



## NEWS REVIEW

## Lincoln Record Society



## THE COUNCIL AND OFFICERS WOULD LIKE TO

*welcome you to the fourteenth edition of the News Review*

It is a great pleasure to have been asked to produce a foreword to this issue of the News Review. I joined the LRS Council in 2015, making me one of its newest members, and have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know my fellow members of the Council in the interim. I have been immensely impressed by the professionalism and dedication of the Society's executive office-holders, and enormously appreciative of the warm welcome extended to me by all the members of the Council as one of the 'new kids on the block'.

I must confess, from the outset, that I have no life-long connections to the county of Lincolnshire, though I could say that I have spent the majority of my life living within the boundaries of the diocese of Lincoln (fortunately very extensive!), and Grantham is now my local town. I have, however, had long-standing connections to various members of the Council, including ex-presidents David Smith and Michael Jones, Alison McHardy and David Crook, and over the years I have derived huge benefit from a number of key LRS publications.

I am a historian of late medieval English politics, kingship and governance, and have been lecturing in the history department, University of Nottingham, for the past seventeen years. Back in the mid-1990s I completed a PhD on the English Parliament 1377-1421, and this subject, together with the closely linked topic of petitioning, have kept me very busy in the intervening years. On these grounds I have, in the past, usually identified myself as a historian of central government, and therefore somewhat removed from the 'local history' scene. But such classification, and separation, I have come to realise, is both unhelpful and inaccurate. The many years I have spent studying how England was ruled in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries have highlighted to me that what went on 'at the centre', and what went on 'in the localities', were two sides of the same coin and were, and are, as interdependent as they are indivisible. For, so much of what shaped national politics in the Westminster 'bubble' of the Middle Ages directly concerned conditions and events in the regions. I am sure little has changed in this respect.

Local history societies, such as LRS, have a vital role to play in illuminating, through their learned publications, much broader themes and national (and even international) trends. They often furnish the historian with the 'on the ground' detail

to explain the rather blander policy statements to be found in the records of central government. They can also be a vital tool for illuminating broader societal and economic trends. One of my favourite publications, used as much for my teaching as for my research, is LRS publication no. 78, *The 1341 Royal Inquest in Lincolnshire*, by Bernard McLane. Published over thirty years ago it is still a mainstay of fourteenth century politics and kingship. Within this volume's pages are detailed a bewildering array of dastardly crimes, misdemeanours and transgressions committed by the agents of royal power in Lincolnshire, brought to light by the strong arm of King Edward III. Publications such as these illuminate what life was like for the residents of Lincolnshire many centuries ago. This particular publication shows what a lawless and misgoverned place fourteenth-century Lincolnshire was!

That a magnificent volume like this exists is in part down to the strength of LRS's publishing tradition, but it also reflects the importance of Lincolnshire in the Middle Ages. Its considerable wealth and burgeoning population made the county one of the most important and influential in



the kingdom, and its records a real barometer for the political and economic health of the nation as a whole. It was these considerations which brought me, and my co-researcher Dr Alison McHardy, to our current work on *Petitions from Lincolnshire, c. 1272-c. 1485*, due to be published as number 108 in the LRS series this Autumn.

Like McLane's publication, our volume illustrates the challenges to face the citizens of medieval Lincolnshire, but such was the open-ended nature of petitioning in this period that the types of problems people brought to the attention of the king were incredibly diverse, from nasty neighbours, natural disasters, and abducted ladies, to disputed boundaries, silted up harbours and heretical monks. And yes, there are plenty of corrupt royal officers too. The richness of these petitions has made our work on this volume immensely pleasurable. We have often felt personally involved in the fate of some of our hapless petitioners, such as the overworked Alan de Cobeldyke, who was kept so busy with royal commissions following

the failed rebellion of 1322 that out of desperation, and quite possibly exhaustion too, he petitioned the king asking to be relieved of his onerous duties. But what we have gained most from the volume is an understanding of how connected to the centre the people of medieval Lincolnshire were, for travelling to London in the fourteenth century may have been just a little more tedious than it is now, but this didn't prevent petitioners from seeking and often gaining satisfaction from the crown for their many and varied problems.

This issue of the News Review contains a taster of what lies ahead from our petitions volume as well as a fantastic piece from Professor Edmund King exploring his favourite LRS volume and Dr Brian Hodgkinson also shares with us some of his research on the Louth churchwardens' accounts, which will be published in a future LRS volume. We hope you enjoy it!

Gwilym Dodd



## PETITIONS FROM LINCOLNSHIRE, C.1200-C.1500

Stories of injustice, feuding, chicanery and natural disasters told through the words of Lincolnshire people and speaking directly to us down the centuries.

When the normal channels for righting wrongs or asking favours were unavailable, the people of medieval England petitioned their kings - in parliament, council, or chancery. Lincolnshire's inhabitants took full advantage of these opportunities, and their stories are told now through their petitions drawn from The National Archives.

Throughout the county, over three centuries, Lincolnshire's petitioners sought redress for their wrongs or requested special favours. Petitions were presented by all sections of society: men and women, aristocrats, peasants, merchants, townsmen, bishops, abbots, and other clergy. Their stories illuminate political turmoil, religious and economic change, and the influence of geography. They also show vividly how Lincolnshire's experience was part of the national, and even international, story.

The introduction sets the documents within England's administrative, legal, political, economic and social framework, and is followed by the texts of almost 200 petitions. These were selected from a much greater possible number for their interest and variety; and each is enhanced by extensive notes to ensure that they offer the maximum usefulness – and enjoyment – for the lay reader ad professional historian alike.

**Gwilym Dodd**, Associate Professor of History at the University of Nottingham, is the author of *Justice and Grace: Private Petitioning and the England Parliament in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2007), co-editor of *Medieval Petitions: Grace and Grievance* (York, 2009), and joint editor of *Petitions to the Crown from English*



'Truth and Justice': detail from east window of Church of Holy Trinity, Tattershall (Image and copyright: The Revd Gordon Plumb)

*Religious Houses, c. 1272-c. 1485* (Canterbury and York Society, 2010).

**Alison K. McHardy**, formerly Reader in Medieval English History at the University of Nottingham, is the author of *The Reign of Richard II* (Manchester, 2012), joint editor of *Proctors for Parliament: Clergy, Community and Politics, c. 1248-1539*, 2 volumes (Canterbury and York Society 2017, 2018), and joint editor with Gwilym Dodd of *Petitions to the Crown from English Religious Houses*.

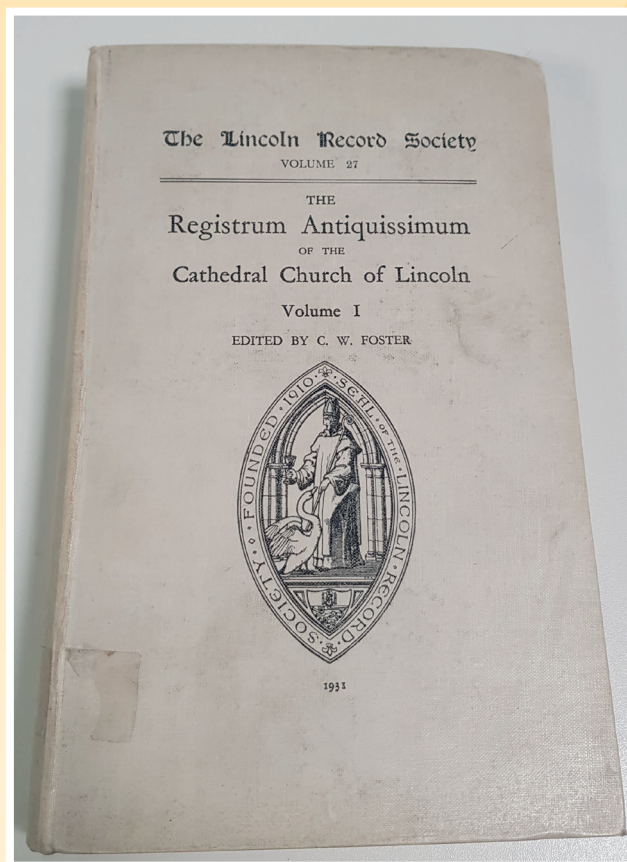


## THE REGISTRUM ANTIQUISSIMUM OF THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF LINCOLN

As a new feature for the News Review, members of the Lincoln Record Society have been invited to select their favourite LRS volume and briefly extol its merits. We have a lot to choose from and the task is not easy. I would want to shortlist, as a real page turner, *A Parson in Wartime: The Boston Diary of the Reverend Arthur Hopkins, 1942-1945* (vol. 107). There is perhaps scope for more research on the “hush hush” work in which he was engaged and opportunity for an article in a future News Review. But my choice is the *Registrum Antiquissimum of the Cathedral Church of Lincoln* (RA). This is a twelve-volume transcript of the original cartulary of Lincoln cathedral, compiled during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, with additional charters, a comprehensive introduction and two volumes of facsimiles.

When I joined the Society in 1968, volume 9 came in return for my first subscription, and volume 10 completed the edition in 1973, by which time I had already purchased the earlier volumes. This is in every way the definitive edition. It is definitive in its editorial standards, giving readers everything that is needed to interpret the texts for themselves, not least remarkably full indexes. It defines our Society, its two editors being Canon Foster (vols. 1-3), our founder, and Kathleen Major (vols. 4-10), whose legacy sustains us to this day. And it defines the very purpose of a Record Society; it was a major project, planned and carried to completion over a period of fifty years.

As I sit in my study in the leafy Sheffield suburb of Ecclesall, the full set of the RA sits in easy reach of my right hand, its placement a sign of my favour. If I have to select one volume, then I will choose volume 1, which contains the royal charters. A small measure of self-promotion is necessary at this point. I have recently produced two royal biographies, one of Henry I (for the Penguin Monarchs series), the other of Stephen (Yale English Monarchs). The RA contains over fifty writs of Henry I, and I reached out for them more than once. Most helpful was no. 73 (my warm thanks to Dr Nicholas Bennett for this and other photographs). It transports us back to the anxious summer of 1101. Henry has been king for less than a year. He writes to the men of the shire requiring them to ready themselves against those who would attack on his land, naming specifically his brother, Robert, duke of Normandy. They were to swear oaths of loyalty and to require their men to do the same: Henry was very keen on oaths. He confirms the privileges that he granted to them “when I first received the crown”. This is what we know as his “coronation charter”. It is often seen as a reluctant series of concessions made in a time of weakness, but I had never quite been persuaded of that and this charter in particular encouraged me to argue otherwise. Henry had all along seen his grant of privileges as part of a deal. This little writ, redolent of royal authority, will have gone to each shire court. No other copy survives, quite understandably, for it had no



Cover of the *Registrum Antiquissimum of the Cathedral Church of Lincoln*, Volume 1

evidentiary value, but happily our cathedral archivists could not bear to throw it away.

During the reign of Stephen, the subject of my earlier biography, according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the great men of the land abandoned their loyalty to the king and caused untold damage from their castles. Ranulf, earl of Chester, was one of the greatest of them; his struggle for the control of Lincoln castle, which precipitated the major battle of the civil war, runs through the reign like the lettering in a stick of rock. The war itself is barely reflected in the RA, but for the making of the peace it comes into its own. Charters show Earl Ranulf offering to the cathedral firstly the living of Repton (Derbyshire), worth £15 a year (no. 316), and then Marston and Warkworth (Northamptonshire) as well as whatever was necessary to make up £30 in alms. These gifts, he said, were “in restitution for the damages inflicted by him or his men”, and had been made “following divine inspiration” and “with the counsel of good men”. Evidence of the later grant comes in a charter of Duke Henry, granted at the siege of Stamford in summer 1153 (no. 150); within a few weeks, to the general satisfaction of the chroniclers, the earl was dead. This also might easily have been discarded, for it is just a fragment, and Henry’s confirmation as king superseded it (no. 149). There were many grants of restitution of this kind. They have more than once been collected and mapped, in an attempt to quantify the





Canon C. W. Foster, founder of the Lincoln Record Society and editor of vols. 1-3 of the *Registrum Antiquissimum of the Cathedral Church of Lincoln* (Image and copyright: Dr Nicholas Bennett)



Kathleen Major, great benefactor to the Lincoln Record Society and editor of vols. 4-10 of the *Registrum Antiquissimum of the Cathedral Church of Lincoln* (Image and copyright: Dr Nicholas Bennett)

damage. But if you take the charters in their context, all of this seems to me to miss the point. Earl Ranulf is writing here, very insistently, not for the benefit of later historians but for the attention of the Recording Angel.

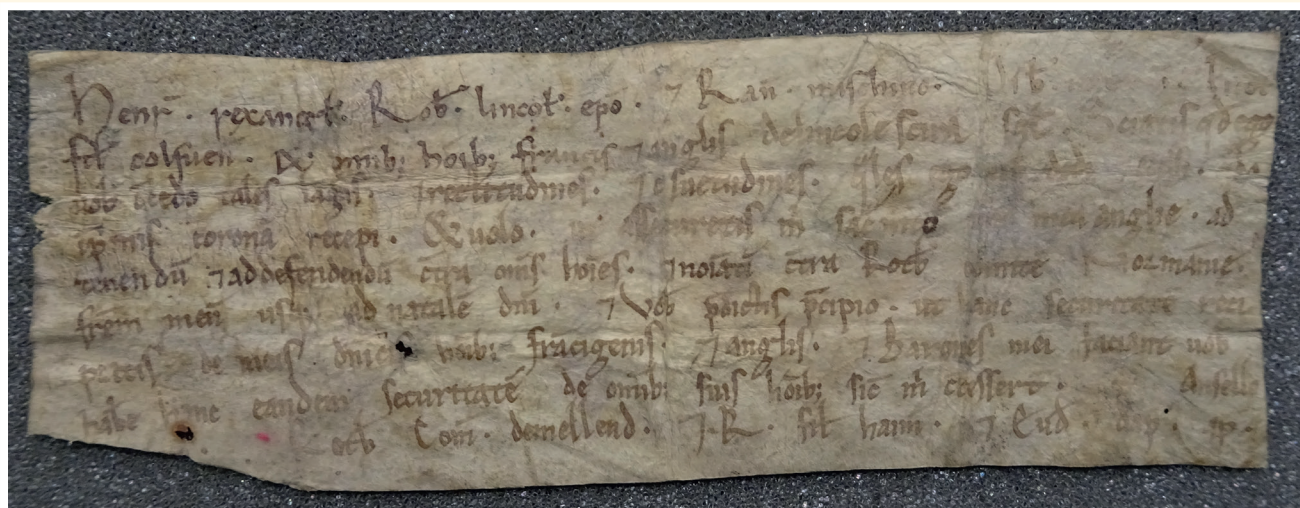
I will not be in my current study for much longer. The need has come to “downsize” and my library must make its contribution to this war effort. I will be able to keep only my favourite books, with the rest destined for homes elsewhere, perhaps via shelves marked as “pre-loved”. I will certainly keep sets from my two adoptive counties. I treasure my set of the *Early Yorkshire Charters* series, edited by William Farrer and Sir Charles Clay (1914-1965), though it is slightly marred by two nasty photographic reprints: my favourite here is volume 8, the charters of the Warenne fee, sheer perfection. I will keep also a full set of Northamptonshire

Record Society volumes, since I acted as General Editor for a number of them. It includes *Facsimiles of Early Charters from Northamptonshire Collections*, volume 4, edited by Sir Frank Stenton, “pre-eminent in the lore of medieval charters”, as the dedication of volume 2 of the RA rightly records. And there will always be room for the RA, for I never know when I may need to reach for it again.

Edmund King

What is your favourite Lincoln Record Society volume? Would you be interested in writing a piece for the News Review? Please get in touch with our Communications Officer, Dr Marianne Wilson, she would love to hear from you! E-mail: [communications@lincoln-record-society.org.uk](mailto:communications@lincoln-record-society.org.uk)

LAO D&C A/1/1/5 (Reg. Ant. no.73) (Image and copyright: Dr Nicholas Bennett)





The parish church of St James, Louth, exterior (Image and copyright: Brian Hodgkinson)



## THE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY LOUTH CHURCHWARDENS' ACCOUNTS

*Item, to Maltby the Smith for mending the clock and chime at the Feast of St. Luke 6s 8d, for the which sum afore paid he hath promised to stand with charge of the said clock and chime to keep them going and to repair them with all such stuff as to his occupation appertaineth...*

This entry from the sixteenth-century churchwardens' accounts of the parish church of St. James, situated in the Lincolnshire market town of Louth, is one of nearly 200 from 1527 to 1570 regarding the maintenance of the

*Louth Churchwardens' Accounts, 1528/9.*

church's clock and chimes, along with its peal of bells. The latter are contained within the fifteenth-century steeple, itself crowned with one of the most architecturally impressive spires in the country; Nikolaus Pevsner →





The nave of the parish church of St James, Louth (Image and copyright: Brian Hodgkinson)

affirming that it was 'one of the most majestic of English parish churches.'

The construction of this remarkable edifice was recounted in minute detail in the first volume of the Louth churchwardens' accounts covering the years 1500 to 1524, recorded by Reginald Dudding, Rector of Saleby (1859-1937). Finally, after a gap of 78 years, volume II (1527-1559) and the first ten years of volume III (1560-1570) have been transcribed for publication by the LRS and will appear as a volume in the not-too-distant future.

The documents are remarkable survivors from the unsettled years of the mid-to-late Tudor period, when the English Church was undergoing its most radical transformation since the refoundation of Christianity in the late sixth century.

These changes were not only doctrinal but also appeared physically; there were radical alterations to the interiors of parish churches. This took the form of a cycle of removal and reinstatement of church furniture, along with volumes of liturgy and spiritual texts; actions largely



dependent on the religious vicissitudes of the reigning monarch. Therefore the forthcoming edition will provide an important understanding not only of the material and liturgical alterations to St. James's, but also to a lesser extent local reactions to the laws and regulations decreed by Tudor governments.

The Louth churchwardens meticulously recorded their income and expenditure. These were largely concerned with the general maintenance of the structure along with quarterly payments of wages for routine activities such as

servicing the bells, washing of altar cloths and 'blowing the organs'. One notable payment was that to John Cawod, choirmaster and organist of the church, who in 1527/8 was paid 13s 4d for '...wrytyng this Acounte'; one of only three named scribes. Income came from the 'Sunday Collections' and also 'Witwords', legacies given by parishioners, along with charges for burials and tolling the numerous bells. In 1529/30 income from burials was 40s 8d, legacies 14s and for the bells 43s 8d; the detailed Sunday collections totalled £8 5s 7d.

Being largely a financial document, the accounts do not outwardly reveal how the ongoing religious changes affected the spiritual lives of individual citizens. Nor indeed does it expose parishioners' reactions to perceived interference on the principles of faith from, for all intents and purposes, a 'state Church'. An analysis of the Sunday collections nevertheless might provide an insight into the standpoint of Louth parishioners via these weekly donations; the fluctuations in the figures for the 'gatherings' might indicate approval or otherwise of the changes taking place.

During construction of the spire between 1501 and 1515, the annual collection totals were generally over £10 per annum, with a maximum of nearly £15 in 1502/3. Following completion, income fell to an average of just over £8. In 1535/6, £10 17s 7d was recorded, but 1536/7 chronicled a dip to £7 18s 9d. This includes three Sundays with no collections during the period of the Lincolnshire Rising in October 1536 which was largely centred on Louth. Nevertheless totals rose to £9 13s in 1537/8, but thereafter were rarely above £7. Notably the lowest was £3 2s 2d in 1549/50, during a period that witnessed the removal of the wealthy church's many accoutrements, many accumulated from parishioner donations often given post-mortem...

One local issue expected to have been well documented was the Rising itself. The only entry, however, concerns the collection on Sunday 8th October, a week after the commencement of the revolt, recording '*nihil propter tumultum populi*' (nothing because of the rising of the people). The only other related entry is, 'Item for coals occupied in the Marketsted when my Lord Admiral was here, 2s'. William Fitzwilliam, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Southampton, led the Henry VIII's forces in reoccupying the town on Friday 27th October.

Nevertheless, throughout the period, the churchwardens' accounts reveal that the church of St. James was competently administered both spiritually and fiscally throughout a period of considerable uncertainty. This included the employment of skilled tradesmen to maintain the structure and make the necessary alterations. In turn the plumbers, glaziers, masons and carpenters taught apprentices and employed unskilled workers. Equally, the wealthier members of the congregation contributed to furnishing, and later replenishing, the church's vestments, silverware and liturgical volumes throughout the ever-changing doctrinal reforms. Before their suppression, the Trinity guild delivered education in the form of the →



grammar school, whilst the Lady guild provided bedesmen to accompany the lay choristers in the church choir, who in turn trained pupils in the song school. Similarly, the poor and destitute were not abandoned following the suppression of the guilds, from where most assistance had previously originated. There are regular mentions of 'alms to the poor', and increasing donations to a Poor Box. This money doubtless would have previously been deposited in the collection plate.

William Tate in his seminal work *The Parish Chest*, records that churchwardens are 'the proper guardians or keepers of the parish church' and 'the very foundation of democratic Local Government in England', having later imposed on them 'certain additional civil duties'. These responsibilities, and the many other laws and decrees initiated by increasingly regulatory Tudor governments, were seemingly carried out efficiently by the churchwardens without any recognisable opposition from the community.

The Louth churchwardens' accounts undoubtedly reveal a sense of co-operation linking the parish church, the guilds and from 1551 the town's corporation and grammar school. Each of these entities are cited regularly in the accounts, combining their activities to enhance the prosperity of the church and community. The celebrated spire was financed with contributions from both the churchwardens and the guilds along with donations from the pockets of local parishioners. All sections of society, rich and poor, secular and ecclesiastical, cooperated in the apparently smooth running of this prosperous Lincolnshire market town throughout a period of considerable political and religious upheaval. In this purpose the people of sixteenth-century Louth, acting either as brethren or sisters of the guilds, parish churchwardens or as wardens and assistants of the Corporation and school, were both fruitful and indeed largely successful.

Brian Hodgkinson



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### *Lincoln Record Society AGM 2019*

The 109th Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held in Teaching Room 1 of the Robert Hardy Building at Bishop Grosseteste University, Longdales Road, Lincoln (LN1 3DY), on Saturday, 26 October 2019 at 2.00pm. This will be followed by a lecture by Dr Gwilym Dodd and Dr Alison McHardy, which will be a fascinating preview of their forthcoming edition of *Petitions from Lincolnshire c.1200-c.1500*. Afternoon tea will be served afterwards. Parking is available onsite, accessed from Longdales Road, and in local streets. We look forward to seeing you there!



## AUTUMN CONFERENCE

### *Lincolnshire in the Wars of the Roses*

Many thanks to all speakers and delegates who participated in our wonderful Autumn conference 'Lincolnshire in the Wars of the Roses' on 20-22 September. Special thanks to Dr Paul Dryburgh, Dr Nicholas Bennett, Ken Hollamby and Dr Marianne Wilson for their roles in organising the conference and to our President, Professor David Stocker, for leading the guided tour. Look out for a full report in the next edition of the News Review!

