Unlocking a Tudor Wage Book: Transcription Manual

Contents

1. An overview of page layout

The wages recorded in the book were totalled up at the end of each fortnight. The start of each new fortnight's payments is marked by a heading at the top of the page which usually opens 'This fortnight…' These usually take up more than one line, so please preserve the line breaks by pressing return to start a new line wherever this happens in the manuscript.
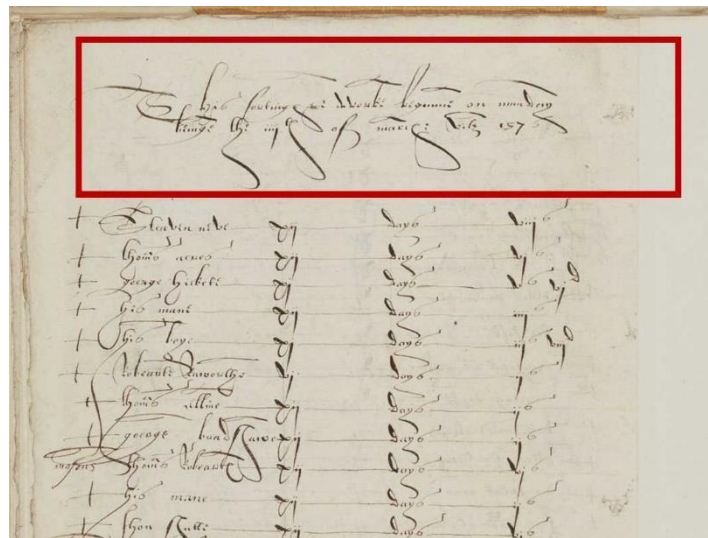

Sometimes on pages without one of these headings, you will see a word or two at the top of the page; this will usually be describing a category of worker (masons, ditchers etc) and refers to the first few entries on the page. For the purposes of our project, we aren't treating these as headings; see Section 12 for information about how to represent them in your transcription. Here is an example where the category 'stone breakers' is noted at the top of the page:


The heading is followed by a series of individual entries, which are either payments to individuals for a number of days worked or tasks undertaken, or purchases of goods and materials.

Here, James Greaves and Roger Gest are each being paid for ten days' work, but are receiving different rates of pay:
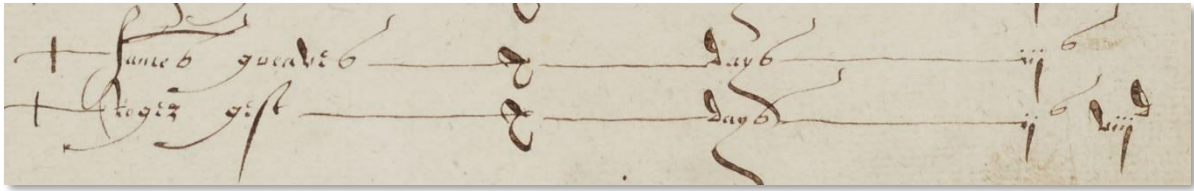

Not all individuals are identified by name: if a craftsman or other worker had their own assistants, they might be identified simply as 'his man' or 'his boy'. In the following example, the entry for George Hicket is followed by entries for 'his mane', 'and his boye' - both of whom spent more time on site than Hicket himself.
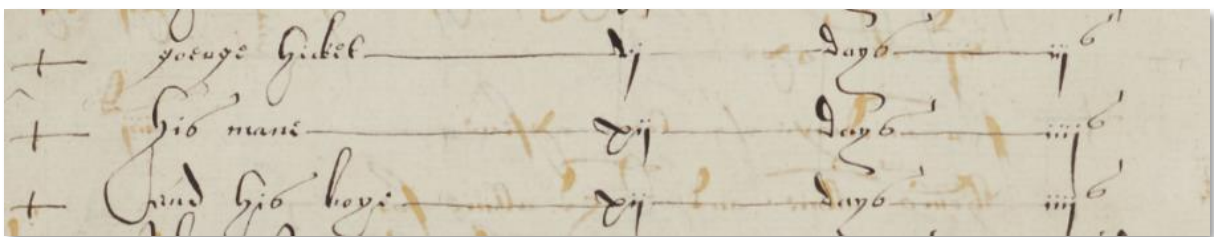
Here Richard Walker is being paid for 'dryvinge the plowe' for eight days at Calton, for which he receives 8 pence:
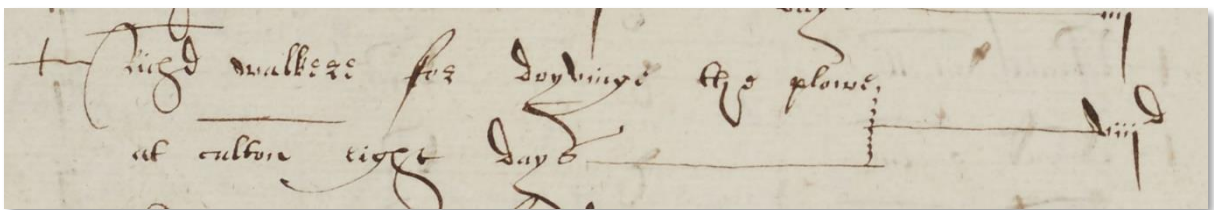
And here is an example of payments for goods, in this case a dozen cart ropes and a quire of paper:
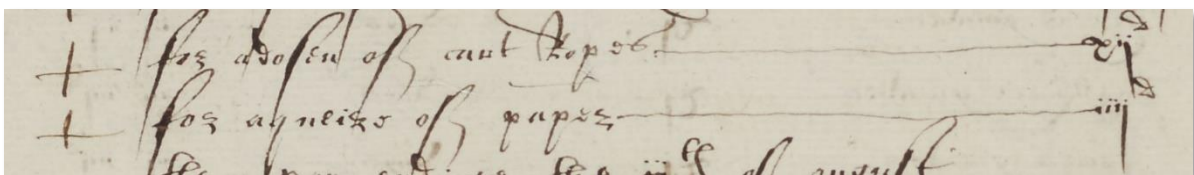
At the end of each fortnight's payments, a total sum for the fortnight is recorded in the same handwriting as the main entries. This often states the period covered as well as the total sum spent. Occasionally you will find some patterns of small dots either preceding or taking the place of a total sum given in Roman numerals:
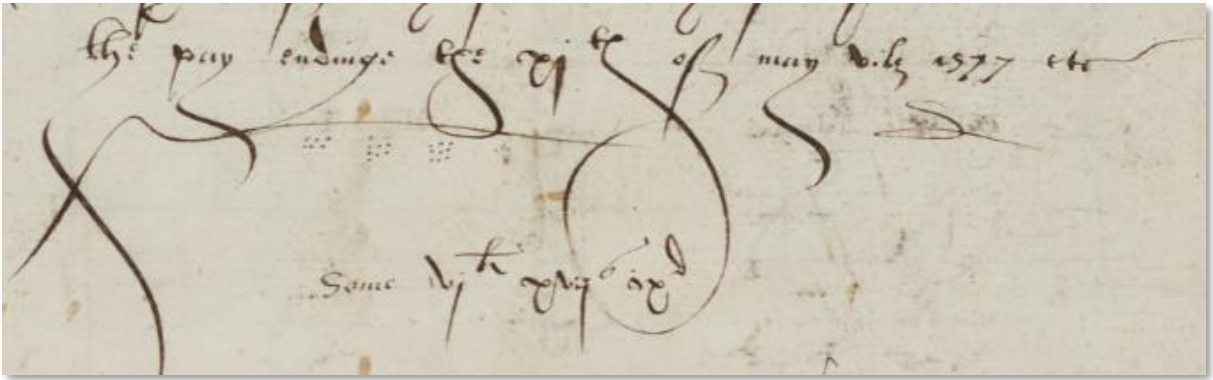
Here is an example of the overall layout on one of the totalling-up pages:

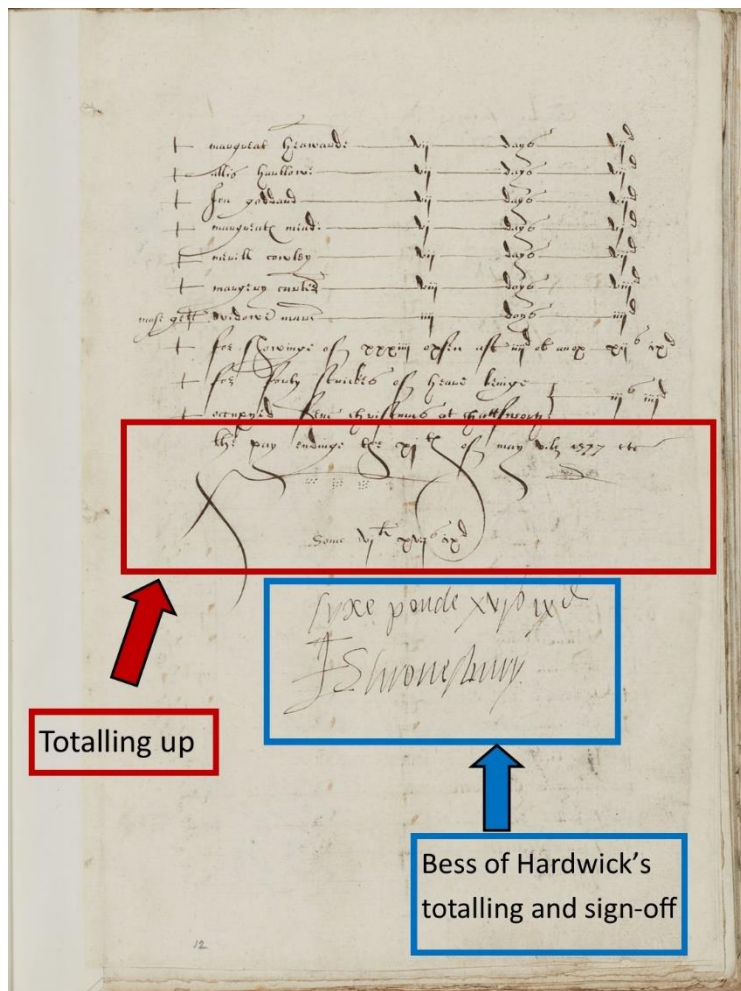Sometimes the fortnight's payments fit onto one page, but often they take up two or more, meaning that you won't see a heading and totalling up on every page; some pages just comprise a list of itemised payments.

2. Transcription guidelines at a glance

Detailed guidance on the layout and content of the wage book is provided in the other sections of this manual, and Section 12 outlines in detail how you should set out your transcription. The

following is intended as a quick summary of everything covered which you can use as a crib sheet while transcribing. It is also available as a separate PDF via our web page.

- Retain all original spellings, however unusual they seem.

- Retain the use of interchangeable letters like i/j and u/v as they are given in the wage book.

- Retain the use of upper- and lower-case letters as they appear in the book.

- Don't expand abbreviated words which are still in current use (for instance 'etc' and 'Mr').

- Expand other abbreviations wherever you are able to, using square brackets to indicate the letters you have added.

- Where superscript letters appear in the text, just type these on the line as normal letters rather than trying to represent them as superscript.

- For suspensions (i.e. words which conclude with an abbreviation sign indicating that something is missing): where you have an uncertain idea of the letter/s that are missing, supply them in square brackets with a question mark. Where you are completely unable to guess what is missing, use an apostrophe. Otherwise simply add the missing letters in square brackets.

- Retain original spacing (or more specifically lack of spacing) between words.

- Transcribe all Roman numerals as you see them.

- Retain the abbreviated forms for pounds, shillings, pence, and halfpence: li, s, d, ob.

- Use angled brackets to indicate deleted text: if you are able to make out the letters/words that are deleted, transcribe them between the angled brackets; if not, then use a full stop to indicate each deleted letter, and a space to indicate spaces between words; if you can't make out the deleted matter at all, simply use angled brackets with several blank spaces inside.

- Use square brackets to enclose any text you supply. This includes any notes on what you see; indications of illegible text; editorial notes like [in margin] and [above line]; and any conjectural readings you are unsure about - in this case also using a question mark.

- To indicate a word or phrase which has been inserted above the line, use caret marks at either side of the word or phrase.

- Preserve all line breaks by using the return key, as well as dashes between the numbers of days/payments in individual entries, but you don't need to record the crosses at the opening of each entry.

- Ignore any Arabic numbers at the bottom of the page as these are modern folio numbers.

3. Introduction to Secretary Hand

Most of the wage book is written by the same person using Secretary Hand, which can be challenging to read as some of the letter forms are very different from those we know today. There are several useful online tutorials focusing on Secretary Hand which are listed in the

'Education' section of our Zooniverse project pages and as a PDF on the Chatsworth web page. These give a full overview of typical Secretary Hand letter forms. Here we list a few of those which are most relevant to our wage book, with examples taken from the book itself.

The letter 'e'

Sometimes this looks exactly like the lower-case 'e' we use today, but on other occasions it looks like a curly capital 'e'. Both examples are shown in this single word 'greaues'- with the first 'e' looking like one we recognise and the second being more typical of Secretary Hand:
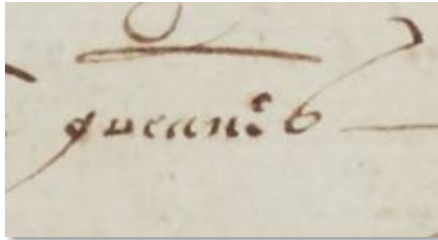

On other occasions 'e' is written in a way which looks backwards to us. This word includes the curly 'e' at the start and the backwards 'e' at the end:
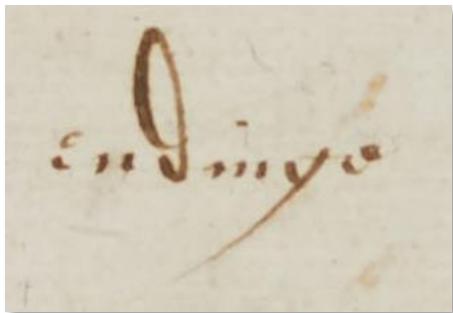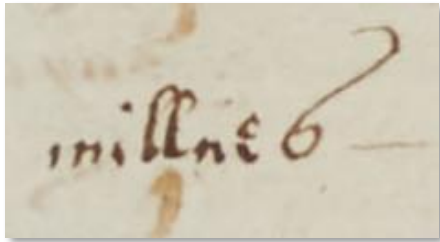

The letter 's'

There are also different forms of 's' in Secretary Hand - the long 's' which descends below the line, and the short 's'. These are the two typical forms found in the wage book.

A long 's' opens the name 'saydgfelde' in the example below; note how similar it looks to the 'f'. The long 's' tends to be used at the start of words but is not a capital letter.
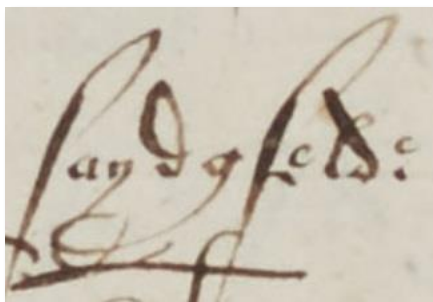
And this is an example of the short 's' in the name 'millnes'; this form is usually found in the terminal position of a word, as here:
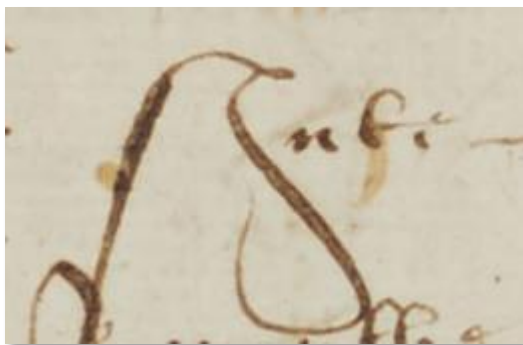

The letter 'h'

Another distinctive letter is 'h': it concludes with a descending leftward curve but can look quite different when joined to a preceding letter like 'g', 's' or 't'.

Here the second letter is an 'h' which isn't joined to any other letter and looks quite familiar to us:
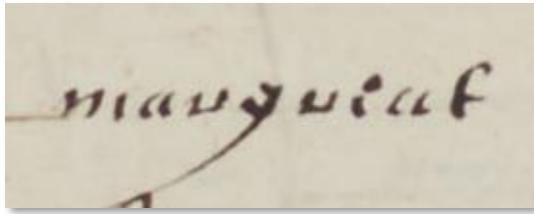

Here the second letter is an 'h' which is joined to a preceding long 's' to make 'sh' in the name 'shute':
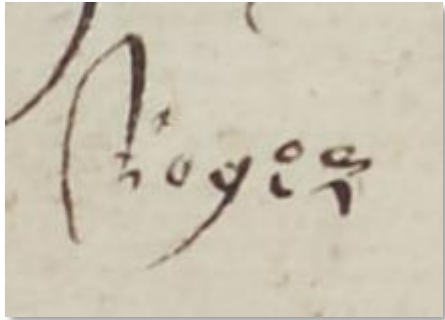

The letter 'r'

The lower-case 'r' in Secretary Hand was traditionally a two-stemmed shape which in our wage book looks almost like a 'w' as in the name 'margreat' below:
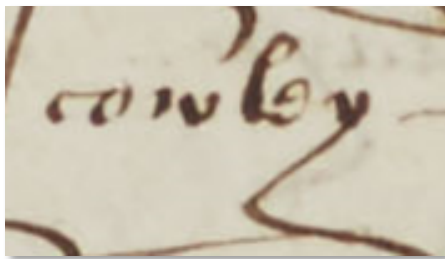
Elsewhere it looks more similar to the 'r' that we would recognise, as here at the end of the name 'Roger':

The letter 'c'
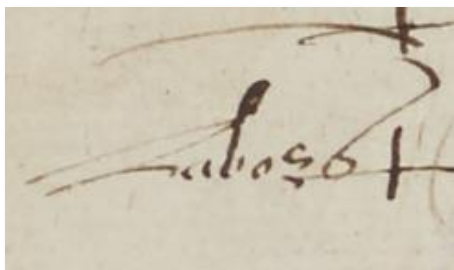
The Secretary Hand 'c' in its most basic form can look like two sides of a square or the modern letter 'r', but in the wage book, the vertical stroke tends to be slightly curved, making it look more like a modern 'c', as in the name 'cowley' below:

The letter 'L'

In our wage book, the upper-case letter 'L' has a sharply forward-leaning ascender, as seen here in the words 'Labor[er]s':

4. Abbreviations - an introduction

You will find abbreviations scattered throughout the wage book.

The most commonly used abbreviation was a straight horizontal line (called a 'macron') or a curly horizontal line (called a 'tilde') appearing above a letter or group of letters. Traditionally this was used to indicate that the writer had omitted a letter 'm' or 'n', but by this period it was also used to indicate other omitted letters, and to confuse matters further it was widely used when there was no abbreviation involved at all.

Here are two examples from the wage book.

Firstly 'ma' with a macron to indicate the missing ending:
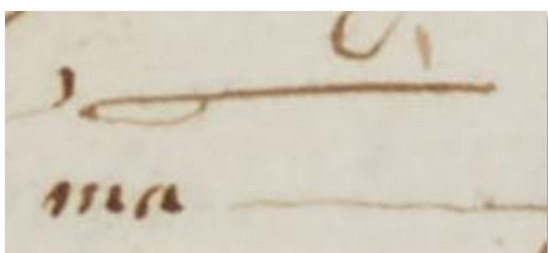
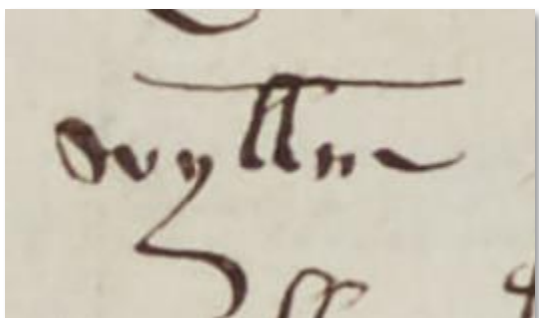The word is 'man', which the scribe of the wage book almost always spells with an 'e' at the end (there was much inconsistency in the use of the terminal 'e' at this time).

In the example below, 'man' is spelt 'mane'; there is a macron, but no letters are missing from the word, so we can simply ignore the macron here:
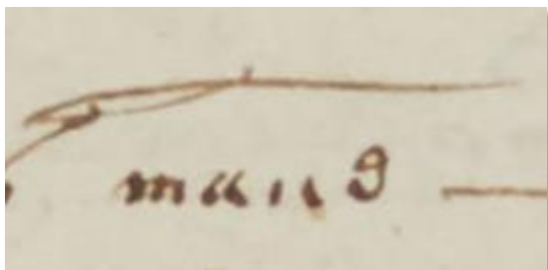

Here the macron is used to indicate a missing 'ia' from the name wylliam:

Another common abbreviation you will see is a curved hook at the end of certain words which – depending on the general habits of the writer – represents the plural ending '-es', '-is', or just '-s'. In trying to decide which of these endings should be used, we study the text to see what the writer's usual practice was. In the case of our wage book, the scribe generally seems to use a single 's' so that would be our choice. Here the name 'Robearts' has the hook at the end:
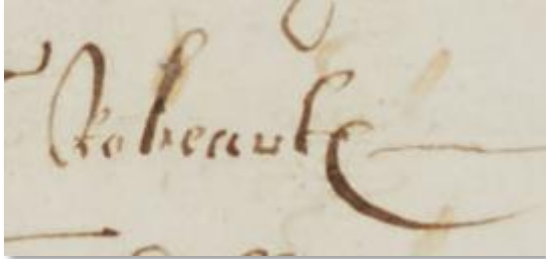
Various abbreviations were made using superscript or superior letters, some of which are familiar to us now, e.g. M^r, but also w^t for with, wch for which etc. An example from the wage book is y^e, which represents 'the', and also provides an example of a commonly used letter. The 'y' is derived from an Old English letter called thorn, which was pronounced 'th'; it continued into the print age and was represented as the letter 'y'. Here is an example from the wage book, which features that letter with the curly 'e' above the line:
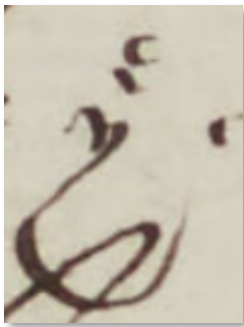
Sometimes the superior letter doesn't represent an abbreviation at all, e.g. the 'a' in 'thomas' below appears above the line but no letters are missing:
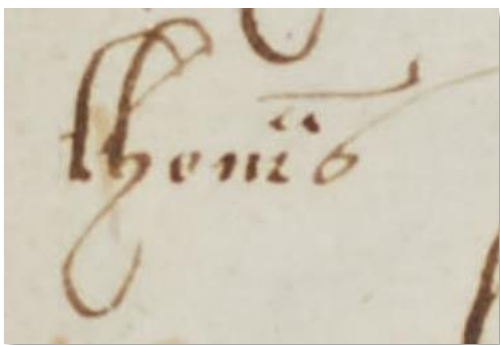

Similarly, the scribe of the wage book uses an abbreviation which looks like a superscript squiggle for '-er', for example in the word 'gardn[er]s' below:

Sometimes names or other words conclude with a mark or flourish. This may mean that the word is suspended (i.e. one or more letters have been omitted at the end), although during this period such marks may not have a meaning and are simply flourishes with no omitted letters.

Here, the flourish at the end of the final 't' indicates 'er' - i.e. 'sist[er]':
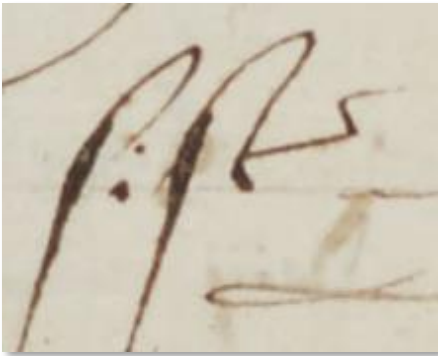
One unusual abbreviation found in the wage book is for the name 'Christopher': the letters 'xp' were often used as an abbreviation for Christ (from the Greek 'chi' and 'rho') so this name is abbreviated 'xpopher':
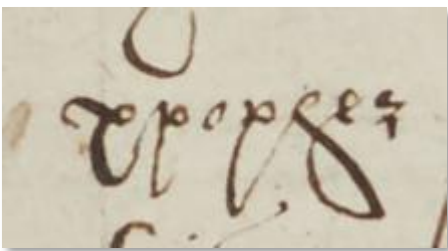
## 5. Abbreviations - how to transcribe them

Dealing with abbreviations is probably the most complicated part of making a transcription, and these notes may not cover every eventuality. Please submit questions to us if you have queries about problematic abbreviations.

For well-known abbreviations that we still use today and are generally understood, leave these as they are given – for instance 'etc'.

In many cases, having worked through this manual and some of the web resources listed on our 'Education' page in Zooniverse, and 'Useful resources' document on the Chatsworth website, you should be able to work out what the abbreviations are straightforwardly. Where you can work out what the abbreviation is, and establish which letters are missing, then transcribe the word in full, using square brackets to enclose the letters you have supplied which are missing in the original, e.g.

For abbreviated wyllm (below), write wyll[ia]m:
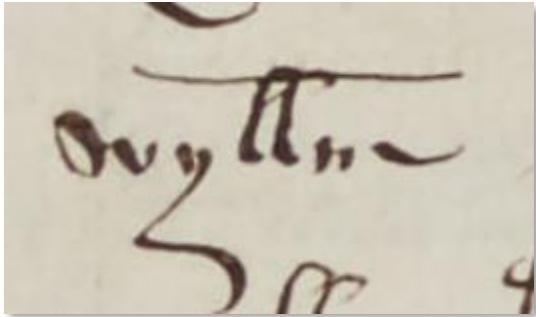
In some cases, the inconsistent spelling practices of the time can make abbreviations ambiguous: the letter 'e' might be added to the end of some words but not others; both 'es' and 's' were used to indicate plurals. Often there is inconsistency even within the same document. If you are unsure about how to expand any of the abbreviations you encounter, studying other examples of the same word in the wage book can be helpful.
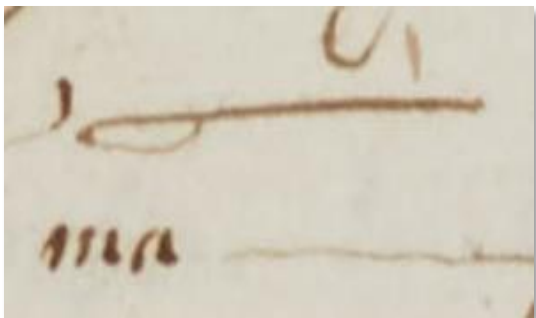
The above is an abbreviation for the word 'man', which seems straightforward. However, in almost every case in our wage book, when written out in full, the scribe spells this word 'mane', so for consistency, we would transcribe this word as ma[ne].

Where a word has been abbreviated using superscript letters, you can lower the superscript letters so they appear on the line, and add any missing letters in square brackets. In some cases, there will be a superscript letter forming part of a word which is not otherwise abbreviated, e.g. Thomas below. In instances like these, simply lower the superscript letter to form part of the word: it should be transcribed as thomas.

You should also lower the superscript letters used to denote denominations of money (see Section 9 for information about dates, numerals and monetary sums), and also in the case of the word 'ye' where the 'e' is usually given above the line:
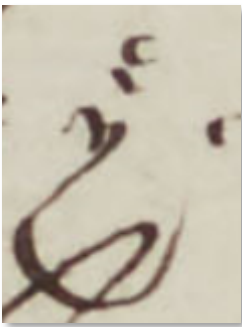
The letter 'y' should be retained; don't convert this to the modern 'th'.

One abbreviated word which is not in such common use today is viz; this is the abbreviation for the Latin word 'videlicet' meaning 'namely'. The 'z' comes from a Latin symbol of a similar shape for indicating 'et'.

The scribe of the wage book has at least four different ways of abbreviating videlicet: viz, vilz, vid and vidz:
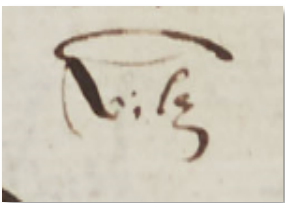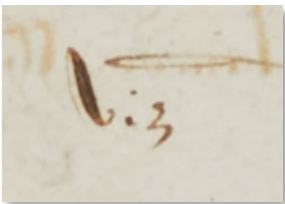
These should be transcribed as follows:

> vi[delic]et for viz
> vi[de]l[ic]et for vilz
> vid[elicet] for vid
> vid[elic]et for vidz
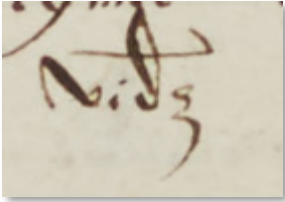
Where names or other words are definitely suspended – that is they conclude with a mark through or extending from a letter, or a flourish, indicating that one or more letters are missing at the end – you should expand the word where possible, enclosing whichever letter/s you supply in square brackets. For instance, this should be transcribed as sist[er]:

For marks of suspension like this where you think some letters are missing but you don't know what letters you should supply, simply add an apostrophe at the end of the word to denote that something is definitely missing, e.g. marc'

In the case of abbreviations where you have an uncertain idea of which letters are missing, then put those letters in square brackets followed by a question mark, e.g. Whyll[er?]

If no letters are obviously missing and the name makes perfect sense, then ignore the flourish.

6. Spelling, spacing and unusual words

Spelling was far from standardised in the late 1570s. In the wage book, the same word may appear with multiple different spellings, or may appear to be spelt wrong. One example relates to the purchase of paper. Paper was acquired by the 'quire' which we find spelt in various different ways:

Here as 'quere':
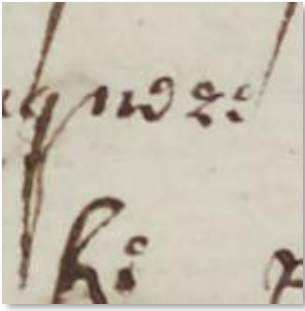
Here as 'queere':

And here as 'queire':

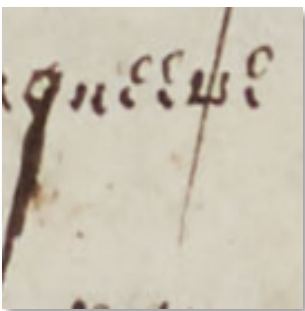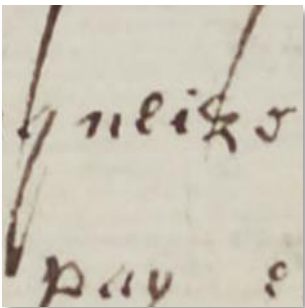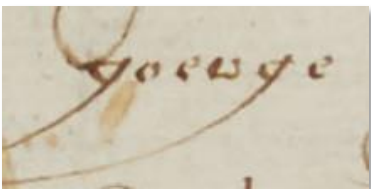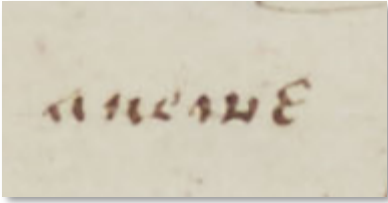Names are often spelt differently, sometimes using spellings that we would consider to be wrong, e.g. here the name George is given as 'goerge':

You should always retain the original spellings in your transcription.

Word spacing can also be inconsistent, and sometimes no spaces are left between words. In this example 'a new' is given as 'anewe':

As well as unusual spellings, you will come across unfamiliar words, especially in the lists of material goods purchased. If you have access to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, this can be very useful for checking some of the items named - especially if you think you have the letters right but can't make sense of them; the OED includes archaic spellings and dialect words. One example from the wage book is 'wiskets':
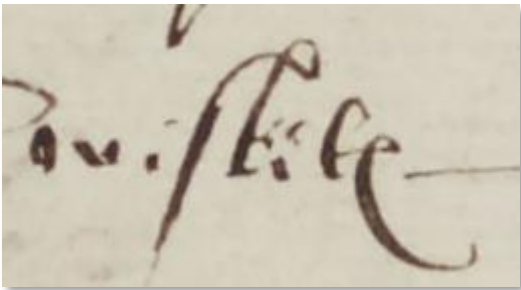
The OED defines a 'whisket' as a local name for a basket, of various kinds and uses.

And 'wayn clouts':
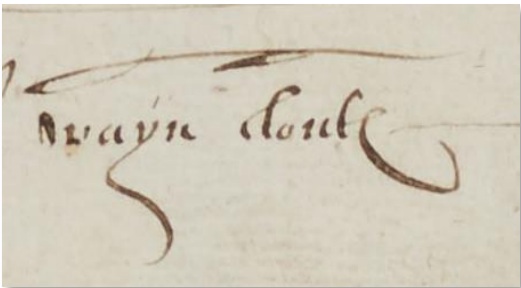
These were iron coverings for the axle-tree of a wagon.

In addition you will find a few local place names in the wage book. The key names to be aware of are Chatsworth, Calton (or Calton Lees) and Cromford.

Here Chatsworth is spelt 'chattsworth':
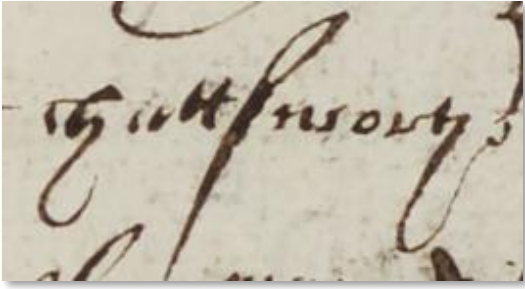
Calton is spelt is it is today:
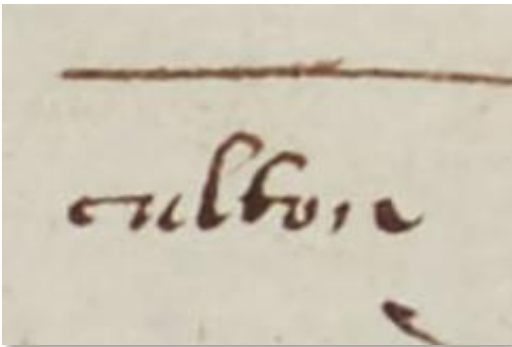
And Cromford is spelt 'crompford':
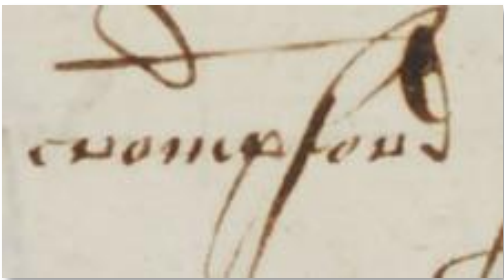
7. Interchangeable letters

The letters 'j' and 'i' were considered to be two different forms of the same letter, so were used interchangeably, e.g. the modern name John may appear spelt Iohn. Most writers in the 16th century used 'i' instead of 'j' both initially and in the middle of words. The 'j' form was often used for the terminal letter where a word (or lower-case Roman numeral) ends in 'i', e.g. iij for the number three. In our wage book, the 'j' form simply looks like an elongated 'i', as in this sum of 2 shillings 8 pence:
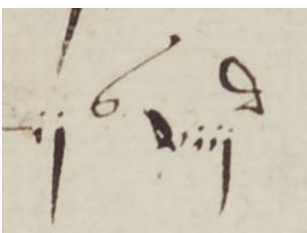
The letters 'u' and 'v' were also used interchangeably, e.g. the name Greaves appears both in that form and as 'Greaues' in the wage book:
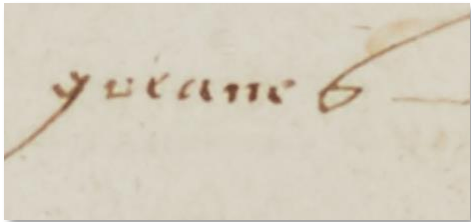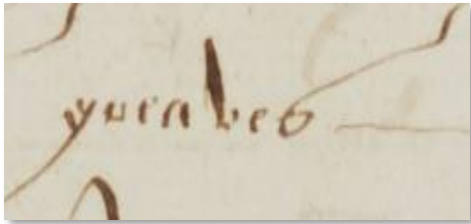
When transcribing you should retain all these letters exactly as they are in the wage book.

8. Capitalisation

Capitalisation was very erratic at this time: sometimes upper-case letters appear where you wouldn't usually expect them, and – more frequently – lower-case letters are used where today we would expect to see a capital, e.g. for the initial letter of names, as with 'allis' and 'margreat' below.
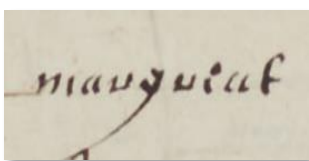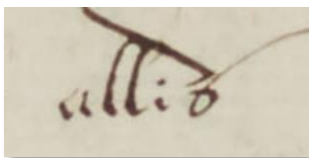
Even with different occurrences of the same word, capitalisation varies, as demonstrated by the initial letter of the name George (which is also spelt in both cases with the e and o inverted):
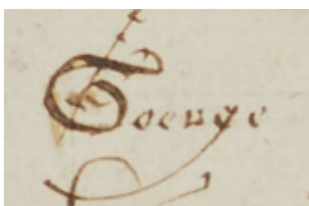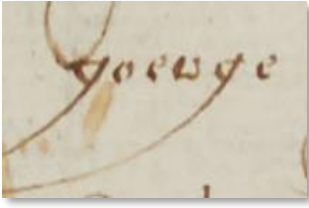
You should retain original capitalisation as you find it in the manuscript.

9. Dates, numerals and sums of money

All numbers in the wage book are given as Roman numerals, but these can differ slightly from the forms we know today: the number four is often given as iiij rather than iv; xiiij is used for fourteen rather than xiv. However, this isn't consistent throughout; elsewhere we find the modern form of ix rather than viiij. Please transcribe all Roman numerals exactly as they are given in the book, and retain the use of 'j' in terminal position where this occurs.

The wage book's scribe generally records dates as Roman numerals too, and always uses a superscript 'th' to indicate the day of the month, even where we would normally use (for example) 'st' for 1st or 'nd' for 2nd. The number below indicates the 22nd of the month:
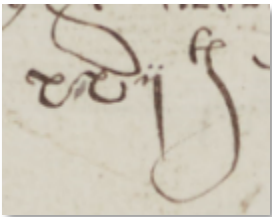
Please retain this rather than correcting it, but you do not need to transcribe 'th' as superscript; just type it on the line alongside the main text, e.g. xxth.

You may notice that the year changes in March rather than January as you would expect. This is because the wage book pre-dates the adoption in Britain of the Gregorian calendar in 1752, which meant that the year started on 25 March. Don't try and amend any dates; simply record what you see.

The abbreviations for pounds, shillings and pence are 'li' (or sometimes just 'l') for pounds, 's' for shillings, and 'd' for pence. These are also given as superscript letters, as in the example below for 4 pounds, 17 shillings and 8 pence.

Please retain these abbreviations rather than try to expand them, but lower them so they sit on the line, e.g. iiijli xvijs viijd.

Occasionally you may encounter the rather less well-known abbreviation 'ob': this comes from the Latin word obolus and indicates a halfpenny, e.g.:

There is no need to abbreviate this either, so please treat it in the same way as the other monetary abbreviations; it usually appears after the final 'd' (penny) in a stated sum. The example above should be transcribed as: iiijli ijs viijd ob

10. Insertions, deletions, and illegible text

On odd occasions, you will find that a word has been inserted by the scribe above the main line of text, e.g. where it was omitted by accident and inserted on reading over the line and realising the mistake; usually it will be obvious where the supralinear word should be inserted in the text. To indicate interlined words, use the caret symbol either side of them, e.g. here the month 'Maye' was inserted above the line:
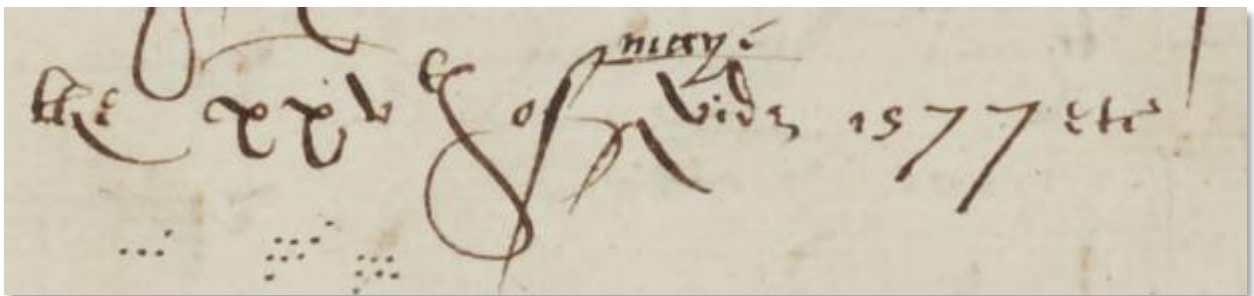
This should be transcribed as:

the xxvth of ^Maye^ vid[elic]et 1577 etc

Where a word has been deleted or struck through, use angled rather than square brackets to indicate this. Here, what looks like the word 'thre' has been crossed out by Bess of Hardwick:
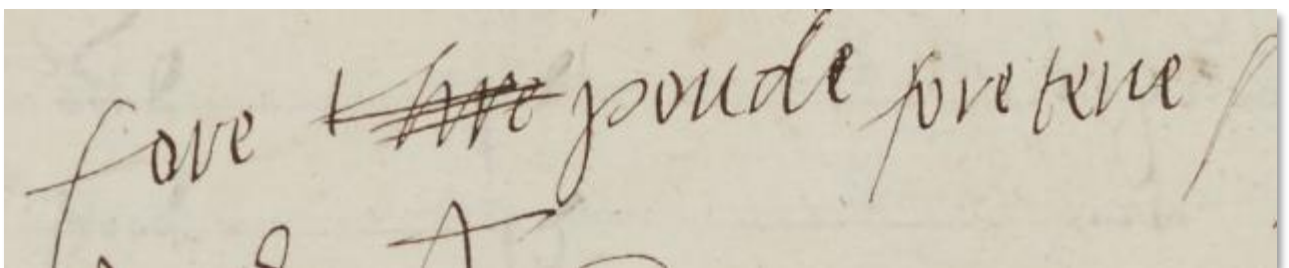
If you can read the deleted word/s, then type them out between the brackets, e.g. <thre>.

If you can read some of the letters but not others, include those you can read with dots representing the illegible letters – one dot per letter, e.g. <t..e>.

If you are unable to read any of the deleted text, but can ascertain how many words or letters are deleted, then represent each missing letter with a dot, with spaces between words where more than one word is deleted, e.g. <….>

If it is impossible to identify any letters or words, or to work out the number of letters/words deleted, leave the brackets empty, i.e. < >

If there are non-deleted words or letters you are unable to decipher, use the following conventions:

> [illegible word]
> [illegible letter]

Or if you are unsure about a specific letter but can make a guess at what it is, enclose it in square brackets and use a question mark to indicate that it is a questionable reading, e.g.

> th[r?]e

You can use square brackets and question marks to indicate anything else you are unsure of throughout the transcription.

11. Bess of Hardwick's Italic hand

Bess of Hardwick's totalling and sign-off of each fortnight's accounts is made in her characteristic form of Italic script, with her own idiosyncratic spelling system. She often wrote the sums out in full as words rather than using numerals.

The editors of Bess's letters have described the angular nature of her Italic hand as having a jagged, 'saw-tooth' appearance and that is apparent in the wage book. Before trying to decipher and transcribe her script, you might find it helpful to have a look at some of the letters she wrote; a number written entirely in Bess's hand have been fully digitised and published on the bessofhardwick.org website. There you can both view digital images of the original letters alongside transcriptions of them, and have a go at transcribing them yourself for practice.

Here are a few examples of her totalling and sign-off taken from the wage book:
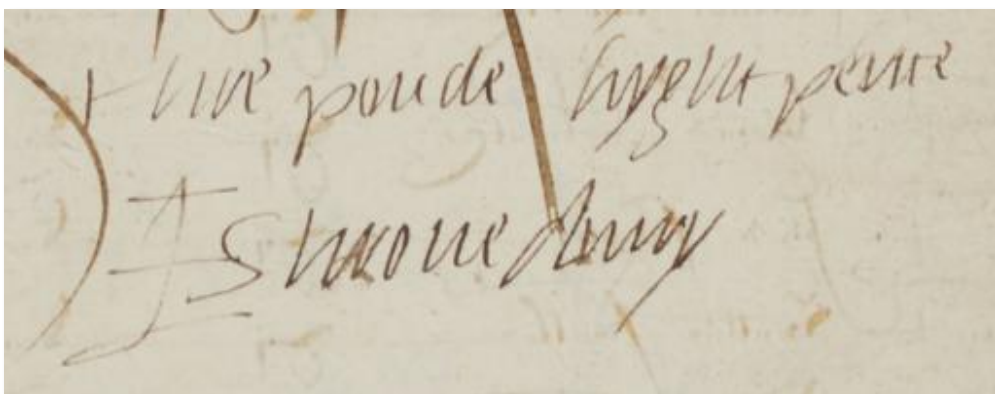
This reads:

> thre ponde eyght pence
> EShrouesbury

'Ponde' was the spelling Bess generally used for 'pounds'. This word also highlights something that can make deciphering her writing tricky: the letters 'n', 'u' and 'm' have a tendency to look very similar. The 'n' here could very easily be read as 'u'.
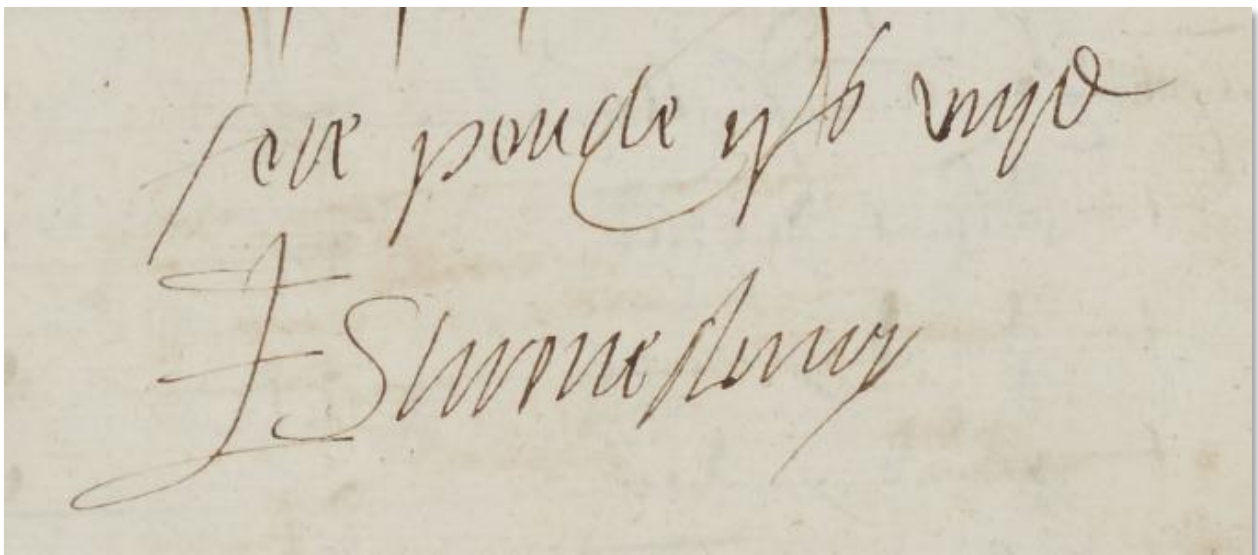
This reads:

> fore ponde iis viijd
> EShrouesbury

In a few cases, Bess writes more than the basic total of the fortnight's payments, as in this example:
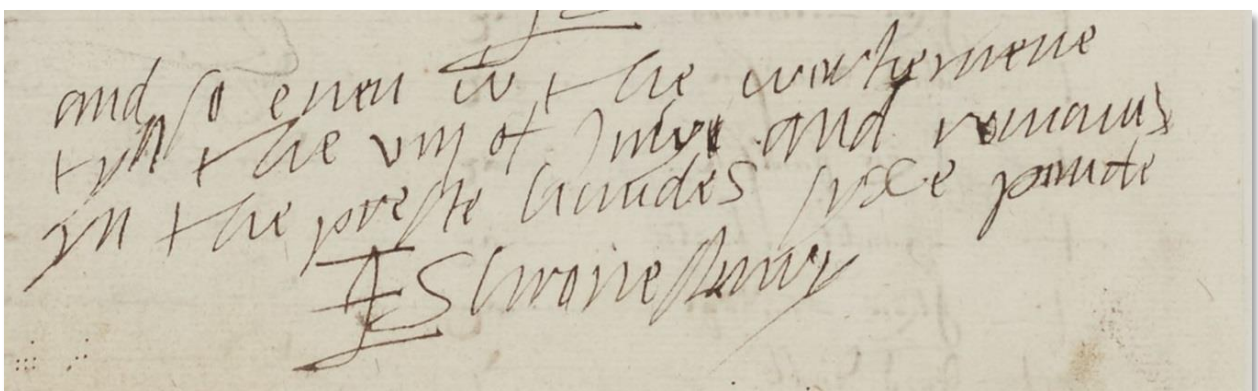
This is probably as difficult to decipher as some of the entries in Secretary Hand! Here are a few tips:

Studying Bess's letters at bessofhardwick.org reveals that Bess habitually abbreviated the word 'with' using a superscript 't': the word appears as 'w' written on the line, and the 't' written directly

above the 'w'. This is the fourth word in the extract above; it is complicated by a flourish which strays from the line above and almost obscures the superscript 't'.

The word at the end of the first line is also quite difficult to make out, but the same word appears in one of Bess's online letters, which reveals that it is her spelling of 'workmen': it reads 'workemene'.

The third line opens 'yn the preste handes'. The word 'handes' appears in one of Bess's letters, and the Oxford English Dictionary helps us to identify the word 'preste' as being an archaic one indicating payment or wages in advance.

The extract above should therefore be transcribed as follows:

> and so euen w[i]t[h] the workemene
> tyll the viij of July and remains
> in the preste handes sixe ponde
> EShrouesbury

12. Laying out your transcription

Headings

For the headings at the start of each fortnight's payments, please preserve line breaks in your transcript by pressing the return key.

In one of our Zooniverse workflows, we ask you to transcribe the whole of a page into a single transcription box. When doing this, please set the heading off from the main body of payment entries by pressing the return key twice.

Individual payment entries

In one of our Zooniverse workflows, we ask you to transcribe each individual payment entry (whether payments to individuals or for goods) into a separate task box. In the other workflows, you will be transcribing all of the entries into the same box, so it is important that you retain line breaks by using the return key at the end of each entry.

Each entry is usually preceded by a cross, which it is not necessary to transcribe.

For payments to named workers, use the following form, to reflect the divisions which are made in the wage book using long lines: Name - number - days - sum paid, e.g.

> goerge bradshawe - xij - days - iijs
> Roger gest - xij - days - ijs viijd

Sometimes payments to workers also include a description of the work they were undertaking, with no line or dash preceding the number of days. In these cases, simply follow the original manuscript and omit the dash, e.g.:

> Rich[ar]d walker for draweinge headge wood at Calton xj days - xjd

If the entries record payments for goods, then list the entry (preceded by 'Item' if this word is included) followed by a dash and the sum paid, e.g.:

Item for half adosene of Wisket[es] - viijd

In some cases, workers of the same type are grouped together, e.g. masons, ditchers, threshers and so on. The definition is generally noted in the left margin of the entry for the first worker of that type. Where this occurs, simply record the word as the opening word of an entry followed by [in margin]; we usually use square brackets to indicate anything that isn't in the original manuscript, including any of your notes as the transcriber. Use [in margin] to indicate anything written in the left margin (i.e. to the left of the main entries on each page), e.g.

Masons [in margin] thomas Robeart[es] – xj – days – vs vjd
his mane – viij – days – xvjd
Jhon Shut – xj – days – vjs
ditchers [in margin] Wyll[ia]m Smalles – xj – days – iijs
Edmond greaues – xj – days – iijs

Occasionally one of the classifications is given at the head of the page, in which case transcribe it at the start of the first entry with [above line] to indicate it appeared above the entry, press return, and start the first entry on the next line e.g.

stone breakers [above line]
Jhon hadfelde - vj - days - ijs

The totalling up

At the end of most fortnight's payments, a total sum is recorded by the same person who wrote the individual entries. This usually states the period covered as well as the total sum spent. Often more than one line of text is involved so please reflect the line breaks as they are in the manuscript, e.g.:

The pay endinge the xxvijth of aprill
Some vli xs vjd

The word 'some' is an anglicised version of the Latin 'summa' or 'total'.

Sometimes you will find some patterns of small dots either preceding or taking the place of a total sum given in Roman numerals. These reflect the fact that when Roman numerals (which have no symbol for zero) were used in accounting, calculations had to be made using counters on a marked-up board, with different positions representing particular quantities and denominations of money. It is likely that the dots in our wage book represent the graphic version of the total sum, showing how the counters would have been placed on the board; in some instances, they are concluded by the word 'ob' – the abbreviation for halfpenny – presumably because there was no way of representing half on the counting board. There is no easy way of representing these patterns in a transcription, so we suggest simply recording them as follows: [accounting symbols]. E.g.:

the pay endinge the xjth of may vi[de]l[ic]et 1577 etc
[accounting symbols]
Some vi li xvij s ix d

Bess of Hardwick's totalling and sign-off

At the end of each fortnight's payments, Bess of Hardwick either provided or confirmed the total expenditure for the period. Please preserve the line breaks here, e.g.

    thre ponde eyght pence
    EShrouesbury

Later numbering

At the bottom left of every other page, you will see an Arabic numeral in pencil as with the number 7 here:

This is modern numbering applied by archivists and you should simply ignore it in your transcription.