**[Holliman Family History](http://hollimanfamilyhistory.blogspot.com/)**

Photographs and articles regarding the ancestors and descendants of Christopher Holliman, Sr. (d 1691 Isle of Wight County, Virginia)

**Friday, June 25, 2010**

**When We Were English, Part III**

[](http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_onotc7qbTJk/TCVcBFTTZhI/AAAAAAAAATM/XVXQfos4w9g/s1600/100_2648.JPG)

**A Holyman in the Late Middle Ages**   
by Glenn N. Holliman  
  
In the local history section of the Tring, Hertfordshire library (photo to the left with patrons in front) there is a book entitled ***A History of Tring*** by Sheila Richards, a denizen of the area. Published in 1974 by the Tring Urban Council in Hertfordshire, it contains many stories, family names and records. While recently pursuing this work I found on page 53 the following information that was translated from middle English.  
  
From the Court Rolls of the Manor of Tring - Courts 28 May, 18 June and 9 July 1444 (yes, 1444, not 1944!)  
  
"*Plaint Continued: the plaint between William Holyman, defendant, and Richard Brame of Chedyngdon, plaintiff, in a pleas of trespass, is continued by order.*"  
  
Observations?  
  
1. Holymans had surnames by the 1400s as did most English by this century.  
  
2. Holymans lived in Tring two centuries before American founder, Christopher Holliman, sailed for Virginia in 1650.  
  
3. This complaint of trespass may have involved a stray animal or William planting a crop on Brame's leasehold. Everyone leased from the Lord of the Manor or shared the common fields surrounding Tring. This lack of personal land is what attracted many of our ancestors to America.  
  
4. As the complaint was continued to another day, perhaps it was settled out of court (just as most legal complaints are today).  
  
There is another mention of William on page 54. He is listed as a juror to decide a leasehold inheritance on shared common town lands known as Goldfield and Bulbourne crofts surrounding Tring.  
  
Observations on this entry?  
  
1. Whatever William's issue in the trespass complaint, it did not keep the judge from appointing him to a jury that summer.  
  
2. Although English common law was in its infancy, the jury system was working, wills were common and so were lawsuits in England by the 1400s.  
  
3. To be appointed to a jury is a compliment indicating some standing in the community. Hats off to our William Holyman. I hope he is one of our great grandfathers. At least he lives in the community which we believe saw the birth to Christopher Holliman, Sr.  
  
Unfortunately, I have found no further records on this William YET. Nothing else in this book on him. Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's chancellor, in 1538 required all churches to keep parish records on baptisms, marriages and deaths. Too late for this 15th century William. So where to look? Manorial Court records? Yes. And where are they? Alas, at the Public Record Office in Kew, near London. Did this William have a will? Here is an English government web site to explore: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>.