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The cartulary of Binham Priory

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so many of the events relied on by the jurors, with specific and very welcome reference to women in general and churcing in particular. Showing none of Deller's doubts about his sources, the authors observe that some of the narratives 'are so circumstantial that they read like eye-witness testimony'. In his own paper, Michael Hicks uses proofs to examine 'Retainers, Monks and Wine' – evidence for bastard feudalism, the life of religious outside the cloister and the role and ubiquity of alcohol at christenings. At one such ceremony in 1392 the witnesses could scarcely walk from the church, and on three occasions 128 gallons of wine was laid in for a churcing.

Simon Payling's closing paper gives a fascinating account of the manipulation and downright forgery of IPMs in the course of land disputes, presenting illuminating evidence of the process by which the finished text emerged. Amplifying an observation first made by Charles Crump in 1924, he demonstrates that the identical findings from juries of different counties must have relied on skeleton returns produced by the counsel of the heir. Although I have no difficulty in accepting that the humble IPM juror was subject to influence, Payling's suggestion that the escheators themselves lacked sufficient legal knowledge to thwart such chicanery is more difficult to accept, both in the context of the biographies published by Sir John Baker in *The men of court* and indeed of his own example of the lawyer Thomas Horde, who sitting as an escheator manipulated an inquest on behalf of one of his clients.

It is a joy to see these documents, so long the preserve of antiquaries, used to illuminate the lives not of their subjects but of the people among whom they lived. Some papers may overrate the ubiquity of the evidence they present, or underestimate the legal sophistication of escheators, but on the basis of this volume, *Mapping the medieval countryside* looks set to transform the way we think about and use inquisitions *post mortem* and proofs of age.

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The cartulary of Binham Priory, edited by Johanna Margerum, Norwich, Norfolk Record Society, 2016, Volume , lxxv + 322 pp., £18 + £4 p&p (hardback), ISBN 978-0-9556357-9-3

The cartulary of Binham Priory provides a rich glimpse into the life and workings of a medieval religious institution and its archives. This edited volume opens up an important source of information for researchers of both local and national history, and supplies the only comprehensive record of the medieval priory's now lost archive. The cartulary (now British Library, Cotton MS Claudius D xiii) was compiled by a single scribe in the mid-fourteenth century in an attempt to copy and preserve details of the grants, deeds, charters and rentals contained within the priory's archives. It is fortunate that the cartulary was produced. Most of the priory's original documents – from which the cartulary was compiled – were destroyed or lost during the peasants' revolt of 1381, and only a handful of the priory's original grants and indentures now survive in the collections of The National Archives and Norfolk Record Office. The publication of this edited volume is therefore a welcome one, bringing details of this lost archive into public view. The earliest documents copied into the Binham cartulary include the priory's foundation charters (entry number

1, dated c 1101 × 1107), while the latest document to be written in the main scribal hand is dated 3 December 1359 (entry 18), although some later additions, in a different hand, date from the mid-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries.

The editorial method used throughout the volume is clearly stated and consistent. Charters dating before 1250 have been printed in full (with English calendars), and spelling, capitalization and punctuation have been silently modernized. The editor has usefully chosen to continue this practice for many of the entries dated after 1250, except in instances when charters have already been published, or when the text adds little to the calendared entry. In a similar fashion, duplicate entries have been given as shortened calendared entries to avoid needless repetition. This approach usefully provides the reader with extra insight into the text and the capabilities of the scribe compiling the cartulary. This is of particular interest given the scribe's poor knowledge of Latin, which the editor notes on more than one occasion (p. lxiii noting entries 135–6, 189, 287, 291 and most notably 35, in which the scribe omitted a crucial verb, rendering the opening lines of the papal privilege meaningless). The majority of these poorly-copied documents predate 1250, but full transcriptions of later deeds allow for comparison between scribal entries.

A significant number of entries in the cartulary (almost one third) are rentals from Binham itself and also from neighbouring areas. These entries, however, have not been included in this volume. While this is perhaps understandable, given that full transcriptions of all the rentals would have substantially increased the page count of the volume, it would have been useful to have included at least a sample of the rentals, given that they comprise so much of the cartulary and are an invaluable source for local historians. The author does, however, indicate where one of the rentals (that of Binham itself) has been published, given its importance as a potentially early-twelfth century rental (disputes over the dating of this rental are also usefully included as a footnote).

The inclusion of supplementary material, including a glossary and appendices listing the known priors and monks (the latter taken primarily from *Heads of Religious Houses*),¹ is a useful addition, opening up the collection to a wider audience who may not be aware of the more technical terms used in land deeds. Similarly, the author provides a useful potted history of both the priory itself, and its relationship with St Albans, providing some much-needed context to the cartulary's contents. It is perhaps a shame that publication did not come a little later for this volume, as this supplementary material would have benefited from the latest research on medieval abbots and priors, as recently published by Martin Heale.² Throughout this contextual history, the author is careful to connect the priory's history (for the most part taken from secondary literature) with its archive (as found in the cartulary), setting the scene for the edited text to follow. Surveys of post-Dissolution land holdings, however, do not feature. This is unfortunate, as some sixteenth-century rentals of the former priory's lands survive from the time of the priory's suppression (covering Dersingham, Wells and Edgefield), which would have offered additional context to the cartulary's contents.³ Given the paucity of extant original documents, it may also have been of interest to have included transcriptions of these manuscripts from The National Archives and Norfolk Record Office as an appendix to this volume. However, the author does provide full references, including details of where transcriptions have been printed (pp. l–li).

The volume's contextual material also usefully includes a detailed discussion of the cartulary's custodial history post-Dissolution, which allows the reader to trace the provenance of the cartulary to the present day. This custodial history is of particular interest in the context of the English Reformation, as the editor notes post-Dissolution alterations which left their mark on the text, such as the papal title *papa* or *pape* having been deliberately erased throughout the cartulary (as noted in entries 29, 43, 231–4, 236, 272, 275 and 286). The editor is careful to avoid guessing who the culprit may have been, but instead gives details of the various individuals and antiquarians who held the cartulary in their collections, including Sir Thomas Paston, the seventeenth-century royalist MP Sir John Legard, and Sir Thomas Cotton, whose librarian Thomas Smith inscribed a

short note at the beginning of the cartulary. As such, this edited volume gives a welcome insight into not only the priory's medieval archive but also the post-Dissolution history of antiquarian record keeping, which may interest regular readers of this journal.

Notes

1. Knowles et al., *Heads of Religious Houses*.
2. Heale, *The Abbots and Priors of Late Medieval and Reformation England*.
3. The National Archives, SC 12/38/55.

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Appraisal and acquisition strategies, edited by Michael Shallcross and Christopher J. Prom, Chicago, Society of American Archivists, 2016, vii + 185 pp., \$29.95 (SAA members \$24.95) (paperback), ISBN 1-978-0-931828-00-3 (Trends in Archives Practice Series Modules 14–16)

This short guide to appraisal and acquisition strategies forms part of the excellent Trends in Archives Practice series produced by the Society of American Archivists. These are concise and digestible practical manuals aimed at the busy professional who perhaps does not have the time to wade through lengthy textbooks, attend courses or conduct long literature searches. The greatest strength of the book is the accompanying reading lists, which include toolkits and case studies as well as relevant recent publications. The book addresses a US-based audience and there are, of course, certain areas where practice differs a little, but this does not detract from its usefulness.

The volume is made up of three modules – ‘Appraising Digital Records’, ‘Collecting Digital Manuscripts and Archives’ and ‘Accessioning Digital Archives’. Each one is a weighty topic in itself but here they are broken down into sections of 50 or so pages which give an overview of the topic and then include further reading, case studies and suggested workflows. The emphasis is very much on practical approaches to appraisal and acquisition. This is very welcome as many entering the field of the management of digital records can feel that the current literature on the topic overly emphasizes the theory without tackling the practicalities.

Michael Shallcross's introduction sets the tone for the book and highlights the importance of provenance and original order in the digital environment and the continuity of practice between traditional materials and digital content. He also makes it clear that there is no ‘one size fits all approach’ and identifies this as a positive, allowing organizations to develop, adapt and learn to tackle digital accessions.