted to bribe the new Lord Chancellor, Sir Thomas More, by sending him 'a fair gilt cup' as a New Year's present at a time when Gresham had a case pending in the Court of Chancery. Sir Thomas More scorned the attempt to corrupt his judgement but admired the workmanship of the cup, accepted it, and sent in return to Master Gresham a cup of greater monetary value, but of poorer workmanship. Thus in the words of one of the biographers of the great Chancellor 'Sir Thomas won the better cup, rebuked the donor and preserved his integrity'.¹⁷ The rebuke can only have served as a momentary check to the brothers, for in 1532 we find one Nicholuccio Vinnaciese, merchant of Antwerp, appealing to Henry VIII for protection from the brothers, who had caused him to be wrongfully arrested and who were attempting to destroy his credit with the mercantile fraternity.¹⁸ Their reputation for ruthlessness, exaction and avarice were such that Sir Francis Bigod wrote to Thomas Cromwell on 31 January 1535 that he was 'in Cambridge, and dare not come to London for fear of Mr. Gresham'.¹⁹ The power, influence, and network of debtors of the Gresham brothers stretched into every stratum of society. In 1541, a frame of timber belonging to Sir John was maliciously destroyed by 'evill disposed p(er)sones unknowen', who felt they had just cause to seek revenge against Sir John. This prompted the Privy Council to ask a justice to investigate the matter.²⁰ Sir John Gresham's death was celebrated in verses, prefixed by the following title, which showed the esteem in which he was held by many of his contemporaries.

The epitaph of that stupid and squalid
Usurer, John Gresham, a soldier
who shovels human manure ... who
is buried in hell ²¹

The reference to Gresham as a shoveller of human manure or the sixteenth-century equivalent of an Army Pioneer shows how he was viewed by many men in the same light as Sir Richard Gresham, as a man obedient to the crown and prepared to undertake any action or venture that the King might require of him, however vile or unsavoury or despised by men of honour.

It was probably through his elder brother's influence that Sir John was appointed one of the Gentlemen Pensioners to Henry VIII in 1526.²² He retained his position at court for over twenty years until the death of Henry VIII in 1547. This appointment did not bring with it a salary, but gave Sir John the emoluments of occasional monetary gifts from the King and robes of office. These chamber offices were generally granted to rising or established members of the gentry whose loyalty the crown wished to ensure by attendance at court. The office held by Sir John was largely honorific and supernumerary, requiring only irregular attendance at court, and bringing the holder neither free food nor free accommodation there, but granting him the status of being a member of the Royal household. It has been calculated that by 1535 there were some 263 of such supernumerary officials at court.²³ Like his brother, Sir John made himself useful to the leading men about court. In 1529 he was listed amongst those to whom Cardinal Wolsey owed money for satins and cloth of gold and, both through his relationship with Wolsey, and his office at court, Sir John came into frequent contact with Wolsey's servants, Thomas Cromwell, later the King's chief minister, and Edmund Bonner, later Bishop of London.²⁴

In a small way Sir John Gresham assisted in the work of the ecclesiastical commissioners in valuing monastic property during the Dissolution, and was not slow to purchase the land

formerly belonging to monastic houses.²⁵ In September 1538 he made his first substantial purchases of land, in Surrey, which he obtained from Battle Abbey in Sussex.²⁶ These were followed in 1539 by grants of land from the Abbey of Hyde near Winchester, and Merton Priory in Surrey, which helped to consolidate his land holdings in Surrey.²⁷

From 1538 until 1547 Sir John played a small but significant part in all the major events of the twilight years of the reign of Henry VIII. In February 1539 he was named as part of the jury to try Sir Nicholas Carewe for High Treason for his alleged assistance to one of the last hapless scions of the Plantagenets, Henry, Marquis of Exeter.²⁸ In December 1541 he was named on the juries to try Thomas Culpeper and Francis Durham for High Treason. Their crime consisted of criminal intimacy with Queen Catherine Howard. Both were condemned and executed; and although, unlike his brother, Sir Richard, he was not sworn on this jury, he served on the trial of the late queen's uncle Lord William Howard and members of her household for misprision of Treason, in being aware of the unchaste behaviour of the Queen before her marriage.²⁹ Sir John also formed part of the jury who tried and condemned Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, the eldest son and heir of the Duke of Norfolk, for High Treason in January 1547.³⁰

Throughout the 1540s Sir John Gresham served on a number of important committees. In January 1541, he and Sir Richard Gresham were appointed two of the Commissioners for Heresies and Offences Done Within the City of London, and sat under the notorious Bishop Bonner. In this they became instrumental in sending a number of Protestants to the fires of Smithfield.³¹ In February 1546 Sir John Gresham was named as one of the twelve Commissioners for the Survey of the Chantries in Surrey, Sussex and Southwark which sat under Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, and surveyed the lands, the yearly value, goods and ornaments of the chantries, prior to their dissolution.³²

Gresham retained his position as Gentleman Pensioner to the King, and in that capacity attended the meeting between the King and his new bride Anne of Cleves in January 1540. He also provided lodgings for some of the Ambassadors who came in her suite.³³ At some date prior to July 1543 he was appointed one of the Esquires for the Body, but his post can have required only his occasional attendance on the King when he was not abroad on the King's business.³⁴ Gresham retained the position and is given this title in a document dated June 1546, and called 'the King's servant' in a document dated August of the same year.³⁵ It is not known if he maintained the post in the courts of Edward VI and Queen Mary.

In May 1539, he was appointed one of the justices of the peace for the county of Surrey, and continued to exercise his position with diligence and application throughout the reign of Henry VIII,³⁶ principally in serving as one of the county's subsidy and muster commissioners who were responsible for collecting taxes and raising, arming and equipping soldiers for the armies of the king.³⁷

The years 1542-1546 were among the most busy of Gresham's career. We find him providing material for the King's ordnance, and during the war with the Scots in 1542 he was involved in victualling the garrison of Berwick-upon-Tweed with wheat and other provisions to withstand a possible siege by the Scots.³⁸ In 1543/4 he provided and armed twenty foot-soldiers for the King's army which invaded France to capture Boulogne;³⁹ he was involved in taking a general muster of the army, supplied the Master of the King's Tents with large stores of canvas and buckram, and acted as the middle man in supplying money for the building work at the Hurst and the tower at Portsmouth to withstand possible raids from the French on the south coast.⁴⁰ The wars against the French and Scots were ideal times for the form of licensed piracy known as privateering. Sir John seized the opportunity to help finance and arm the ship called 'The Martin Bulley', which, furnished with letters of marque from the king, preyed upon and

captured French and Scottish merchantmen and gave Sir John part of the proceeds from their activities.⁴¹

The ruinous cost of the wars with the Scots and the French put great strain on the already depleted treasury of Henry VIII, and Sir John Gresham was closely involved with the three resultant strands of the crown's fiscal policy; the procurement of large loans from the Antwerp money markets, the debasement of the coinage, and the sale of crown lands. Owing to the poor credit of the crown the rates of interest negotiated on the money markets were crippling.⁴² Gresham took advantage of the situation and loaned the King substantial sums of money in return for the mortgages of large tracts of land. Although the crown retained the option to regain the lands if the money was repaid within a year, it was well known at the time that the chances of this happening were slight. Between 1544 and 1547 Gresham profited by the financial plight of the crown. By 1546 it is claimed that he had lent to the King the accumulated total of £40,000.⁴³

The debasement of the coinage was the last refuge for the government. The silver coinage was increasingly adulterated with the addition of copper, producing a cheaper coinage at a saving to the government. The decline in confidence in the currency that followed compounded the problem. Gresham was acting as the King's agent under the orders of the Lord Chancellor Wriothesley and the Privy Council. In July 1546 the Fuggers, the leading bankers in Europe, provided Sir John Gresham with samples of copper for the King, which, following their acceptance, were shipped by Sir John and arrived in October 1546.⁴⁴

Sir John's work amongst the merchants of Antwerp brought him into contact with the sister of the Emperor Charles V, Mary Queen of Hungary, who was the Regent of the Spanish Netherlands for her brother. He took great pains to raise £3,000 for the queen in August and September 1543, and this was achieved with such speed and efficiency that Eustace Chapuys, the Imperial and Spanish Ambassador to the court of Henry VIII, wrote to the queen informing her that Sir John 'well deserves being recommended to your majesty, and if he is only told that his services on this occasion have been agreeable it will spur him on to do service at future time.'⁴⁵

Sir John Gresham also became involved in acting as one of the Crown's agents for the sale of lead, which was a Royal monopoly. In December 1545 he was supervising the transport of lead from the north to London.⁴⁶ Sir Rowland Hill and Sir Andrew Judde, two of Gresham's closest friends, were involved with him in the trade of both lead and alum. Alum was another Royal monopoly used in dyeing cloth and tanning leather. This was sold by Sir John on behalf of the crown in the Spanish Netherlands.⁴⁷ Gresham in return purchased merchandise for the King and in August 1546 purchased 421 bales of fustian cloth from Anthony Fugger in Antwerp and imported them into England.⁴⁸

The State Papers from 1547 to 1580 are much less full, and we are unable to gain a clear picture of Sir John in the last nine years of his life. We know from those of the reign of Henry VIII that Sir John and Sir Richard were closely associated in both their business and their public careers. On the death of Henry VIII, Sir Richard appears to have partly retired from public life, and died in 1549.

In 1547/8 Sir John Gresham filled the office of Lord Mayor of London with much splendour and revived certain ancient and costly pageants.⁴⁹ In the years following his mayoralty he continued to sit on the Aldermanic bench, and to interest himself in the affairs of the city and country. In 1549 he formed one of the mounted city dignitaries who witnessed the journey of the disgraced Protector Somerset through the city on his way to the Tower. Sir John had known

Somerset's successor, Sir John Dudley, later the Duke of Northumberland, for many years and had sat with him both on a number of commissions and juries as well as served with him on the Surrey bench of magistrates.⁵⁰

How Gresham adjusted himself to the change in religious sympathies of the country's rulers is unknown. Although he enriched himself through the despoliation of the monasteries, assisted in the fall of the chantries and numbered amongst his closest friends Sir Rowland Hill, the first Protestant Lord Mayor of London, he is not known to have had sympathies with Protestantism as such. It was left to his nephew, Sir Thomas Gresham (1519-1579), the son of his brother, Sir Richard Gresham, to bring the family into line with the ascendant creed.

Throughout the 1530s, 1540s and 1550s, Sir John Gresham continued to be involved in mercantilism. Amongst his apprentices was his nephew, Sir Thomas Gresham, the founder of the Royal Exchange, who later in his life paid tribute to the wide training he had received under his uncle between *c.* 1535 and 1542, and it was to this apprenticeship that he attributed his later substantial successes in business. In addition to membership of the Worshipful Company of Mercers, Sir John Gresham was a leading member of the newly formed Merchant Venturers, and in 1547 and 1553 he is called in documents a merchant of the staple of Calais. He was one of the leading merchant princes in the country, and although much of his trade was with the Spanish Netherlands, his ships plied their trade as far afield as Portugal, the Mediterranean, and the Levantine ports, with considerable success and with mixed reputation for over thirty years.

His employments at the commencement of the reign of Edward VI were much the same as they had been under Henry VIII. In July 1547 he was granted the customary pardon for all acts done during the reign of the late king. In April he had been confirmed as one of the Royal agents for the sale of the Royal monopolies of alum and lead and for purchasing black and white fustians from Anthony Fugger and his nephews in Antwerp.⁵¹ His importance in the business life of the city of London was confirmed in November 1547 by his appointment, together with thirteen other merchants, including his brother and Sir Rowland Hill, to a commission to examine the petitions of those debtors in Ludgate gaol who wished to compound with their creditors.⁵²

Sir John was active in the Low Countries in the late 1540s trying to liquidate the Royal debts, using the monies derived from the sale of alum and lead. In March 1548 the king granted him a warrant for £200 'by way of his Majestes reward in journeying and taking other peynes in his Majestes affairs.'⁵³ He was also helping to victual and equip the English garrison at Boulogne. The details of Gresham's activities in Antwerp are not known, but it is recorded that Sir John Gresham, Sir Andrew Judde, and Sir John York, the friend of Northumberland and master of the Southwark mint, were the victims of speculators and sustained substantial losses in the silver bullion market in Antwerp at this time.⁵⁴

The fiscal policy of the King's agent in Antwerp, Thomas Gresham, Sir John's nephew, was much disliked by Sir John and the other English merchants in the Low Countries. Thomas Gresham was determined to restore English financial credit on the continent and to liquidate the external debt. To achieve this he both controlled cloth shipments from England to the Spanish Netherlands, which were the main source of England's credit, and maintained a shortage of bills drawn on the crown in circulation on the bourse. This manipulation of the Antwerp markets was highly successful in achieving the government's ends, but it was most unpopular with individual merchants. It was reported that Sir John, so recently the victim of speculation in the silver bullion market, had through his nephew's action lost the control of the sale of some £4,000 – £5,000 in woollen goods which he had committed to the Antwerp market, and 'doth storm at the matter'.⁵⁵

The memorandum book or 'Chronicle' kept by the young king shows that the Royal Council sent Sir John to negotiate the king's debts with the Fuggers in Antwerp during January and February 1552. Whilst there he fulfilled a further commission by obtaining 1,100 pairs of corselets and horse harnesses, which the king pronounced to be 'very fair'.⁵⁶

Although Sir John spent much of the period 1548-1552 on the king's business in Flanders, he continued to be named on commissions dealing with the county of Surrey, where he had most territorial influence. On the 16 December 1550 he was named as one of those who were appointed to collect in Surrey the third payment of the lay subsidy granted to the crown by Parliament.⁵⁷ It is doubtful if he could spare much time to see to this work, which probably fell most heavily on those members of the commission without regular employment abroad.

Sir John was in London for part of the years 1553-4 at the time of the death of Edward VI and the troubled accession of his sister. The patent rolls for the reign of Queen Mary show that Sir John was active as a magistrate in the early part of the new queen's reign. On 12 February 1554 he sat at the Old Bailey as one of the Justices of Oyer and Terminer for London and Middlesex and condemned at least two men to death by hanging, drawing and quartering for rebelling against the Queen and marching on London. On the following day he sat in Southwark in his capacity as a Justice of Oyer and Terminer for the County of Surrey, and with his fellow justices condemned to death John Harper, gentleman of Cobham, Kent, and others for forming part of a band of 3,000 men who had assembled at Southwark and marched to Kingston in an attempt to overthrow the queen.⁵⁸

Throughout the reign Gresham exercised his powers as a justice for the city of London. He was one of those who tried Silvestra Butler, widow, in June 1555 for conspiring with others to depose the queen, and in December 1555 he tried a woman for both speaking treason against the queen and for denying the veracity of the royal (phantasmal) pregnancy.⁵⁹

The transfer of much monastic property in Surrey to Sir John, together with subsequent purchases of secular land in the county, gave him a good knowledge of Surrey, and thus it is not surprising to find that he was appointed one of the Commissioners of Sewers 'to survey the walls, streams, ditches &c. from Ravensborne, Co. Kent, to Putney Church, Co. Surrey', to repair them, and 'to make statutes ordinances and provisions for the safeguard of the premises', in November 1553. He was confirmed as one of the sixteen commissioners and appointed as one of the eight men named as being 'of the quorum' in November 1554. At least three members of the quorum were required to sit on any meeting of the commissioners.⁶⁰ It is not known how active Sir John was on the commission. In February 1554 he had been confirmed in his post as one of the commissioners of the peace for the county of Surrey, although he was not placed on the quorum, and again it is unlikely he was able to devote much attention to county affairs because of his frequent employment abroad by the queen.⁶¹

During this period Sir John was much involved in trying to obtain credit on the Antwerp exchange for the queen's council. This was not an easy assignment, as the successful fiscal policy employed by Edward VI and his council to curb high inflation and the problems left by Henry VIII had been undone by the war in France and the attendant foreign policy. During the absence of the Royal agent in Antwerp, Thomas Gresham, on Crown business in Spain between September 1554 and March 1555, the council employed Sir John and one Nicholas Holborne to tackle the important and difficult tasks left behind. During this time they borrowed almost £100,000. At the same time, they were attempting to discharge, where possible, existing debts contracted on the bourse and to prolong loans where this was not possible. The expense to the crown of negotiating such loans was considerable. Between September 1554 and August 1557 Sir John Gresham, Thomas Gresham and Nicholas Holborne received between them

£195,000 from the Mint and the Exchequer to be employed in repaying a proportion of the capital sums borrowed, settling brokerage charges, interest, and the expenses of the agents. The accounts of Thomas Gresham have survived for part of this period. They show that between 17% and 18% of the money spent by the government in servicing the loans went on paying interest and on brokerage expenses, of which the former accounted for between 11% and 15%, and the latter, for between 2% and 7%. It is probable that Sir John received a similar percentage to his nephew of the total to cover brokerage and expenses. Although this was not an excessive percentage, the capital sums were sufficiently large for Sir John to receive substantial sums of money for acting as a broker for the crown.⁶²

Sir John maintained an active interest in expanding his commercial links and opportunities. At the very time that he was involved in critical negotiations on behalf of the crown with the Antwerp merchants, he found time to become involved in the provision of some of the capital funding needed for the voyage of Sir Hugh Willoughby and Richard Chancellor which was undertaken in 1553 to discover a North-east Passage to China and the Orient. Chancellor's return in 1554 with a letter from the Russian czar, Ivan IV, inviting trade relations, encouraged Sir John Gresham and his nephew Thomas and his friends Sir Andrew Judde and Sir Rowland Heywood to join with other merchants to form a company to exploit the trading potential revealed by Chancellor's voyage. On 26 February 1555 the Queen granted a charter appointing Sir John one of the twenty-four members of the Court of Assistants to Sebastian Cabot, the Governor of the newly formed Company of Merchants Adventurers of England. More commonly known as the Muscovy Company, they were dedicated to the 'discovery of lands, territories, isles and seigniories unknown' and were involved in most of the notable voyages of discovery sent from London in the next eighty years.⁶³ The company had influential backers and took the form of a joint stock company. Sir John's interest in the new venture was closely associated with the sharp decline in the volume of the cloth trade with the Low Countries between 1550 and 1554. The Royal Council, like Sir John, hoped that the nation's dependence upon trade with the Low Countries and Spain would be broken and replaced by new trade links with the north which would provide a market for English cloth. At a meeting on 1 May 1555 the new company appointed its first factors in Russia and provided the finance for the voyage of Richard Chancellor which left later in the month. Sir John did not live to see either the company's successes or to reap financial rewards from the ventures.⁶⁴

Sir John Gresham and Education

As a prominent member of the Mercers' Company Sir John Gresham was closely involved in the government of at least four educational establishments, St. Paul's School, the Mercers' School, London, Richard Collyer's Grammar School, Horsham (1532/3), and the Free Grammar School of the mercer, Alderman William Dautesey, at West Lavington, Wiltshire, which was founded by the terms of his will and built in 1553.⁶⁵ The most important of these was St. Paul's School. Sir John Gresham sent his eldest son and heir, William Gresham (1522-1579), to be educated there, and at least two of his nephews, Sir John Gresham the Younger, and Sir Thomas Gresham, were Paulines.⁶⁶

The interest of Sir John Gresham in education must have been increased by the activities of his two closest friends and business associates, Alderman Sir Rowland Hill (c.1492-1561) and Alderman Sir Andrew Judde (c.1494-1558), with whom he was involved in the sale of merchandise derived from the Royal monopolies of alum and lead. Sir Rowland Hill was a prominent mercer, four times Master of the Company, and sometime Lord Mayor of London. He founded and endowed a free Grammar School at Market Drayton in Shropshire.⁶⁷ Sir Andrew

Judde was also a Lord Mayor of London, and Lord Deputy and Mayor of the Staple at Calais. In 1553 he founded and endowed Tonbridge School in Kent.⁶⁸ Sir John Gresham named both men as overseers of his will, and is probable that he discussed with them their schools and educational endeavours. The close association between Lord Mayors of London and education was a feature of the period 1450-1600. Other contemporaries of Sir John Gresham who founded schools in their native towns included Sir William Laxton, a grocer and Lord Mayor in 1545, who founded Oundle, and William Harper, a merchant taylor, and Lord Mayor in 1562, who founded Bedford School.⁶⁹ Dr. Willan in his study of the founders of the Muscovy Company in 1555 noted that many of them made bequests to found schools and foster education.⁷⁰

The foundation of a Grammar School at Holt by Sir John Gresham was closely entwined with the history of the Priory of the Augustinian Canons at Beeston Regis, near Sheringham in Norfolk. The house was founded in 1216 by Lady Isabel de Cressy for the Black Canons. These men were priests who formed part of the diocesan clergy and were distinct from monks. They were bound together by vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and shared a common refectory, chapter house, infirmary and dormitory. The Augustinian Canons or Canons Regular served the parochial cures of many adjacent livings and kept a school for the children of their tenants and the local gentry from at least the fourteenth century onwards.⁷¹ The house at Beeston Regis was never large, and was founded for a Prior and four Canons.⁷²

As we have seen, the Gresham family were associated with the Priory from the date of the addition of the manor of Holt Pereers to the possessions of the Priory in 1407, and were from at least 1414 residents in Holt. As the children of a prominent resident of Holt it is probable that they, like the tenants of the Priory, followed tradition, and received their early education at Beeston Regis Priory. Educational provision there was not continuous in the early sixteenth century. At the time of the Visitation of Bishop Nix on the 18 July 1514 the school was defunct, but it was soon revived. At the time of the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, in 1535, the Priory establishment consisted of the Prior, four Canons, six boys, and seven servants. The six boys listed were boarders, and their number in the school would have been supplemented by day boys. In addition the priory provided 'one scholler of Oxonforde (with) xl s(hillings) yearly for his exibicione'.⁷³

The Priory was one of the last to be suppressed by the Commissioners of Henry VIII in June 1539. With this act educational provision for children in this part of Norfolk ceased, leaving Sir Bartholomew Read's Free Grammar School at Cromer as the nearest school to Holt. Since it was situated ten miles away, it is doubtful if the school ever counted pupils from Holt amongst its numbers.

The commissioners of Henry VIII returned the annual income of the Priory at £46-3s-6³/₄d p.a. and almost immediately on 30 October 1539 the crown leased the Priory and its land to one John Travers on a rent of £20-5s-2d p.a., for the space of twenty-one years.⁷⁴ On 5 September 1545 Sir Edmund Wyndham (c.1500-1589) of Felbrigg Hall, like Sir John Gresham a supernumerary court official, who was serving as High Sheriff of the County, joined with Giles Sefowle, gentleman of Waterden, and paid the crown £628-10s-0d for the reversion of the Priory and its five Norfolk manors, together with the rent of Travers's lease.⁷⁵ On 12 September 1545 Sir Edmund Wyndham was given power to alienate the Lordship and Manor of Holt Pereers to Sir John Gresham, together with a wood of 10 acres called Prior's Grove, Pereers Grove or Peremiter's Grove. The manor had been valued at £7-14s-0d p.a. by the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* in 1535.⁷⁶ The timing of the alienation so soon after Sir Edmund Wyndham's purchase of the reversion indicates that Sir John Gresham's desire to found a school to serve Holt and the adjacent parishes, to replace that lost by the dissolution of Beeston Regis Priory,

pre-dated his purchase of the manor of Holt Pereers in 1545. Unfortunately the early papers relating to the foundation of the school were lost in the Great Fire of London in 1666. Granville Leveson Gower, a descendant of Sir John Gresham, writing in 1883, put the date of the foundation of the school at 1546, but no other evidence to support this date has been found.⁷⁷ Certainly Sir John Gresham consolidated his possessions in Holt by purchasing on 14 October 1546 the freehold ancestral lands of the Gresham family from his elder brother William Gresham for £170; they appear to have abutted on to those belonging to the manor of Holt Pereers. At a subsequent date these were augmented with the manor of Holt Hales, which he purchased from his fellow mercer, John Appleyard.⁷⁸ There is little doubt that these purchases were made with the idea of founding a school. This is partly confirmed by the fact that Sir John Gresham was now firmly based in Surrey, where he had made his country residence at Titsey Place. The acquisition of the manor of Holt Pereers was his sole purchase of despoiled monastic property in Norfolk. Although these purchases were made in 1545/6, the business commitments of Sir John Gresham were such that he was unable to make further provision for the projected school until 1551/2.

Erasmus, when enquiring why John Colet, Dean of St Paul's, entrusted the government of his new school to the Worshipful Company of Mercers, was told by him that 'there is no absolute certainty in human affairs; but for his part, he found less corruption in such a body of citizens than in any other order or degree of mankind'.⁷⁹ Colet confirmed and encouraged a trend which was already established. Sir John Gresham had served on the livery of the Mercers since 1519, and his involvement in their educational charities has already been briefly described.⁸⁰ The Company's close association in a number of these charities precluded them from accepting the trust of Sir John Gresham's projected school at Holt.

The Worshipful Company of Fishmongers was undoubtedly chosen in part by Sir John Gresham because until that date they had not administered any similar trusts. The details of Sir John's enrolment as a Fishmonger were lost during the Great Fire; however, we know that he became one of the benefactors of the Fishmongers in 1552.⁸¹ Thereafter progress on the foundation of the school continued quickly. In his first will, dated 12 February 1553, Sir John left the family land in Holt, purchased from his brother William Gresham, to his son Edmund Gresham (1530-1589). Although he had decided to bequeath his family lands to his son, he excepted from the bequest his 'mannor of Holte Hales and all other lands and tenements whiche I purchased of late of John Appliard Esq. and except the lands and tenements whiche I late purchased of Sir Edmund Windham Kt., and Giles Sefowlde [*sic*] Esq., and also except all the land and tenements being freehold I late purchased of Thomas Foly in Holte and H(L)etheringsett Co. Norfolk'.⁸² These lands became the nucleus of the endowments of the school.

Although no statutes of the school survive before 1689, it is probable that the original statutes were drawn up by the current High Master of St. Paul's School, Thomas Freeman, who held the post from 1549 to 1559 and was well known to Gresham and his family.⁸³

The endowment of the grammar school was confirmed by Letters Patent of 27 April 1555, 1 and 2 Philip and Mary. They consisted of the Manors of Holt Hales and Holt Pereers, land in ten other Norfolk parishes and three houses formerly in possession of the Hospital of St. Giles Cripplegate, London.⁸⁴ The Letters Patent recited that Sir John Gresham, together with the inhabitants of Holt and the neighbouring country, had petitioned for the foundation of the school in Holt, to be run by a master and under master, and governed by the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers of London.

The patent allowed Sir John Gresham to appoint the master and under master during his life, to establish the school's statutes, and to order the stipends of the master. On his death the

Fishmongers were given the right to appoint the master with the consent of both the Bishop of Norwich and of Sir John's brother, Thomas Gresham (c.1487-1558), who was Chaplain to Henry VIII, Prebendary and Chancellor of the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, and Prebendary of Chichester. He resided at his living of North Repps, which he held in plurality with South Repps and Wiveton. On the death of Chancellor Gresham this right of consent became vested solely in the bishop. The licence clearly emphasised that the lands with which the school was to be endowed were not to exceed £40 p.a. This part of the old patent allowing the Fishmongers to acquire land for the maintenance of the school not exceeding £40 p.a. was renewed by new letters patent granted by Elizabeth I on 12 July 1565, upon the petition of Sir Christopher Heydon of Baconsthorpe Castle, and the Wardens and Commonalty of the Mystery of Fishmongers.⁸⁵

Work on the school house probably commenced before the granting of the letters patent, and we know that by 25 June 1555 the work of building a new school house attached to the old Gresham family home was well under way. On that date Sir John Gresham wrote to Henry Roose, 2nd Earl of Rutland; 'I have a school house building in your town of Holt Market in Norfolk, with a large dwelling adjoining to the same, and I am in great want of timber ...' Although Sir John Gresham had already received ten oaks, he requested him to 'make them twenty oaks, for the halfe of which I will pay you as much as they be worth. By one obligation you owe me £35, and by another £86. Please give a letter for my payment to my overseer of the buildings, William Rombotte before Bartermew-tide'.⁸⁶

The legal formalities relating to the transfer of the lands to the Fishmongers were completed and confirmed by a deed dated 16 October 1556.⁸⁷ Already ill, Sir John Gresham died of the sweating sickness seven days later on 23 October 1556, and was buried on 25 October under a fine monument in his parish church, St. Michael's Bassishaw, London, which was destroyed in the Great Fire.⁸⁸

The sudden death of Sir John Gresham showed how seriously overstretched he had been in the organisation and execution of his own business and financial affairs. In certain areas the result was chaos. In his will he bequeathed the Rectories of Mayfield and Wadhurst in Sussex, farmland formerly in the possession of Merton Priory in Surrey, the lordship of Mayfield, and the part of Mayfield and Frankham to his wife, Katherine, for her life, and upon her death to their children. Sir John held these lands as a tenant of the crown, and contrary to his feudal obligations he had bequeathed the properties without first obtaining a licence from the crown allowing him to make such a disposition of the property in question. His executors were required to obtain a royal pardon for Sir John's offence, and to pay a fine of £33-6s-8d to the Treasury for the 'trespass' before the property could pass to Sir John's relict.⁸⁸ This failure by Sir John to observe feudal customs was not an isolated case. In May 1557 William Morante of Surrey found that Sir John, Sir Rowland Hill and others had failed to obtain a suitable licence from the crown when they sold him lands in Wimbledon, which had formerly been part of the endowments of the dissolved Hospital of St. Thomas, Southwark. Morante was obliged to sue for pardon from the crown and to pay a fine.⁸⁹

It is consequently not surprising that Sir John's endowment of his grammar school should experience the same difficulties. Unfortunately on this occasion his trustees were dealing with forces more venal and less tractable and accommodating than the crown.

Probate of Sir John's estate was issued on 26 November 1556 to Thomas Rowe, merchant tailor, and Edmund Gresham, his youngest son. It soon became apparent that the endowment of the school fell foul of the Statute of Mortmain, because Sir John had not received the necessary licence to alienate the Manor of Holt Hales which was held under the manor of Holt. Thus,

owing to the law of primogeniture it passed to William Gresham (1522-1579), who fulfilled his father's wishes and reconveyed the manor to the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers. In doing this he failed firstly to obtain the permission of his feudal overlord Sir Christopher Heydon (c.1519-1579) of Baconsthorpe Castle, Lord of the Manor of Holt, from whom Sir John Gresham held his paternal lands purchased in 1546 under the feudal land tenure socage, and under whom he held the manor of Holt Hales; and secondly he failed to obtain a licence under the terms of the Statute of Mortmain.⁹¹ The result was that Sir Christopher seized possession of the manor within a year and a day of the alienation, perhaps in part owing to his feeling about the Greshams, and in part owing to his opportunism.⁹² A protracted case in the Court of Chancery was the outcome. Firstly the Fishmongers went to law against William Gresham and in 1560 obtained a writ 'yt the sd Will: should commit no waste nor do any action, or make any leases of ye manors lands, &c given by Sir John, for to support the school till ye action was determined in chancery'.⁹³

The verdict in the Court of Chancery was reached in 1562 and confirmed Sir Christopher Heydon's possession of the manor of Holt Hales. Subsequently the Fishmongers and Sir Christopher Heydon came to an agreement by which:— 'Sr Christopher understanding how profitable necessary & nedefull that the sd school is for the Godlye education of youth in vertuese and Godlye Disciptyne and there upon liking well the said William Gresham for the good will which he beareth as well to ye sd towne of Holt and other the sd towns & villages there unto nigh & adjoinge as to the children and posteritie of the inhabitants thereof and of other mannors, Lordshippes & lands of the same Sr Xper there nigh adjoining, and to ye intent the same children may be hereafter the better instructed and taughte to lyve in the feare of Almightye Godd and to perform their Bounden duties to our Sovereigne Lady the Queens Majesty that now is her heirs & successors and to yt native countrey,' – he agreed to settle £7 p.a. from the profits of the manor on the school, payable in two equal instalments, together with 8 acres and 3 roods of land in Holt. An additional clause provided Sir Christopher Heydon and his heirs with the right to nominate the master and usher of the school alternately with the Fishmongers' Company in perpetuity. This right was to be attached to the Lord of the Manor of Holt Hales for ever, but is last known to have been exercised in 1640.

The agreement of 1562 was renewed formally in 1568, when the Fishmongers finally released all claim on the Manor of Holt Hales in return for an annuity of £7 p.a.⁹⁴ With the satisfactory conclusion of this case, William Gresham in a document dated 14 June 1562 re-granted to the Fishmongers' Company the manor of Holt Pereers and all other lands granted by his father for the foundation of the school.⁹⁵

The estate of Sir John Gresham was not finally settled until 2 November 1575, when Edmund Gresham (1530-1586), gentleman of Thorpe Market, granted the Fishmongers' Company a tenement together with a yard, barn, stable and garden in Holt, which had formed part of his paternal inheritance. This was to augment the possessions held by the Company in trust for the school, and is the last known contact between Sir John's family and his foundation.⁹⁶

The Heydon family remained closely involved with the school throughout the remainder of the century. Sir William Heydon (1540-1594) of Baconsthorpe appointed the fourth master of the school, Christopher Williams, at some date prior to 1585, and educated both his sons, Sir Christopher Heydon the Younger (c.1560-1623) and Sir John Heydon at the school in the 1570s.⁹⁷ Sir Christopher Heydon entered Peterhouse at Easter 1576 and graduated as a B.A. in 1578. The family, however, were living well beyond their means and were in debt by this time. In 1600 Sir Christopher Heydon the Younger was obliged to alleviate himself of some of his

more pressing debts by selling to James Hobart (c.1550-1611) the Younger of Norwich, the manors of Holt, Holt Market, Holt Hales and Cley-by-the-Sea, advowsons of churches, free chapels, sea wrecks, port courts, hundred courts and the donation of the school mastership and ushership of Hold Free School, for £1,700.⁹⁸ Writing just after this transaction on 13 December 1600, Sir Robert Mansfield in London wrote to Sir Bassingbourn Gawdy mentioning the Heydon brothers, Sir Christopher and Sir John, and stated that 'people seek as much to shun the elder brother since the mortgage of Baconsthorpe, as to talk of the younger.'⁹⁹ The Heydons, having seized their rôle in the governance of the school through litigation with Sir John's trustees, now after thirty-eight years pass ignominiously from the history of the school.

The date of the commencement of the school is unknown. The first master and usher were appointed prior to the agreement between the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers and Sir Christopher Heydon at some unknown date in 1562. This was probably prior to 1 May 1562, when Elizabeth I confirmed the letters patent of her sister and brother-in-law.¹⁰⁰ The first boy known to have entered the school was Edward Hammond (1549-1621), who arrived in 1562. In the absence of conflicting evidence 1562 has been taken as the date of the opening of the school, and in 1912 the foundation stone of the chapel was laid during the celebrations commemorating the commencement of education at Gresham's School, Holt, three hundred and fifty years before.¹⁰¹

Thus twenty-three years after the dissolution of the Augustinian Priory at Beeston Regis, Holt and the adjacent parishes in North Norfolk once more had the benefits of a local school which could provide opportunities for boys from poor homes to rise in the world. The multiplicity of Sir John's engagements between 1545 and 1556 and his frequent absences abroad made the steps towards realising his intentions both slow and difficult. Sir John's lack of time to attend to the details of his foundation and his sudden and unexpected death combined to ensure that the school was shorn of most of its endowments before it was opened. The strength of his endowment was his choice of trustees to have the future oversight of the school. The Worshipful Company of Fishmongers repaid Sir John's trust by the tenacity with which they fought, with some success, the rights and the predatory pretensions of the Heydon family. It was through the industry and application of the Company that Sir John Gresham's intentions were finally realised and that the school was opened, thus creating a lasting memorial to a successful Norfolk-born merchant and financier, who had been a loyal servant of the crown in difficult and exacting circumstances both at home and abroad for over a quarter of a century.

February 1991

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my thanks to Dr. A.B. Cottle, F.S.A., lately Reader in Mediaeval English at the University of Bristol, and to Professor J.A. Guy for having given so generously of their time in reading and commenting on this article.

(All volumes entitled *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic in the Reign of Henry VIII* have been converted to C.S.P.D.)

1. V. Cowles, *Edward VII and His Circle* (1956), pp.212-213, 268, 282-283, 289, 359; P. Magnus, *King Edward the Seventh* (1964), pp. 65, 258, 260, 285, 286, 326, 390, 397, 398, 406-407, 410, 455, etc.
2. G. Leveson Gower, *Genealogical Memoranda Relating to the Family of Gresham* (privately printed, London, 1884) pp. 160-161.
3. A. Campbell Erroll, *A History of the Parishes of Sheringham and Beeston Regis in the County of Norfolk* (Norwich, 1970), p.45; *V.C.H., Norfolk*, II (1906), p.372, gives the date as 1408. The Revd. L.B. Radford, *A History of Holt* (Norwich, 1908), p.99, gives the date as 1407/8. N.R.O., The Frere Manuscripts, The Hundred of Holt, mention a John Gresham in Holt in 1414. I am indebted to Mr. Stephen Freeth, the Keeper of Manuscripts at

- the Guildhall for searching the Court Roll of the Manor of Holt Pereers 1433-1460, Guildhall MS 7266/3. Letters 25 April and 16 May 1989.
4. G. Leveson Gower, *Genealogical Memoranda Relating to the Family of Gresham* (privately printed, London, 1884), pp. 160-161; *The City Press* Friday, 16 September, 1938. "The Greshams and the City, Story of a Great Family retold by Mr. C.N. Hooper, Clerk of the Fishmongers' Company, in a chat to the Bridge Ward Club."
 5. The Revd. F. Blomefield, *An Essay Towards the Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, IX, (1808), pp. 396-397. This account is confused, and there is some doubt about what land belonged to the family and what belonged to the manor of Holt Pereers.
 6. G. Leveson Gower; *Genealogical Memoranda Relating to the Family of Gresham*, pp. 160-161; The Revd. F. Blomefield, *An Essay Towards the Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, VIII, (1808), pp. 91-92. The Revd. L.B. Radford, *A History of Holt*, (Norwich, 1908), p.98.
 7. *C.S.P.* (Spanish 1542-1543), VI, Part II, (1895), p.86. See also *Acts of the Privy Council* (New Series), I, (1890), pp. 51-52.
 8. S.T. Bindoff, *The House of Commons 1509-1558*, II, (1982), pp. 248-250; D.N.B., XXIII, (1890), p.142.
 9. J.W. Burgon, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Gresham*, I, (1839), p.11.
 10. L. Lyell & F.D. Watney, *Acts of Court of the Mercers' Company 1435-1527* (Cambridge, 1936), p.487.
 11. *C.S.P.D.*, Henry VIII, 1509-1537, Addenda I, Part I, 1509-1537, (1929), pp. 225-227, 239, 245, 317.
 12. Mrs A.F. Sutton, The Archivist of the Company, in her letter dated 28 April 1989 gives the years as 1538 and 1546.
 13. The Revd. A.E. Beaven, *The Aldermen of the City of London, Temp Henry III - 1908*, II, (1913), p.30.
 14. The Revd. A.E. Beaven, *The Aldermen of the City of London, Temp Henry III - 1908*, I, (1908), pp. 11, 18, 138; II (1913), p.30.
 15. A.G. Rigg, "Two Poems on the Death of Sir Richard Gresham (c. 1485-1549)", *Guildhall Miscellany*, II, number 9, (1967), pp.389-391.
 16. *C.S.P.D.*, Henry VIII 1509-1537, Addenda, I, Part I, (1929), pp. 172, 194-195.
 17. R.W. Chambers, *Thomas More* (1935), pp. 270-271; J.A. Guy, *The Public Career of Sir Thomas More* (New Haven, 1980), p.82.
 18. *The Lisle Letters*, edited by M. St. Clare Byrne, IV, (Chicago, 1981), p.281.
 19. *C.S.P.D.*, 1535, VIII, (1885), p.42.
 20. *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England*, VII, (1837), p.174.
 21. I am indebted to Professor W.J.N. Rudd, M.A., Ph.D., lately Professor of Latin at the University of Bristol, for translating these lines for me from the original Latin. See *H.M.C.* 7th Report (1879), the MS of W.M. Molyneux, p.665.
 22. *C.S.P.D.*, 1524-1526, IV, Part I, (1870), p.871. Professor J.A. Guy has brought into question the nature of the position to which Sir John was appointed in 1526.
 23. J.A. Guy, *Tudor England* (1988), pp. 165-169.
 24. *C.S.P.D.* 1529-1530, IV, Part III, (1876), pp. 2344, 2674.
 25. *C.S.P.D.* 1537, XII, Part II, (1891), p.230. John Gresham certified to Cromwell that the value of Whittington College to the Master was £13-13s-4d p.a.
 26. *C.S.P.D.* 1538, XIII, Part II, (1893), p.191.
 27. *C.S.P.D.* 1539, XIV, Part I, (1894), p.159; *C.S.P.D.* 1539, XIV, Part II, (1895), p.220.
 28. *C.S.P.D.* 1539, XIV, Part I, (1894), pp. 112-114. He was not sworn as part of the jury.
 29. *C.S.P.D.* 1540/1, XVI, (1898), pp. 648, 684-686.
 30. *C.S.P.D.* 1546/7, XXI, Part II, (1910), pp. 365/6.
 31. *C.S.P.D.* 1540/1, XVI, (1898), p.236.
 32. *C.S.P.D.* 1546, XXI, Part I, (1908), p.146.
 33. *C.S.P.D.* 1540, XV, (1896), pp.5, 307.
 34. *C.S.P.D.* 1543, XVIII, Part I, (1901), p.532.
 35. *C.S.P.D.* 1546, XXI, Part I, (1908), pp. 576, 760.
 36. *C.S.P.D.* 1539, XIV, Part I, (1894), p.485.
 37. J.A. Guy, *Tudor England* (1988), pp.168-177.
 38. *C.S.P.D.* 1542, XVII, (1900), pp. 138, 415, 445, 447. *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, (New Series edited by J.R. Dasent), I, (1890), p.35.
 39. *C.S.P.D.* 1543, XVIII, Part I, (1901), p.467.
 40. *C.S.P.D.* 1544, XIX Part I, (1903), pp. 152, 158, 241. *H.M.C.*, 7th Report, (1879), p.602, the Mss of W. More Molyneux of Losely Park, Guildford, Surrey. See also *Acts of the Privy Council of England* (New Series), I, (1890), p.161.

41. T.S. Willan, *The Muscovy Merchants of 1555*, (Manchester, 1953), p.33.
42. *C.S.P.D. 1544*, XIX, Part I, (1903), pp. 315, 462; *C.S.P.D. 1545*, XX, Part II, (1907), pp. 274, 330; *C.S.P.D. 1546*, XXI, Part I (1908), pp. 79, 92, 178, 182, 194, 390, 400, 417, 432, 469, 542. *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, (New Series), I, (1890), pp. 224, 329, 387, 415, 417-418, 423, 437, 461.
43. *C.S.P.D. 1544*, XIX, Part I, (1903), pp. 84, 498, 553, 554; *C.S.P.D. 1544*, XIX, Part II, (1905) p.78; *C.S.P.D. 1545*, XX, Part 2, (1907), p.220; *C.S.P.D. 1546/7*, XXI, Part II (1910), pp. 10, 419-420.
44. *C.S.P.D. 1546*, XXI, Part I, (1908), pp. 655-656; *C.S.P.D. 1546*, XXI, Part II, (1910), pp. 30, 141, *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, (New Series), I, (1890), p.489.
45. *C.S.P.D. (Spanish 1542-1543)*, VI, Part II (1895), pp. 470, 471, 472 and n.
46. *C.S.P.D. 1545*, XX, Part II, (1907), p.471; *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, (New Series), I, (1890), p.284.
47. *C.S.P.D. 1546*, XXI, Part I, (1908), pp. 577, 614-615; *C.S.P.D. 1546*, XXI, Part II, (1910), p.64.
48. *C.S.P.D. 1546*, XXI, Part I, (1908), p.760.
49. J. Stow, *A Survey of London*, I, (Oxford, 1908), p.103.
50. J.W. Burgon, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Gresham*, I, (1839), pp. 16-17.
51. *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edward VI*, II, (1924), pp. 67, 136-137, 140.
52. *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edward VI*, I, (1924), p.65.
53. *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, (New Series), II, (1890), p.179.
54. W.K. Jordan, *Edward VI: The Threshold of Power, The Dominance of the Duke of Northumberland* (1970), p.458.
55. W.K. Jordan, *Edward VI: The Threshold of Power, The Dominance of the Duke of Northumberland* (1970), pp. 464-466.
56. *The Chronicle and Political Papers of King Edward VI*, edited by W.K. Jordan, (1966), pp. 107, 111; Jordan doubts that the king was correct in his identification of Sir John as the purchaser of the corselets.
57. *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edward VI*, V, (1926), p.357.
58. *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Philip and Mary*, II, (1936), pp. 94-95; III, (1938), p.125.
59. *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Philip and Mary*, III, (1938), pp. 338, 400. See also p.538.
60. *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Philip and Mary*, I (1937), p.35; II, (1936), p.107.
61. *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Philip and Mary*, I (1937), p.24.
62. D.M. Loades, *The Reign of Mary Tudor, Politics, Government and Religion in England 1553-1558* (1979), pp. 201, 291, 292, 293, 295, 316.
63. *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Phillip and Mary*, II, (1936), p.55; *C.S.P.D., 1601-1603*, (1870), p.439.
64. T.S. Willan, *The Muscovy Merchants of 1555*, (Manchester, 1953), pp. 6, 10, 13, 100; T.S. Willan, *The Early History of the Russia Company 1553-1603*, (Manchester, 1956), pp. 1, 2, 3, 5, 21, 22.
65. *V.C.H. Sussex*, II (1907), pp. 421-422. G.W. Olive, *A School's Adventure*, (1951), pp. 11-13.
66. Letter from the Revd. A.H. Mead, M.A., Archivist of St. Paul's School, 1 August 1983.
67. The Revd. A.B. Beaven, *The Aldermen of the City of London, Temp. Henry III - 1908*, II, (1913), p.31.
68. The Revd. A.B. Beaven, *The Aldermen of the City of London, Temp. Henry III - 1908*, II, (1913), p.30.
69. J. Stow, *A Survey of London*, I, (Oxford, 1908), p.113.
70. T.S. Willan, *The Muscovy Merchants of 1555*, (Manchester, 1953), p.62.
71. R. Le Strange, *Monasteries of Norfolk*, (King's Lynn, 1973), pp. 11-13, 22.
72. W. Dugdale, *Monasticon*, (1830 edition), VI, Part I, p.568. S. Heywood 'The Priory of St. Mary in the Meadow of the Order of Peterstone, Beeston next the Sea, Norfolk', *Norfolk Archaeology*, XL, Part III (1989), pp.226-259, and E.J. Rose 'Beeston Regis Priory: A Note on the Ponds', *Norfolk Archaeology*, XLI, Part I, (1990), pp. 94-97 give an excellent account of the Priory buildings and grounds, but shed no light on the school.
73. *V.C.H. Norfolk*, II, (1906), pp. 372-374. A. Campbell Erroll, *A History of the Parishes of Sheringham and Beeston Regis in the county of Norfolk*, (Norwich, 1970), pp. 46-48.
74. A. Campbell Erroll, *A History of the Parishes of Sheringham and Beeston Regis in the County of Norfolk*, (Norwich, 1970), p.49. *N.R.S.*, I, (1931), p.25 shows that in 1476 the manor of Holt Pereers, which was called by Radford a Knights's fee, was held under the Manor of Holt.
75. T.W. Swales, 'The Redistribution of the Monastic Lands in Norfolk at the Dissolution', *Norfolk Archaeology*, XXXIV, Part I, (1966), pp. 23-24, 36; *C.S.P.D. 1545*, XX, Part II, (1907), p.217.
76. *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, III, (1817), p.351. From this figure 7/1d should be deducted to give a clear value of £7-7s-8d p.a. A different figure is given in W. Dugdale, *Monasticon*, (1830 edition), VI, Part I, p.568; A. Campbell Erroll, *A History of the Parishes of Sheringham and Beeston Regis in the County of Norfolk*, (Norwich, 1970), p.49; T.W. Swales, 'The Redistribution of the Monastic Lands in Norfolk at the Dissolution', *Norfolk Archaeology*, XXXIV, Part I, (1966), p.36; G. Leveson Gower, *Genealogical Memoranda Relating to the Family of Gresham*, (privately printed, London, 1884), p.146; *C.S.P.D. 1545*, XX, Part II, (1907), p.232.

77. G. Leveson Gower, *op. cit.*, p.viii. *Miscellanea Genealogica et Heraldica*, IV, New Series, (1884), p.269. C.M. Hood (editor), *The Chorography of Norfolk, An Historicall and Chorographicall Description of Norfolk*, (Norwich, 1938), p.116 is ambiguous. The date 1547 could refer to the year of Gresham's mayoralty (correctly 1547-1548) or to the year of the foundation of the school. The source is early, probably compiled 1600-1611. For its probable authorship see A.H. Smith and The Revd. D.N.T. MacCulloch 'The Authorship of the Chorographies of Norfolk and Suffolk', *Norfolk Archaeology*, XXXVI, (1977), pp. 327-341. I am grateful to Mr. Andrew Sulston for drawing these to my attention.
78. The Revd. F. Blomefield, *An Essay Towards the Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, IX, (1808), pp. 396-397.
79. P.S. Allen, *Erasmi Epistolae*, (Oxford, 1922), IV, p.518.
80. L. Lyell and F.D. Watney, *Acts of the Court of the Mercers's Company 1453-1527* (Cambridge, 1936), p.487.
81. A.B. Douglas and the Revd. C.L.S. Linnell, *Gresham's School History and Register 1555-1955* (Ipswich, 1955), p.12.
82. G. Leveson Gower, *op. cit.*, p.32.
83. M. McDonnell, *The Annals of St. Paul's School* (privately printed, 1959), pp. 67, 71, 74-87.
84. A.B. Douglas and The Revd. C.L.S. Linnell, *Gresham's School History and Register 1555-1955* (Ipswich, 1955), pp. 11-12, *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Philip and Mary*, II, (1936), p.323.
85. *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Elizabeth I*, III, (1960), p.279.
86. *H.M.C. 12th Report Appendix*, part IV, *Calendar of the Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Rutland*, I, (1888), p.65, (edited by H.C. Maxwell Lyte).
87. British Library, Add MS 6209, f.130v.
88. G. Leveson Gower, *op. cit.*, p.166; J. Stow, *A Survey of London*, I, (Oxford, 1908), p.289; J.W. Burgon, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Gresham*, I, (1839), pp. 19-20.
89. *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Philip and Mary*, III, (1938), p.338.
90. *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Philip and Mary*, III, (1938), p.417.
91. For the will see P.R.O., P.C.C. Wills 28 Ketchyn. N.R.O., The Frere MS, The Hundred of Holt.
92. A. Hassall Smith, *County and Court, Government and Politics in Norfolk, 1558-1603* (Oxford, 1974), pp. 149, 161, 163, 164, 221.
93. N.R.O., The Frere Manuscripts, The Hundred of Holt. The history of the manor of Holt Hales is uncertain. Blomefield claims that Thomas Hunt, soapboiler of London, was Lord of the Manor in 1593, and that Thomas Tomlinson, skinner, conveyed the manor to James Hobart, but states this was hearsay. Blomefield *op. cit.*, IX, p.397. *N.R.S.*, I, (1931), p.27 states that Heydon sold the manor of Holt Hales to the Hobarts and p.28 shows that Tomlinson appointed 2 men to grant Hobart seisin in 1602.
94. N.R.O. The Frere Manuscripts, The Hundred of Holt.
95. British Library, Add MS 6209, f.130v-f.131.
96. Guildhall Library MS 6722. Edmund Gresham is buried in the aisle of Thorpe Market Church. I am indebted to A.A.E. Beck (O.G.), for this information. Letter 5 October 1980. This sale appears to relate to the school house itself and the minutes of the Company for 4 May 1612 mention the deed of purchase of the school house from Edmund Gresham. This shows that the family home of the Greshams was not part of the manor of Holt Pereers, and was not affected by the action of Sir Christopher Heydon. In 1566 it was stated that Edmund Gresham held 'lands and a good estate' in Holt. *N.R.S.*, I, (1931), p.26.
97. For the latter see A.B. Douglas & the Revd. C.L.S. Linnell, *A History of Gresham's School, 1555-1955*, (Ipswich, 1955), p.34, J. & J.A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, Part I, II, (Cambridge, 1922), p.363.
98. N.R.O., The Frere Manuscripts, The Hundred of Holt.
99. *H.M.C. The Gawdy Manuscripts* (1885) edited by W.Rye, p.71.
100. Taken from a copy of the Exchequer Records of the Hilary Term of Elizabeth I (1564/5), formerly in possession of the late Revd. C.L.S. Linnell M.A.
101. British Library, Add MS 6209, f.130v-f.131, The Revd. L.B. Radford, *A History of Holt*, (Norwich, 1908), p.102, states that 1562 was the date on the original arms on the old school house. J. & J.A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, Part I, II, (Cambridge, 1922), p.293. Hammond was Rector of Cawston between 1574 and 1621.