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MEDIEVAL HISTORY
in schools

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EXPLORING AND TEACHING MEDIEVAL HISTORY in schools

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Section 1

Reviewing medieval history in schools

Introduction

Early in January 2016 15 teachers arrived for the two-day residential which opened the Historical Association's Teacher Fellowship course on late medieval history. The aims for the eight-month course were to deepen teachers' knowledge, discuss how we teach this period at Key Stage 3, GCSE and A-level and produce resources for other teachers to use. As it was the first such Fellowship course there was a lot to be excited and nervous about but happily we made the ideal start, thanks to the insights provided in the very first session when Professor Anne Curry introduced us to the organisation of the English military campaign of 1415 that led to the Battle of Agincourt.

From then on, the word most repeated that weekend was 'sophisticated' – as in 'we had no idea that medieval administration, record-keeping, military planning etc. etc. etc. was so sophisticated.' Our course over the following months continued to be informed by this insight, with 'sophistication' supplemented by other key words and phrases we now applied to the people of the Middle Ages – 'thoughtful', 'inventive', 'questioning', 'highly-organised', 'creative', 'intelligent', 'sense of community'. There was no need to assume that everyone in the Middle Ages was sitting waiting for the Renaissance to arrive before they could have a new and challenging idea! Teachers' respect for the people of the later Middle Ages increased significantly. Being a well-mannered Fellowship organiser, I didn't punch the air in glee. Not in public anyway!

This publication (in both its paper format and its extended on-line version) is that Teacher Fellowship course writ large, with a greater range of academic contributions, deeper consideration of teaching issues, a wider range of resources being created and a focus on the longer period of *c.*1000-*c.*1530. The choice of periodisation is a pragmatic one, being limited to the medieval centuries most widely taught in secondary schools. It would have been wonderful to include the period before 1000 but space, time and our target audience of secondary teachers determined our focus on *c.*1000-*c.*1530.

Sophistication, representation, respect

No one receiving this publication will have much free time, so we expect you will at first dip into these pages and the on-line version, which has a further eight articles on teaching this period. In the longer term we hope you will read the whole publication because the content has been planned to present a set of coherent and inter-related arguments about teaching medieval history in schools. Central to this coherence are the three words in the heading above. I have already touched upon the first so will now introduce the others. If you haven't done so, have a look at the picture of the cover before you read on (typical teacher, giving instructions, even in print!).

> *One sees, with a sharp tender shock,*
> *His hand withdrawn, holding her hand.*

These lines, inspired by the effigies pictured on the cover, come from Philip Larkin's poem *An Arundel Tomb*. The effigies represent Richard Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel, and his second wife, Eleanor. Like Larkin, we may feel that 'sharp tender shock' when we see that Richard and Eleanor are holding hands, suggesting that these people, who died over 600 years ago in the 1370s, experienced at least some of the same feelings as ourselves. The experience of holding hands is a world away from how the people of the Middle Ages are often portrayed in the school curriculum, where they can appear to spend all their time fighting, praying or dying from plague.

Richard and Eleanor's lives do, to an extent, fit that caricature. Richard was exiled amid the tumult of Edward II's deposition, then fought in Scotland and at Crecy. Together they made a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela and suffered bereavements when two daughters died young. But to return to Larkin: the most-quoted lines from his delightful, and delightfully ambiguous, poem are the final ones:

> *Our almost-instinct almost true:*
> *What will survive of us is love.*

What publicly survives of Richard and Eleanor, thanks to their effigies, is indeed love, and, as they carried on a lengthy 'affair' before their first marriages were annulled, it seems reasonable to suggest that love was an important part of their lives.

The question posed by Richard and Eleanor is 'How representative a picture of the Middle Ages do we give our students?' War and plague may be classroom box-office on a wet and windy afternoon but should we be trying to present a more representative picture of the Middle Ages to our students – and also a more respectful one?

Do students respect the individuals they are studying and is it important for them to do so? Respect seems hard to

achieve when the word 'medieval' is frequently used in public as a synonym for brutality and ignorance, when religious belief is construed as mere superstition, and idealism and concern for the welfare of local and national communities are assumed to be the preserves of later centuries. Such negative, misleading generalisations make it very difficult for students of any age to reach balanced judgements about the motives of individuals and the reasons for their actions.

As Professor Christine Carpenter explains in her book *The Wars of the Roses* (CUP, 1996), respecting the people we study is essential for understanding the events of the past:

> … not deriding them for having beliefs we do not share nor dismissing them as aliens who share nothing with us at all. If the apparently incoherent politics of the last sixty years of the fifteenth century are studied as a period in which human beings with certain kinds of expectations were suddenly confronted with the wholly unexpected and struggled to understand and to cope with it, as human beings will, they begin to make a surprising amount of sense.

Respect, not derision, is what we owe the past until our studies show that, for particular individuals, respect is not deserved. A major aim of this publication is to help students build a more representative picture of the period, one respecting the complexity and sophistication of the ideals and thoughts of the people and the extent of change taking place across these centuries.

What is – and isn't – in this publication

First it's important to point out that the extended version of this publication is available on the Historical Association website (details below). As noted above, the on-line version contains a further eight articles on teaching and these are listed in the contents page to Section 2 on page 69.

Now to explain the approach taken in compiling this publication. It does not provide a 'quick-fix' guide to teaching medieval history. Over the last 30 years there have been far too many such 'solutions', necessitated by National Curriculum reviews, changes to examination specifications and, increasingly, by the introduction of two-year Key Stage 3 courses. We can now add the introduction of medieval history at GCSE, a positive development but creating the need for more new ideas, both at GCSE and, in consequence, at Key Stage 3. It was therefore tempting to focus on immediate needs, providing articles describing teaching and assessment activities for GCSE topics or restricting the articles by historians to those GCSE units. That, however, would have missed the opportunity to stand back and think about the understandings of the period we want students to develop, how we can foster those understandings through choice of content at Key Stage 3 and so deepen knowledge of the period. Therefore this publication contains two sections, each with a different type of article.

Section 1 contains articles by historians, introducing the period (pages 6-14), its sources (pages 15-27), some GCSE options (pages 28-47), three broader issues (pages 48-59) and, finally, two unfamiliar but revealing topics (pages 60-67). Throughout we have borne in mind that our audience contains many teachers who studied little or no medieval history at university, including non-specialists teaching at Key Stage 3.

Section 2 explores what we want students to learn about the Middle Ages and about how work on the Middle Ages can support students' understanding of how history is studied. It would be pointless, however, to raise questions and offer ideas if we do not follow them up with the resources with which to implement them. The aim is therefore, over the next two years, to publish on-line teaching resources to develop the ideas in this publication. For the contents page to Section 2 and a developed introduction to this section see pages 69-71.

Finally I would like to thank Agincourt600, whose initiative prompted and paid for this publication to be sent to every secondary school, and the historians who have written such a splendid array of articles, squeezing in the task amid teaching, research, examining, writing books and articles, redesigning degree schemes and, not least, braving writing for an audience many do not normally write for, a difficult thing to do regardless of other experience. Non-medievalists may not appreciate quite how eminent a team of historians has been assembled but take my word for it – this is a deeply distinguished group!

I hope you find this publication valuable, enjoyable and thought-provoking and that we have succeeded in conveying the enthusiasm and passion that lie behind all the contributions.

Ian Dawson
Associate Vice-President,
The Historical Association

The editor – Ian Dawson

Ian specialised in later medieval history during his first degree and then completed an MA on the Yorkshire sections of the Pipe Rolls of Henry II and Richard I. Since then he has spent 40 years connected with history teaching as schoolteacher, teacher-trainer, Director of the Schools History Project and author and editor of around one hundred books for schools. He also taught a Special Subject on The Wars of the Roses on the degree course at Leeds Trinity University for 15 years alongside working as PGCE tutor. This led to the award of a HEFCE National Teaching Fellowship in 2003 and to setting up www.thinkinghistory.co.uk, providing free resources for teachers. In 2016 he led the HA's Teacher Fellowship scheme on teaching later medieval history in schools. Ian is an Honorary Fellow of the Historical Association and of Leeds Trinity University.

The on-line, extended edition of this publication

A lengthier version of this publication, containing a wider range of articles on teaching, can be found on the HA website. It is open-access and so NOT restricted to Historical Association members. We hope that this enables every member of a department to have their own individual copy of this material. You can find the on-line version at: www.history.org.uk

The Middle Ages:
taking on the myths

John Gillingham

What I particularly enjoy about the Middle Ages are the endless opportunities the period provides for pricking bubbles, for explaining to people, or at least trying to explain to them, that pretty much everything they think they know about it is wrong.

> In his own day and for well over 400 years after his death, Richard I – 'Coeur de Lion' as he was known in his lifetime – was regarded as a model king, admired not only by his own subjects in France and in England, but also by foreign enemies, Muslim as well as Christian. No other medieval king of England was so much liked by the Scots. They even contributed to his ransom! That positive judgement on him began to be questioned in England in the seventeenth century, largely on the grounds that he spent too much time and money outside England, and was jettisoned completely in the eighteenth. The verdict of the Ladybird History Book (1965), 'Richard was not a good king. He cared only for his soldiers,' faithfully reflected the received academic opinion of the previous 300 years. It let children know what sensible grown-ups thought about him. But how much sense does it make to judge the people of the past by criteria of which they could have known nothing? How would we like to be judged by standards not yet thought of?

Since the Middle Ages, by definition, preceded modern times, it is all too easy to assume that the period was less civilised and less sophisticated, more violent and more superstitious than our own, i.e. that the people who lived then were 'positively medieval' in the usual sense of that phrase. Beliefs of this kind were powerfully formulated during the eighteenth century Enlightenment by thinkers such as Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson who conceived of history as the progress of civilisation through various stages of development. 'Civilisation' is an eighteenth century neologism. When the great Scottish philosopher David Hume, in his hugely influential History of England, reached 1485, it seemed to him that after 'a series of barbarous ages', he had 'at last reached the dawn of civility and science'. When interpretations of this kind come to be regarded as basic truths about the past, they have achieved the status of myth. And, as was observed by two schoolmasters (the authors of *1066 and All That*), 'The truth is, of course, that the importance of Myths cannot be exaggerated (bad luck).'[1]

Occasionally it is easy enough to disentangle myth from reality. The notion that medieval people were much shorter than those of the post-medieval centuries has been dispelled by scientific archaeology. But the potency of 1485 as the year civility and science dawned has long been reinforced by its chronological closeness to 1492, and so to the myth that Columbus by sailing to the Americas disproved the old idea that the earth was flat. In fact, learned people had for centuries known that it was, in Bede's words (written in the early eighth century), 'not round like a shield, but round like a ball.' Indeed

Ladybird book image of Richard I.

the 'medieval' experts had been right – the ball *was,* as they said, a lot bigger than Columbus had thought – and in any case his voyage was only possible thanks to 'medieval' advances in maritime technology.

Global and insular discontinuities

Instead of the old assumption that the Middle Ages was characterised by barbarous stagnation, might we do better to think of it as an important period of take-off? It is in the Middle Ages, after all, that crucial early stages of many things can be found: above all, of course, the languages of England, Scotland and Wales, but also some central political and educational institutions: parliament, monarchy, schools, universities, the law and the legal profession, as well as our freedoms (think Magna Carta).

But one great advantage of studying a 500-year time span is that it makes it easier to see that neither stagnation nor take-off is an adequate characterisation of so long a period. Thanks to increasingly sophisticated archaeological and scientific research into subjects such as climate change, ancient DNA, past environments and landscapes, we are now almost daily becoming more aware of profound discontinuities, as we put the history of medieval Britain into an unstable global context, massively affected by events on the other side of the world: mega eruptions, outbreaks of disease, and ocean currents such as El Niño. Most profoundly, a combination of plague (*Yersinia pestis*) in 1348-49 and a prolonged period of diminishing solar irradiance (leading to cooler and wetter weather), brought premature death to nearly half of the total population: the Black Death, by far the greatest setback so far in Europe's (including Britain's) recorded history.

No other discontinuity was on this scale – though from the point of view of England's old elite the impact of the Norman Conquest was worse. For all that it happened more than 950 years ago, 1066 remains the best remembered date in English history, so well-known that banks advise customers not to choose it as their PIN number. No other occurrence produced so spectacular a political upheaval or left so enduring a legacy in the national memory. No other event had so profound

an effect upon our language or brought us so close to our neighbours across the Channel. Other violent developments of these centuries, though less well known to the English, also remain deeply embedded in the memories of those whose lands were invaded: the conquest of Wales, the Scottish War of Independence. The long-term consequences of these events, as also of the invasion of Ireland in 1169, Ireland's 'year of destiny', remain with us to this day.

Historical research helps to set these well-remembered events in context. It can also 'rediscover' momentous developments that have slipped from memory. Slavery was still an important source of labour in eleventh-century Britain, but was gone by the end of the twelfth. This transformation has, however, been forgotten, in part because many subsequent historians have thought of serfdom (villeinage) as being almost as bad as slavery. They were, however, very different. While serfs could in effect be sold, it was as a package which included their families and the ground on which they were tenants; slaves, by contrast, could be separated from their families and bought and sold as individual items. Slaves, moreover, unlike serfs, were often acquired during the raids that represented the routine of war in almost all early human history. The shift from a form of war in which women and children were desirable objects of plunder to a more chivalrous type of warfare is another of these 'misunderestimated' changes within Britain. These changes meant that men and women, especially women, the chief victims of the slave trade, were significantly freer than they had ever been before.

Perceptions of change in country and town

There were certainly some ways in which little changed between 1000 and 1500. Most people lived and worked on small farms, kept animals, especially sheep, cattle and poultry, and grew crops, especially the grain used for making their daily bread and ale. The family and the household remained the basic unit of economic as well as of social life. Such industry as there was took place at home, whether indoors, in the yard or on the street outside the shop. For most children their home was also their school, and from the age of seven or eight they were expected to help their parents in the unremitting round of gender-divided work described in the fifteenth-century *Ballad of the Tyrannical Husband* (a title given this song in the nineteenth century). A ploughman, returning home after a day's work, suggests to his wife that his dinner is not yet ready because she has been gossiping with the neighbours; her furious answer is a very long list of the tasks that keep her busy night and day.[2] While much always depended upon social status and stage of life cycle as well as sheer individuality, basic inequalities between men and women barely changed.

Medieval Britain appears to us to have remained overwhelmingly and unchangingly rural, this is not how it seemed to those who participated in the process of urbanisation and commercialisation that characterised the period of population growth and economic expansion in the centuries of the MWP, the medieval warm period, *c.*950-*c.*1250 (aka MCA, medieval climate anomaly). Twelfth-century authors such as William of Malmesbury and Gerald de Barri (aka Gerald of Wales) thought of societies advancing through stages of development, much as Adam Smith was to do, although they did not claim to be saying anything remarkable or revolutionary. 'Mankind', wrote Gerald, 'usually proceeds from the woods to the fields, and then from fields to settlements and communities of citizens in which it can enjoy the rights and privileges of urban civil life.'[3] In that expansionist age the rich and powerful were prepared to invest in making hundreds of new towns and markets as well as churches and castles.

Decline and rise

Very different challenges were faced by everyone in the century or so of demographic stagnation and declining international trade that followed the Black Death. Yet people were far from being helpless victims of events beyond their understanding. Despite the abrupt shift from labour plenty to labour shortage there was no movement to re-introduce slavery into Britain. Instead wage levels rose and serfdom withered away. The institutional and technological infra-structures built up in previous centuries survived: great stone towers in cathedrals and castles, windmills, ploughs and carts drawn by horses rather than oxen, stone bridges, bulk-carrying cargo ships and maritime compasses, bills of exchange, schools and universities. In later medieval Britain all these survived – as the material technology and culture of the ancient world had not done in the centuries after the withdrawal of the Roman government from Britain. By 1500 there was not only per capita more money in circulation, both in coin and in credit, than in 1000, but a widening range of denominations (from 10 shillings down to farthings) meant that coins were very much more useful than they had been in the one coin (silver penny) economy that had existed until 1279. People now lived in better-built houses and more of them could read.

Indeed, the fact that writing, even in this era of plague, was much more widely used than in previous centuries is itself a sign of one sort of progress. True, the writings which have survived best record the doings of men of power, locally as well as nationally, and only very rarely those of the poor, the weak and of women. None the less it was the growing number of readers that sustained the demand that led to Gutenberg's great breakthrough, printing with moveable type, that enabled William Caxton to set up shop in Westminster in 1476. Much as archaeology can tell us about the physical culture of the past, both the material environment and the medical health of individuals, it is through the growing volume of words and pictures, above all words like those written by authors such as Geoffrey Chaucer, that we can explore and begin to understand the thoughts, ideas and emotions of people who lived between 500 and 1,000 years ago.

Further Reading

Richard Britnell, *Britain and Ireland 1050-1530: Economy and Society* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004)

Bruce M. S. Campbell, *The Great Transition Climate, Disease and Society in the Late Medieval World* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2016)

John Gillingham, *Conquests, Catastrophe and Recovery, Britain and Ireland 1066-1485* (Vintage/Random House, London, 2014).

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2   Goldberg, P.J.P. trans. and ed. (1995) *Women in England c.1275-1525* (Manchester Medieval Sources) Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 169-70.
3   Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland.* Translation by John O'Meara first published by Dundalgan Press 1951; Penguin Classics edition published 1982, pp. 101-02.

John Gillingham is a Fellow of the British Academy and Emeritus Professor of Medieval History of the LSE where he taught for over 30 years. Among his many publications are: *The Wars of the Roses* (Reprint: Phoenix Press, 2002); *The Angevin Empire* 2nd edn. (Hodder/Oxford University Press, 2001); *Richard I* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1999); *The English in the Twelfth Century* (Boydell, Woodbridge, 2000); *William II: The Red King* (Penguin Monarchs, London, 2015).

What would you like teachers and students to know about the period *c.* 1000 to *c.* 1348?

During the Historical Association's Teacher Fellowship course on the later Middle Ages I asked a number of historians to sum up what they would like teachers and students to know about the period *c.*1348-*c.*1530. The variety of answers and the insights provided made them a natural inclusion in this publication (see pages 10-11), along with the new set of replies about the period *c.*1000-*c.*1348 you can see below. It's worth adding that I told the historians that I wasn't seeking a list of events but hoping they could set a broader context. After that I left the choice of what to include and how to structure their replies entirely up to them. The question now is how to use these insights to enhance students' understanding of the Middle Ages!

Ian Dawson

Stephen Church
Professor of Medieval History, University of East Anglia

The period *c.*1000-*c.*1340 was one in which England, Scotland, and Wales became intertwined with the mainstream of European civilisation. That civilisation was for the most part French. The mounted warrior, who represented the high ideals of French aristocratic society, was the knight, *le chivalier*, united by the chivalric ideals that had their roots in the heartlands of the French kingdom. In England, after the Norman Conquest, the language of the high aristocracy was French with all that entailed about the society which they inhabited. Soon, the Scottish aristocracy followed suit, with French quickly supplanting Scots as the language of the elite centred in the lowland regions in the east of the country. When Wales and Ireland were conquered by the incoming English, these territories, too, became part of the cultural mainstream.

In England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, the period also witnessed the beginnings of something we can recognisably see as the state. The state had not yet come fully into existence, since this was still the age of kingdoms as personal property: this was an age of estates not states. But the structures that will underpin the state were created in this period. It was during the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries that the shires – the fundamental building blocks of the state – were established. Governed by the shire reeve (the sheriff), the shire played the role of the smallest part of the structure of royal administration. On the basis of the shire, justice was dispensed, tax collected, armies mustered, and the king's word and authority made real. The sheriff answered for his actions to the exchequer for royal revenue and to the justices for good law and governance. It was in this period, too, that Parliament emerged whereby those in central authority might be held accountable for their actions by the community of the realm, and its members were collected together, in part, on the basis of the shire. This was the period, too, when urban communities were created, emerging to be both politically and economically central to the kingdoms which they inhabited.

Katherine Harvey
Wellcome Trust Research Fellow, Birkbeck, University of London

It seems an obvious point to make, but I'd like students to be aware of the human dimension of medieval history. It is easy to think of the Middle Ages solely in terms of kings and parliaments, churchmen and crusades – and of course these things are very important. But we should also consider the people who were involved in the big events and processes which we study. For example, the Norman Conquest had major political consequences, but what was the human cost of the Harrying of the North – not only in terms of death and destruction, but also how the English felt about their new rulers? Castles were another important tool of Norman colonisation, but they were also home to men, women and children who ate dinner, fell ill, fell in love and had nightmares.

Religion is a key dimension of our understanding of the Middle Ages, but medieval Christianity is too often considered to be a monolithic, top-down phenomenon. Again, I'd like students to think about individual experience – about the monk who wept as he contemplated the suffering of Christ, the crusader who embarked on the perilous journey to Jerusalem in the hope of remitting his sins, the parishioner who attended church but privately doubted the truth of what the priest taught her. What's more, there were plenty of people in medieval England who were not Roman Catholics – including a small number of heretics and, until the expulsion of 1290, a sizeable Jewish population.

These varied personal experiences matter because they help us relate to the distant past, but also because they enhance our understanding of it. Medieval people were different from us, in both their attitudes and behaviour – for example, the famous rages of the Angevin kings now seem undignified, but to a twelfth-century onlooker they were righteous displays of royal anger. But despite these differences, medieval people were just as complicated, contradictory and diverse as us!

Eleanor Parker
Lecturer in Medieval English, Brasenose College, Oxford

One aspect I'd want to highlight about this period is how important it is to get a sense of the multiple cultures and languages co-existing and interacting during these centuries, rather than thinking in terms of a single homogeneous 'medieval' culture. In the earlier part of the period, Britain was still very much shaped by interaction with Scandinavia; the culture of northern Britain was heavily influenced by Viking settlement, and in the eleventh century England and other areas of Britain became part of a Scandinavian empire ruled by the Danish king Cnut. Later, of course, the Norman Conquest brought a new and influential French-speaking elite, who had their own language and culture but soon developed ways to think of themselves as English. Over time these various groups intermarried and mingled, but for a person in the twelfth or thirteenth century their opportunities in life might be very much influenced by the language they spoke and the region or culture they belonged to. An educated person might switch between English, French, or Latin depending on context, and it's interesting to consider what might that mean for their sense of identity and their interactions with different groups of people.

The other thing I find fascinating about this period – a time of so much social and political change – is how powerful a belief in continuity was, even as life was changing rapidly. The Norman elite took a great interest in the Anglo-Saxon past, and through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries historians and poets were writing about Anglo-Saxon kings, heroes, and saints – creating and celebrating a romantic, re-imagined version of the culture their own ancestors had conquered. Why was it so important, in a time of change, to feel that connection to the past? It's easy to think that the changes of this period meant simply supplanting what had gone before, but it was much more complicated than that.

Levi Roach
Lecturer in History, University of Exeter

Like many historians, I see the period between 1000 and 1340 as one of significant change. At the start of these years, we see an early medieval society based on relatively simple methods of surplus extraction – one in which profits on landed estates are relatively low and largely stay in the immediate vicinity – with comparatively little trade and relatively *ad hoc* methods of governance. For all that traditional readings of this era as a 'Dark Age' are untenable, taxation was rare and unsystematic, bureaucracy limited and state structures fluid and flexible. Under new social, political and economic pressures – many of which can be traced back to the eighth and ninth centuries – more formalised means of government and commerce now emerged: coinage became plentiful, cities grew in size, bureaucracy blossomed, and administration (both state and non-state) developed apace. These developments happened at different speeds in different regions, but were linked. Cities were largest where the greatest concentrations of wealth were to be found – and where coinage allowed for complex trading networks to develop. This in turn could only be sustained by increased agrarian surplus from the countryside, now redistributed, sometimes across considerable distances, to those dwelling in the city; a surplus which when sold off there increased the circulation of coinage back to the countryside. This additional wealth provided opportunities for taxation to be reintroduced, after a long hiatus in most parts of Europe; and this (combined with the increasing wealth generated by tolls paid by merchants and traders on the goods they brought to market) both necessitated and helped sustain increasingly formalised means of government. The result was not only the birth of bureaucracy in something approximating the modern sense. There was also a physical and visual legacy. More wealth led to more building: churches were founded and re-built, with almost all of the most famous cathedrals in Europe being erected in these years; castles were constructed; residences started to be built in stone as well as wood; bridges were constructed; and roads maintained. Thus much of what is now considered archetypically 'medieval' is a product of these heady years.

Sethina Watson
Senior Lecturer in History, University of York

I find this period so intriguing for the ways in which people were *building*, and in all walks of life. By this, I don't mean constructing in stone (although, all around us, their great castles and cathedrals, their parish churches, city walls, and remnants of monasteries and hospitals are testimony to this). I mean how they were building ways of understanding and organising life, faith, government and society. This was a period of great change, marked by the development of far-reaching ideals, institutions, and networks. To me, it was a time when people worried about what they thought and believed (indeed, how ideas worked) and, still more, how these should be put into practice. I'd point to three main themes.

Reform, and the development of religious ideas and institutions. This began with a push by the papacy to separate the church from the mud of the world (that is from what they saw as the corrupting influence of worldly people and forces, especially sex and money). Soon, new forms of religious life (and heretical challenges) flourished, as people sought to live out very different kinds of religious ideals. In the last half of the period, the focus turned to the laity: what it meant to be a good Christian and how the parish and diocese should cultivate this.

The rise of the university. Scholars criss-crossed Europe, seeking new knowledges, connections and careers. They translated classical, Arabic and Jewish texts, and changed the way life was understood and lived: what made a marriage (or a tyrant), the morality of the market, how confession worked. Graduates found careers in the law, medicine, and royal government, as well as at all levels in the church, professionalising and institutionalising these in turn.

Urbanisation. Steady population growth fuelled the expansion of markets, towns, migration and trade. Cities became corporations, with their own government, and their streets spaces for preaching, theatre and dissent, as well as commerce and social display. Here, villagers saw people of other regions, nations, and religions and new types of wealth lived alongside new types of poverty.

We today so often see change as A Good Thing, but in the Middle Ages they were not always so sure. Out of these changes above emerged new kinds of communities and, with them, controversies, as well as challenges to the religious, social and political order. In the Becket crisis and Magna Carta we see glimpses of these wider clashes. The Norman Conquest flew the banner of papal reform and, in its wake, brought new people, ideas and networks.

What would you like teachers and students to know about the period *c.*1348 to *c.*1530?

Christopher Dyer
Emeritus Professor of History, The University of Leicester

I regard it not just in material terms as a period of improvement and growing prosperity, but above all one when people became free and were able to exercise more control over their lives. Positive consequences of that can be seen around us – thousands of houses of ordinary artisans and peasants are still standing, and we know that they were built in the period because of the advances in tree-ring dating, a much more important discovery than Richard III! Many people paid for their own houses out of their profits from the land and higher wages. The construction work was done by craftsmen, especially carpenters, who worked with great skill and were well rewarded.

To continue with the building theme, look at the large amount of high-quality parish church architecture at this time, and public buildings like guildhalls, schools and almshouses, all the result of the collective efforts of communities organised into parishes, self-governing villages and towns, and fraternities. People were better off, but that does not mean that they were just selfish pursuers of their own wealth – they put a lot of time and money into community projects, expressing their ideas of the common good, advancing ethical values, helping those less fortunate than themselves.

Many features of the modern world – productive farming, industrial expansion, a healthy diet, the conquest of famine, can be seen in this period. Many dimensions of modern society in which we can take pride, like public education, social welfare provisions, an ideal of honest government, an effective legal system, protection of the individual from oppressive institutions like serfdom, can trace their roots to this period.

Catherine Nall
Senior Lecturer in Medieval English, Royal Holloway College

I'd want to communicate the complexity of the period, and to dismantle some of the myths of the Middle Ages. So I suppose consideration of Lollardy and heresy – the idea that people in the period debated issues to do with salvation and the Church; that there were debates about the availability of the Bible in English, and why that might matter. I suppose I'd want them to know that women owned businesses, worked in the fields; that educated women wrote books and read books. And along with the key events of Agincourt and the Wars of the Roses, I'd want them to know that people debated the legitimacy of violence, that some people

worried about the costs to civilians, and that 'ideas' were as important as ambition, greed etc in motivating people to choose particular paths. It's a difficult balancing act – between communicating that sense of the Middle Ages as really different, which of course it is in lots of ways, but also as peculiarly modern in other ways. The poet Thomas Hoccleve worries about how he'll support himself in old age, suffers with something that we would term depression; Margery Kempe travelled the world, negotiated a chaste marriage with her husband, owned a business, disputed with some of the key clerical figures in fifteenth-century England – but she also couldn't write and had 14 children.

Mark Ormrod
Emeritus Professor of History, University of York

1. How tiny England was: population dropping dramatically after the Black Death, and then remaining static at under three million people for the whole of the remainder of the period. Alongside the absence of electricity, internal combustion engines and chocolate, our biggest shock on being transported back to this period would be just how *empty* England was.

2. The importance of national sentiment, prompted by war with the Scots and the French, and articulated in the development of English as a written (as well as spoken) language. Fear of the enemy was universal; the sense of being 'English' was a growing preoccupation at least in the ruling elite and chattering classes.

3. The ability of central government to mobilise for war. Battles were won (and lost) not just on the basis of the bravery and tactics of the participants, but on the back of a huge fiscal and logistical machine at home that engaged a very large proportion of the population in the war effort.

4. The very heavy reliance on the personality and ability of the king to provide political and social stability, and the dramatic consequences that arose when, for various reasons, the king's leadership was absent or challenged (Peasants' Revolt, Cade's Rebellion, Wars of the Roses...). This is not just about personality politics: it's about the *power* and *trust* that the political community invested in the institution of monarchy.

5. The Tudors didn't change everything overnight, but brought to a peak trends discernible throughout the period from *c.*1350: new ways of governing and controlling the kingdom, royal authority over the Church; the theme of national sovereignty ('This realm of England is an empire...').

A.J. Pollard
Emeritus Professor, Teesside University
What actually captures the imagination of 14-year-olds? I guess you'll want wars and battles v the French (but only the victories, never the defeats!). I'd sooner not. I'd go for the rising living standards, emergence of yeomen and prosperous husbandmen, new woollen districts, new disposable wealth, printing and widening literacy, expansion of education opportunities, parish fraternities and drama. If you want politics, forget kings, go for popular involvement and situate popular 'uprisings' in this context. Everything to show that the fifteenth century was a dynamic era as far as 'ordinary people' were concerned (well those who survived): finally get over the C.L. Kingsford formulation of 'an age of promise'. One way to approach this, and capture the imagination, might be through the prism of the early stories of Robin Hood, which in their composition neatly span your period. It's all here: ripping yarns, violence (but no sex unfortunately); idealism, opposition to the undeserving rich and the corrupt, popular religion, criticism of monastic orders, attitudes to monarchy and all directed towards an audience of both gentry and the new 'middling sorts'. It has the great advantage of the hero, the central characters and the basic plots being familiar. Not of course the whole syllabus, but as a way of getting into some of the aspects of the late Middle Ages which are still not understood and have a direct relevance to twenty-first-century English society. In addition to selections from the Robin Hood stories (in modern English?), sources could include local church architecture, church warden accounts, testamentary evidence including bequests, inventories.

Miri Rubin
Professor of Medieval and Early Modern History, School of History, Queen Mary University of London
It is striking just how integrated were the worlds of religion and learning in this period, how interested continental Europeans were in developments in England, and the English in European ideas. England developed its own brand of criticism of contemporary arrangements in the church – many of which resemble the protestant critiques of the sixteenth century – and a good example is the work of John Wyclif (1320-84), an Oxford theologian, with his novel ideas about the sacraments, on the role of secular authorities in religious life. He inspired followers among Oxford students and lower clergy – often known by the detractors as Lollards – and they further questioned the truth and efficacy of pilgrimage, sacred images, the cult of saints and the power of the sacraments. Such critique interested religious reformers as far afield as Bohemia, some of whom travelled to England in search of manuscripts of Wycliffite works. With these they hoped to support the claims of their home-grown reform movement, Hussitism, a powerful political and religious force in the later Middle Ages.

Under the close scrutiny of church and state, England did not develop the whole array of public religious expression known to Italian or Flemish towns, like movements inspired by prophecy, lay flagellant and penitential groups. But those interested in the possibilities of religious life, were inspired indeed by the rich vein of urban lay religion known as the Modern Devotion, in the cities of the Low Countries. The best seller of this milieu, a guide to religious introspection, penance and prayer, is *The Imitation of Christ* composed by Thomas à Kempis around 1420. This Latin book was not only used by monks and priests in England, but also translated into English repeatedly, often through the efforts of prominent women

interested in reform, such as Lady Margaret Beaufort (*c*.1441-1509), Henry VII's mother. The English also appreciated the skill of manuscript makers – and later printers – of that region, and Netherlandish workshops habitually crafted prayer-books for export to the English market. With the coming of print the new scholarship inspired by continental humanists attracted English scholars to study abroad; in turn Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) visited England repeatedly, worked at Cambridge University, and interacted with scholars in London.

The quintessence of European intellectual, religious and scholarly integration is powerfully evident in this period, and forms an essential background to the exciting events of following decades: the collapse of unitary Christianity, and Europe's global extension.

John Watts
Professor of Later Medieval History at the University of Oxford, and Fellow and Tutor at Corpus Christi College, Oxford.
I think the thing I'd emphasise is the growth of political society, to include more or less everyone. Growing government (taxation, justice, legislation/regulation) and spreading education and literacy (pastoral outreach by the church from c.1215, increased record-keeping and literate administration from c.1200, the emergence of written vernaculars – first French and then, *c*.1370-1430, English – and then mass-production of manuscripts, followed by printing from the 1470s) combined to create a large public of political consumers, who didn't simply use government agencies, but also critiqued them. This is what fed into the convulsive politics of the time – it wasn't just dissatisfaction or competition among social elites, such as nobles, gentry and oligarchs, but rather anger on the part of the mass of taxpayers, petty officers, jurors, litigants etc. that provoked conflict in parliaments and around the kings. Not for nothing, then, is this the great age of popular uprisings, from the 1381 'Peasants' Revolt' to the 1536 'Pilgrimage of Grace for the commonwealth'. While the huge loss of population caused by repeated visitations of the plague after 1348 caused significant social re-organisation (end of serfdom, more mobile labour force, moves towards 'capitalism' in agriculture and commerce), I personally would give priority to these political and cultural changes. Historians are going through one of their phases of depreciating politics, but one only has to look at the Middle East and the Maghreb – where events very similar to those of the Wars of the Roses are unfolding before our eyes – to see how important politics and the means of political communication still are.

Is 1066 a good place to start a course?

Leonie Hicks

The year 1066 assumes a significant place in the historiography of medieval Britain. On the face of it, starting a course in 1066 seems sensible: a new king, a new dynasty, a new way of ruling. But even a brief glance at the sources reveals that the events and processes of the Norman Conquest cannot be understood in isolation from their wider eleventh-century context. This essay sets out some key areas teachers should consider when introducing students to the topic.

Relations between Normandy, England and the North Sea world

The question of why William launched an invasion of England in the autumn of 1066 cannot be understood without considering the relations between Normandy, England and the wider North Sea world prior to this date. Taking a longer view of cross-Channel connections helps to explain why William had an interest in his northern neighbour and how he was seen as a possible heir to Edward the Confessor's crown.

Analysis of place-name evidence, though archaeological remains are extremely scarce, suggests that some of the tenth-century Norse settlers in Normandy did not come directly from Scandinavia, but indirectly via the Danelaw along the eastern coast of England. These people settled along the Channel littoral and quite possibly continued to sustain links with Norse settlers in England and Scandinavia. Certainly the dukes of Normandy maintained political links with key Scandinavian figures well into the reign of Duke Richard II (996-1026): King Olaf of Norway was one of the duke's allies during disputes with the neighbouring counts of Blois-Chartres in the early eleventh century. Cultural connections might well have lasted longer, evidenced by Scandinavian influences on poetry circulating at the ducal court. The capital, Rouen, was a significant trading place attracting a cosmopolitan selection of visitors.[1]

Evidence exists that these connections caused problems between the English kings and the Norman dukes. A letter from Pope John XV dated 991 provides indirect evidence for the Normans providing shelter for Scandinavian raiding parties attacking the English coast: John mentions a treaty that aimed to prevent Normans and English harming each other.[2] As the English king Æthelred launched an unsuccessful invasion of Normandy in the early eleventh century, it seems likely that this treaty was breached during the reign of Duke Richard II.

The most significant link between Normandy and England and of great importance for understanding the Conquest was the marriage between Richard II's sister, Emma and Æthelred (r.978-1016). Emma, sometimes called Ælfgifu in English sources, was Æthelred's second wife and they had two sons: Edward, later the Confessor, and Alfred. These two brothers were therefore related to the future William the Conqueror because their mother, Emma, was also William's great-aunt. This alone does not explain why Edward might have regarded William as a potential heir and why William was able to persuade others he had a valid claim. To understand these points, it is necessary to consider what happened towards the end of Æthelred's reign.

Emma of Normandy receiving the Encomium Emmae, a biographical work commissioned by Emma, justifying her actions.
British Library

To a great extent the events of 1066 overshadow the earlier invasions and conquests by Svein Forkbeard, king of Denmark in 1013 and his son Cnut in 1016.[3] Indeed, 2016 was labelled the 'Year of the Normans' by English Heritage to commemorate the 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings, but the millennial anniversary of Cnut's conquest was largely ignored. In the wake of Svein's invasion, Æthelred, Emma and their sons fled for shelter to her brother Duke Richard's court in Normandy. Following Svein's death in 1014, Æthelred came back to England but was killed in 1016. Although his son, Edmund Ironside, initially shared the throne with Cnut, he too died in 1016 and left the Danish king as sole ruler of England. Cnut consolidated his hold on power by marrying Æthelred's widow, Emma. Her sons, Edward and Alfred, faced a long exile in Normandy.

As the sources for the English brothers' exile are fragmentary it is impossible to know exactly how they were regarded or what place they held in the ducal court. It does seem, however, that Edward's royal status was acknowledged to some extent. A charter dated to 1033-34 for the famous abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel accords Edward the title of 'king of the English' and he appears in the witness list at the end of the charter as 'rex'. He also witnessed a charter of Duke Robert the Magnificent, as 'rex'.[4] The monastic chronicler, William of Jumièges, records that Robert also made diplomatic overtures to Cnut to allow Edward and Alfred to return to England and he also adopted them as 'brothers'. Diplomacy failed, but Robert's planned invasion in support of his cousins was abandoned due to adverse weather conditions. In the meantime, Edward continued to stay at the Norman court, advised by Norman churchmen and probably absorbed some of the cultural influences that informed his building of Westminster Abbey.

Figure 1: Simplified genealogy of the counts and dukes (in bold type) of Normandy 911–1204.
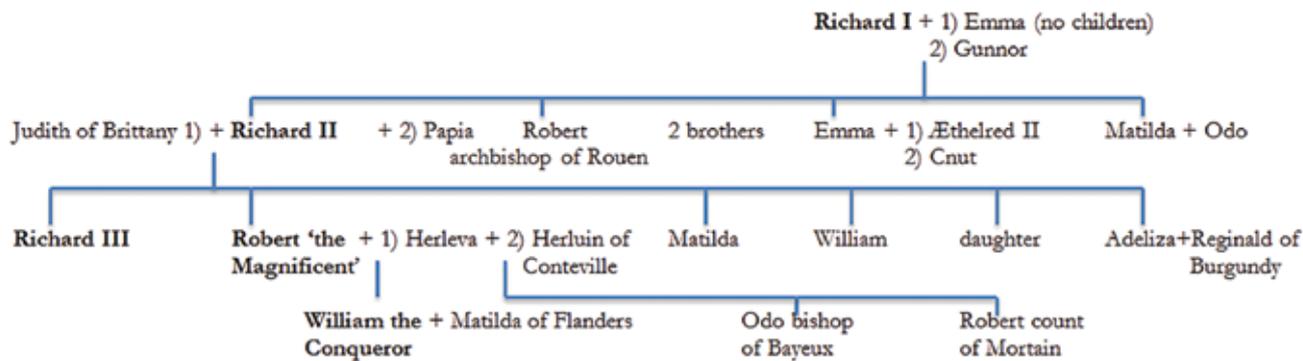
Given control of the English crown had passed out of the Wessex royal line to the Danish king and attempts by Edward's Norman family to get him back to England had failed it must have seemed inconceivable that he would ever regain the throne. Cnut himself had two sons from his marriages to Emma and previously to Ælfgifu of Northampton. These sons inherited in turn following Cnut's death in 1035. Crucially Harthacnut, son of Emma and thus Edward's half-brother, had no heir and invited Edward back to England in 1041. Eventually, Edward was crowned in 1042 and the throne returned to the royal line of Wessex. He also married Edith, the daughter of the powerful Earl Godwine of Wessex who had risen to prominence during the reign of Cnut. Godwine had several sons, one of whom was Harold who took the throne following Edward's death in 1066.

Figure 2: Simplified genealogy of the kings of England in the eleventh century with regnal years.
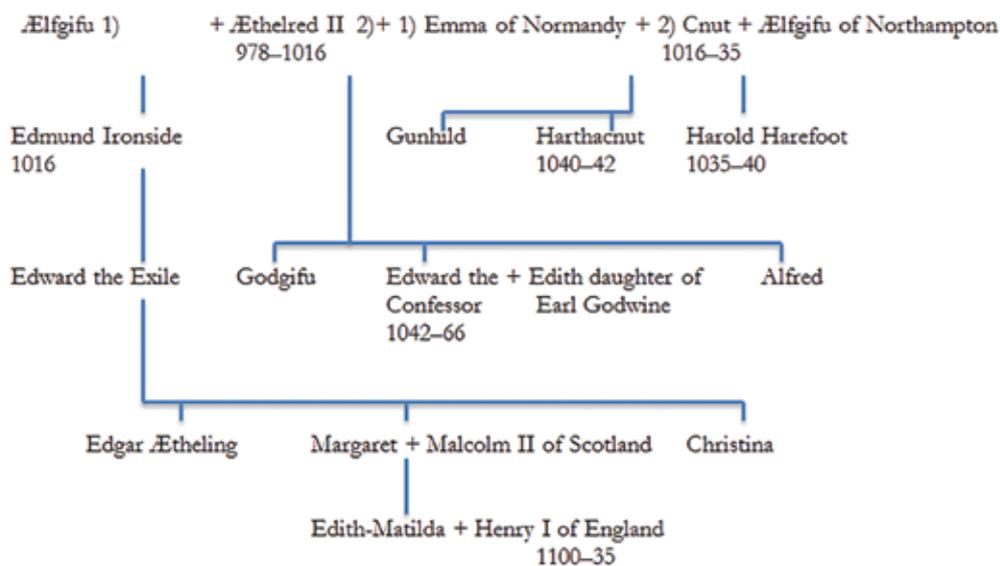
King-making in the eleventh century

The relations between England, Normandy and the wider North Sea world reveal why the Norman dukes had an interest in who held the English kingdom. Edward's probable interest in William as a potential heir lies more squarely within the political situation he inherited. The Godwine family was very powerful. The narrative sources also suggest that Earl Godwine himself was responsible for the murder of Edward's brother Alfred when he crossed to England in 1034. As Edward and Edith had no children, looking at alternative heirs was not only a way of solving a potential succession crisis, but also a means to keep a powerful family in check. At the heart of the debate surrounding the succession is how a man became king in the eleventh century when primogeniture, the method by which the eldest son succeeded, was not established.[5]

One method of nominating a successor is what historians have termed a *post obitum* grant, meaning an individual was designated heir during the king's lifetime and that he would succeed on the previous ruler's death. The nature of the evidence does not allow historians to say conclusively that this is what happened in the case of William. The clearest sources that mention Edward's offer of the throne to William are written from a Norman perspective following the Conquest. A brief note in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle 'D' version entry for 1051 notes, however, that William visited England and was received by Edward. This visit coincided with the period of exile forced on the Godwines when Edward overruled the election of the local Godwine-supporting candidate for archbishop of Canterbury and imposed his own man, Robert of Jumièges, on the see. The later Norman sources note that William was accepted by the nobles, with hostages being given by the English to ensure good faith.

The Godwines' exile was, however, short-lived and although Earl Godwine himself died in 1053 his sons, notably Harold, earl of Wessex continued to be pre-eminent at court. Harold was also active campaigning in the Welsh marches and demonstrating his abilities as an able military commander. There were, however, other potential heirs. Edmund Ironside might have died in 1016, but his descendants fled into exile in Hungary. Edward seems to have invited Edward ætheling to his court in 1057, though he unfortunately died soon after. This meant the person of the royal line of Wessex with the strongest claim was Edgar ætheling who was a teenager in 1066. He was also unproven and not well known in England.

In the end there was nothing to trump being in the right place at the right time. As Edward lay dying over Christmas 1065, Harold was that man. He had demonstrated his abilities, was known to the leading nobles and seems to have been granted the throne by Edward on his deathbed, a scene depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry and recounted in the *Vita Edwardi regis* commissioned by Queen Edith. This form of grant was known as a *verba novissima* and countermanded any previous promise in English law, for example, that to William. Regardless of the legalities of anyone's claim, two strong and capable men were able to gather the necessary support to push their position.

Edgar might have proved more credible had he been older. The Norwegian challenger Harald Hadraada's claim rested on treaties going back to the succession crises following Cnut's death. The origins of the Conquest therefore lie in a complex European context shaped by the politics of the first two-thirds of the eleventh century.

Continuity and change[6]

A lot of debate surrounding the Norman Conquest focuses on the extent to which the Normans changed the political, cultural and social landscape of England and later Wales, Ireland and Scotland. Again, it helps to take a longer view. The English did not suddenly throw out all their pots and pans, change their names overnight and decide they were going to do things in a Norman manner. Changes on that level were gradual and effected a moulding of cultures, as analysis of pottery from Southampton makes plain. The ceramic evidence shows both an exchange of culinary practices stretching long into the twelfth century and the continued use of pre-Conquest methods. Analysis of scratch marks and soot deposits on vessels reveal the differences in the way the English and the Normans cooked food. English methods of cooking involved placing the pot in the fire, while the Normans suspended it above the fire allowing food to be cooked more slowly. Gradually, as English and Norman cooks came into contact with each other, the suspension method of cooking took over. Other changes were more dramatic, notably in the manner and speed of construction of castles and great churches, as well as the changes in landholding.[7]

One of the main debates surrounding continuity and change has focused on the conditions by which people held land and on what terms. In this respect, Domesday Book produced in 1086 as a result of the survey launched by William in 1085, is essential. Domesday records not only the state of the land in 1085-86, but also the situation at the end of Edward the Confessor's reign. Harold's reign is erased from the record. One of the key points to note is that Harold's lands of Wessex combined with those of the Crown meant that William had far greater land to distribute than had been the case for Edward. This meant he could reward his followers from Normandy and elsewhere in France who had taken the gamble of crossing the Channel on a risky adventure. Although a great many of the English nobles were killed at Hastings, some, notably Earls Waltheof, Edwin and Morcar held on to their lands until they rebelled. The middling ranks (thegns) stood a much greater chance of retaining their estates, though the terms on which they held them worsened. The same could be said of the peasants and Domesday reveals the loss of status and the impact this had in different parts of the country.[8]

Even though England was part of the ecclesiastical European mainstream prior to 1066, William did make changes in the governance of the Church. Part of the reason he was able to get papal backing for his invasion was the potential to remove the problematic archbishop of Canterbury, Stigand, who had been excommunicated by several different popes. It was not until 1070 that this happened and Lanfranc, William's close confidant and abbot of the monastery he founded in Caen, was appointed. Several other Norman churchmen became bishops, such as Thomas of Bayeux archbishop of York and Gundulf, bishop of Rochester. Crucially, however, bishops Giso of Wells and Wulfstan of Worcester provided a degree of continuity with Edward's reign and continued in post, though no Englishman was made a bishop after 1066. William continued the policy begun under Edward of moving the seat of bishoprics to more strategic or economically important areas to help bolster his authority: for example,

Dorchester moved to Lincoln to help counter potential Danish invasion. Normans were also appointed to head up important monasteries. Perhaps more of the English abbots and abbesses survived, though some, notably Ælfsige of St Augustine's abbey in Canterbury, fled into exile. Attempts to introduce Norman liturgies into some monasteries met with resistance and violent repercussions, as was the case at Glastonbury. By contrast, Lanfranc rescinded his decision to remove English saints from the calendar at Canterbury and by and large the conquerors adopted local saints.[9]

While 1066 remains a significant year, it can only be understood in relation to a much wider context. The Conquest was not completed overnight on 14 October of that year, but was an ongoing process that affected England, its neighbouring polities and Normandy. The Normans brought change, but also adapted to local circumstances and their experiences of rule in England influenced government in Normandy.

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Chronicles:
authorship, evidence and objectivity

Christopher Given-Wilson

The word 'chronicles' comes from the Greek *chronos* (time), and refers, strictly speaking, to a consecutive narrative or record of events in chronological order. Some medieval chronicles are also called 'annals', from the Latin *annus* (a year), implying that their narratives were structured on a year-by-year basis. Although medieval chroniclers did not always keep to a strictly chronological structure, the recording of events in order of time was certainly a characteristic of historical writing during the Middle Ages, and it has remained influential to this day, despite being frequently criticised by Renaissance and later historians on the grounds that it was thought to inhibit thematic analysis and discussion of issues such as historical causation and motivation. Although chronology no longer acts as a constraint on historical writing, much of it still tends to move forward in time.

Thousands of chronicles were written in the Middle Ages, and their usefulness as historical sources varies enormously. Some consisted simply of a succession of one-line, barely grammatical factual statements, sometimes no more than two or three for each year, such as 'In this year King Alfred defeated the Danes', or 'In this year there was a great frost. Many people died of hunger'. Other chroniclers were much more ambitious, producing elegant and detailed narratives which might devote 50 or 100 pages to especially noteworthy events such as the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 or the Battle of Agincourt in 1415. While it goes without saying that historians find such in-depth narratives more satisfying, in fact a simple statement that a particular event – a battle, the death of a king, the making of a peace treaty – occurred on a particular date or at a particular point within a sequence of events (or indeed that it occurred at all) can sometimes be just as useful in trying to reach a comprehensive understanding of the pattern and significance of events.

Medieval chronicles come in all shapes and sizes, and there are various ways in which they can be differentiated: for example, by subject matter (political, military, ecclesiastical), by institutional affiliation (monastic, courtly, urban), by form (prose or verse), or by language (Latin, Old French, Middle English). However, the most useful way to categorise them – since it played a large part in determining most of these other distinctions – is according to the status and occupation of the author. Broadly speaking, three types of men wrote chronicles in the Middle Ages: monks, secular clerks and laymen. (No woman, it should be noted, is known to have written a chronicle in medieval England, although women did very occasionally write chronicles elsewhere in Europe.)

Monastic chronicles

Most medieval chroniclers were monks – indeed it is probably true to say that most of the 800 or so monasteries of medieval England maintained historical records of some sort, although the vast majority of these have not survived and many others are disappointingly brief and unoriginal. There are, however, a number of names that stand out as first-rate sources, men without whose testimony our knowledge of their times would be almost unimaginably poorer. One is the Venerable Bede (672-735), 'the Father of English History', a monk of Jarrow (Tyne and Wear) whose *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* described the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons from paganism to Christianity during the seventh century. Another is the prolific and opinionated William of Malmesbury, one of the most learned Englishmen of the twelfth century, who spent his adult life as a monk at Malmesbury abbey (Wiltshire), where he wrote his *Deeds of the English Kings*, his *Deeds of the English Bishops*, both of which delved far into the past, and his *Contemporary History*, covering events almost up to the date of his death in 1143. Here is his unforgettable description of King William Rufus (1087-1100): 'He respected God too little, and man not at all…. His aspect was haughty and unbending. He would fix the man before him with a threatening gaze, and with assumed severity and a harsh voice overbear those with whom he spoke…. At home and in the chamber with his private friends, he was all mildness and complaisance, a merry critic of his own mistakes so as to reduce the unpopularity they caused and dissolve it in laughter. He was squarely built, ruddy (*rufo*) in colour, with rather yellow hair, eyes of no single colour but spangled with bright specks; of great strength, though no great height, and inclined to be pot-bellied. He had no skill in speech but was remarkable for his stammer, especially when his temper began to rise'.

Equally opinionated was Matthew Paris (d. 1259), whose six-volume *Greater Chronicle*, the manuscripts of which are enlivened with his own maps and illustrations, is full of sharp asides and witty anecdotes as well as being an indispensable source for the turbulent 1240s and 1250s. Paris was a monk at St Albans (Hertfordshire), which from about 1200 until 1420 was the most important centre of historical writing in England. His predecessor there, Roger of Wendover, compiled a chronicle beginning in the last years of King John's reign and continuing until 1236, a tradition later maintained by several generations of St Albans monks, of whom the most famous was Thomas Walsingham, author of the fullest surviving chronicle for the years 1376-1422. Crucial to the survival of this tradition was St Albans' location: some 20 miles north of London on the main road northwards, it was a regular stopping point for important visitors bringing news of events both at the royal court and from throughout the kingdom. Westminster Abbey, situated at the heart of royal government, and Canterbury Cathedral priory, where ambassadors and other visitors from abroad usually stopped to make offerings at the shrine of St Thomas Becket, enjoyed similar advantages and also established traditions of chronicle writing. For monastic chroniclers, who were in theory bound by their vows to a life in the cloister, the regular passage of dignitaries provided their main source of information. Yet monastic vows were not inflexible. William of Malmesbury travelled widely in England gathering evidence for his chronicles, while Matthew Paris visited Westminster and met King Henry III on several occasions, and in 1248 even travelled to Norway.

Matthew Paris's self-portrait, from the Royal manuscript of his chronicle in the British Library.
British Library Royal 14C VII Fol 006r

Secular clerks and lay chroniclers

The thirteenth century was the heyday of the monastic chronicle, but although monks continued to write substantial historical narratives well into the fifteenth century, the impetus behind the writing of chronicles during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries came increasingly from royal and noble courts, and those who wrote them were increasingly not monks but secular clerks. Secular clerks were still clerics – that is, they had taken holy orders – but they had not taken monastic vows and did not live in monasteries. University-trained, frequently in law, they lived in the world, serving in the households of kings, great lords or bishops. Many of the secular clerks who wrote chronicles occupied positions of considerable responsibility, acting as chaplains, secretaries or ambassadors to the great, as civil or canon (ecclesiastical) lawyers, or in the financial or secretarial offices of the government. It was this proximity to the sources of power and patronage which acted as the spur to them to record what they saw as the notable events of their time. Learned and well-connected, they wrote, like monks, in prose and usually in Latin.

Secular clerks really emerged as chroniclers of first-rate significance during the twelfth century: Henry of Huntingdon, archdeacon of Lincoln, worked for 30 years at the court of successive bishops of Lincoln, and it was at the bishop's request that he wrote his *History of the English People,* an immensely popular work (there are 25 surviving manuscripts, a large number for a twelfth-century chronicle) which recounted the history of England from its beginnings until 1154, and which Henry revised and updated five times before his death in 1157. Written in the monastic tradition at a time when almost all chroniclers were still monks, it was a wide-ranging work, but by the fourteenth century chronicles written by secular clerks were diverging from those written by monks. Writing from personal experience, they tended not to share the corporate ambition – which in some monastic houses amounted to a sense of obligation – to maintain a consecutive and comprehensive register of events over a lengthy period. Instead, they tended to concentrate upon what they knew, which often meant events in which they had participated. *The Deeds of Henry V*, which includes the most informative account of the Battle of Agincourt, was written by one of the king's personal chaplains who was present at the battle. *The Life of Edward II,* the most sophisticated and well-informed chronicle

of the early fourteenth century, was probably written by a clerk who rose to become treasurer of England, and who was thus closely involved in the traumas of that disastrous reign. At times, clerks who had participated in great events could not resist the temptation to introduce an autobiographical element into their chronicles – as did Adam Usk, a Crown lawyer who sat on the committee to depose King Richard II in 1399 and visited the king in the Tower as he awaited his fate. As Usk tells us, he was present there while the king dined, 'And there and then, during dinner, the king began to discourse dolefully as follows: "My God, this is a strange and fickle land, which has exiled, slain, destroyed and ruined so many kings, so many rulers, so many great men, and which never ceases to be riven and worn down by dissensions and strife and internecine hatreds." And he recounted the names and the histories of those who had suffered such fates, from the time when the realm was first inhabited. Seeing therefore the troubles of his soul, and seeing that none of those who had been deputed to wait on him were in any way bound to him, or used to serving him, but were strangers who had been sent there simply to spy upon him, I departed much moved at heart, reflecting to myself on the glories of his former state and on the fickle fortune of this world'. It is this immediacy of first-hand experience, and the willingness to sacrifice broad coverage for focused and in-depth treatment of specific, often major, episodes, that distinguishes the best chronicles written by secular clerks.

The most famous of all medieval chroniclers, Jean Froissart (d. 1405), was also a secular clerk. Although he was not English (he came from the Low Countries), Froissart is much the most important narrative source for that defining event in late medieval English history, the Hundred Years War. He travelled widely, spending several years at the English court, and actively sought out soldiers and politicians, recording and recounting their experiences, memories and attitudes to the war, thereby providing a range of personal insights into the martial and chivalric culture of the age. Known as the 'secretary of chivalry', Froissart's *Chronicles* extended to one and a half million words and achieved great fame even during his lifetime. They survive in more than 100 medieval manuscripts, many of them beautifully illuminated, and their popularity meant that not only has Froissart left us an unforgettable record of the chivalric culture of his time, but also helped to ensure that it remained the dominant ethos of the ruling class.

Chivalric culture also featured strongly in the relatively few chronicles written by medieval laymen, most of whom were old soldiers keen to ensure that their deeds were preserved for posterity. Such a man was Sir Thomas Gray, whose *Scalacronica* was based upon his and his father's memories of their participation in England's wars with Scotland and France between the 1290s and the 1360s. (Gray began writing it while in Edinburgh castle, a prisoner of the Scots, in the late 1350s.) As a result, it is often tales of derring-do and the exploits of individuals that tend to dominate lay narratives of battles, sieges and campaigns, rather than strategic or tactical analysis. Yet although medieval chroniclers (unlike military

historians nowadays) included relatively little *explicit* discussion of strategy or tactics, their work was nonetheless implicitly didactic, providing examples of good leadership, the value of discipline, the importance of logistics and so forth, which were consciously intended to teach as well as to inspire succeeding generations of warriors.

Both Froissart and Gray wrote not in Latin, but in Old French (or 'Anglo-Norman'), the language almost invariably used for chivalric literature such as romances. Vernacular chronicles had a long history in England: after all, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was written in Old English, and a number of late twelfth-century chroniclers wrote in Old French verse. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, both Old French and Middle English were increasingly used by chroniclers in both prose and verse, although it was not until the fifteenth century, partly as a result of the decline of monastic chronicles, that Latin was replaced as the normal medium for historical writing. Old French was also going out of fashion now. England's national history, the *Brut* – named after Brutus, the legendary founder of the nation – first emerged as an Old French prose chronicle around 1300, but by the fifteenth century it was most commonly found in its Middle English translation. It survives in over 200 manuscripts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and was, in effect, the text from which late medieval English men and women learned their nation's history. Some of the *Brut* manuscripts were maintained and continued by clerks employed in town governments. Urban chronicle-writing grew rapidly in late medieval England, where the *Brut* often formed the basis of what was later continued as a more localised form of history. The London chronicles are important sources for both local and national history in the fifteenth century.

Evidence and objectivity

Most chroniclers cared greatly about the quality of the evidence upon which their histories were constructed, but the task they faced was a difficult one. Communication was slow and unreliable, and printing was not invented until the later fifteenth century. Before about 1200, chroniclers rarely had more than one account of an event to base their writings on and so had to rely largely on conversation, often with interested parties, or witnesses who might or might not be reliable. Monks, as already noted, were to a considerable extent reliant on those who visited them, while secular clerks often wrote under the patronage of kings or great lords whose interests and prejudices they naturally tended to reflect. From the early thirteenth century, however, as literacy spread and kings, nobles, bishops and towns increasingly kept copies of their administrative acts, written sources became much more abundant, and monastic chronicles in particular tended to be increasingly based on them. This naturally brought its own problems. Kings, their friends and their enemies demonstrated growing awareness of the value of propaganda, and the newsletters or justifications which they circulated to monasteries, town governments or county courts were rarely objective. Much the same, of course, can be said of modern political dialogue, or indeed of modern newspapers or news broadcasts: objective truth has always been at a premium. But whereas nowadays it is usually possible to read or hear both sides of an argument, during the Middle Ages that was more difficult.

There was, moreover, one particular form of evidence which nowadays can seem puzzling but to which medieval chroniclers paid close attention – the operation of Divine Will. In medieval Christendom, belief in the Christian God was almost unquestioned, as was the belief that he was the prime mover behind everything that happened in the world. This is why so many medieval chronicles include large numbers of miracles and portents: because strange and seemingly inexplicable events were widely seen as direct manifestations of God's plan for mankind. Thus John of Salisbury, one of the foremost intellectuals of the twelfth century, remarked that, 'All the chroniclers who have come before me have had but one purpose: that is, to relate noteworthy matters, so that the invisible things of God may be more clearly seen by the things that are done on earth'. About a quarter of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* is devoted to miracle-stories, usually involving cures from sickness, instances of divinely-inspired foresight, or extraordinary natural occurrences, some performed by God directly, others by saints. To the modern reader, these miracle-stories can seem hard to accept, but to Bede's contemporaries they made his story more, not less, believable. Miracles were *expected* in an age of faith. How else could something as remarkable as the conversion of a nation to Christianity be explained, except as the consequence of divine intervention?

Despite their difficulties and preconceptions, a good number of medieval chroniclers demonstrated an admirable desire to make their history both as 'truthful' and as objective as they could, although of course they made mistakes, and they nearly always had a point of view – but what author or social or political commentator does not? As with any source, historical or contemporary, each chronicle should be approached in a spirit of skeptical enquiry. Who wrote it? Why and for whom? What 'baggage', or agenda, did he bring with him, and what was he trying to convince his readers to believe or disbelieve? Taken on their own terms, many chronicles are first-rate sources: we would certainly know a great deal less about the Middle Ages without them.

Further reading

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Why are medieval administrative records so valuable to historians?

Sean Cunningham

At first glance, medieval government and administration seems as dry and dull as the stereotypical modern civil service – peddlers of policy and bureaucracy, hidden behind an obscure system designed to preserve the ruling elites of church and state in an uncertain age. While there were mechanisms by which things got done, the personal influence of individuals in government and administration was dominant and essential. At the top, monarchs were heavily and directly involved in the business of ruling. They were expected to be hands-on with the government teams that turned discussion into action. Kings sat in their councils, spoke in parliaments, led armies in war, sent direct instructions to their nearby ministers and distant officials, and signed-off grants. When dealing with friends in the ruling elites, it was in the king's interests to remember where people lived, whom they married and what their children's names were.

These connections and resources were vitally important to all rulers, but kings could not look after their estates or uphold law and order without delegating authority to powerful or specialist individuals and groups. Nor could they raise large armies for national defence or flag-waving wars without allies in the nobility, gentry and towns to supply troops or friendly merchants to lend money to pay them. Even further down the scale, the craftsmen, traders, sailors, farm-workers, vicars, labourers, monks, friars and serfs who made up the ranks of commoners all supplied their service and fealty on the assumption that, as they made their livings, they would be protected and their loyalty rewarded with a secure and safe environment.

All of these relationships had to be managed; and that required structure and bureaucracy. There was no civil service in the modern sense, but rather a collection of experts at Westminster, in regional sheriffs' offices or the houses of noble families who learned their role from predecessors and passed on their skills to successors worthy of the post. In that way, institutional knowledge was inherited quietly and efficiently – but the process remains largely invisible to historians today. The records that these offices produced form our core understanding of how, broadly, medieval government and society worked. But they contain far more than the (mis) perceived dry evidence of government quill-pushers and bored clerks in guildhalls, courts or lords' castles.

The techniques that the king used also worked lower down the social scale. The descendants of the families and churchmen who shared the spoils of the Conquest in 1066 formed a ruling clique that dominated society for hundreds of years afterwards. Estates held directly from the king became a guarantee of stable income for lords because it aligned them closely with the monarch and opened doors for other benefits through royal patronage. Their lands could be farmed or sub-let, leased or sold. Land also gave lords rights over other people who lived on and worked that land. These aristocrats became the friends and natural counsellors of the royal family; and because they were at court and in the household, they secured for themselves, their relatives or servants the plum jobs and rewards that the king offered. To defend those rights and interests, lords had to record and understand them.

The lords of the Church were similarly powerful as landholders, but as spiritual leaders headed a separate system of administration that controlled behaviour, social relationships, charity and popular piety. Bishops' registers and churchwardens' accounts contain the evidence of that dual role of spiritual and secular influence. Their education also enabled them to play a key part in government. Bishops and senior clergy from the royal household and chapel filled many of the top posts in the royal secretariat. They were also present in the royal council and parliament to add another dimension to how the Crown's policies were developed and delivered.

Sometimes innovations by these groups were adopted by the monarch, but more often the royals set the fashions followed elsewhere. The scale of the Crown's responsibilities and the number of bright, dedicated officials in its employment meant that improvements were more likely to emerge from the machinery at the centre of the state. Nevertheless, abbots, nobles and knights all appointed people to manage their lands, serve them in their houses, defend their rights in the law and look after their spiritual life. These people were all paid for their service and many created documents to prove what a good job they were doing, partly to show professionalism and accountability to their masters, but also to advertise their administrative skill more broadly.

The extent of a written culture

Bureaucracy and administration meant paperwork. Our medieval ancestors were good at writing things down, and even some illiterate subjects appear in the records when, for example, involved as witnesses, criminals or jurors in court cases. Medieval Europe had a very strong writing culture – an expression of national identity, and a way of making government and personal administration accountable. In England and Wales, from the king down to the tenant farmer or trader with just enough possessions to leave a will, it was in people's interests to collect together and record, in specific forms of documents for different purposes, their most important rights and decisions. Often their thoughts, opinions and justifications would find their way into formal texts at the same time.

We know from collections like the Paston or Stonor correspondence that thousands of letters must have been written throughout the country every day. Only a fragment has

In this letter from October 1483, King Richard III reveals the personal connection of medieval monarchs to the everyday processes of government. The duke of Buckingham has joined a rebellion in favour of the exiled Henry Tudor, earl of Richmond (although many assumed he would try to take the crown himself, given the chance). Richard is at Lincoln, coordinating the resistance of his allies and their troops. He is about to lead his army towards the south west but is greatly concerned that he does not have possession of the Great Seal. The chancellor, Bishop John Russell of Lincoln, has been ill in London and has been unable to travel with the king. Without the seal, Richard does not have full control of the machinery of government. If it were to fall into the hands of rebels they could issue orders and authenticate decisions that would cause confusion in the royal ranks and undermine Richard's power. To boost the formal command, written by one of the clerks with the king, Richard hastily scrawls a personal message to Russell on the warrant – if he can't come in person then he is to ensure that a trusted man is sent with the seal as soon as possible. While Richard sensibly announces that he is well-set and determined to fight for his crown, he cannot help but reveal his sense of injustice in the behaviour of the malicious and ungrateful duke – the most untrue creature living. The bearer of the warrant, one of Richard's heralds, can disclose more by word of mouth. Formal and personal correspondence was normally separated in the late medieval period. Here they are merged. While we still have a great volume of the former in our archival collections, glimpses into personality and the instant response to events that this letter reveals, can only make us lament the losses of virtually all the private letters circulating at that time –small parts of the Paston, Stonor, Plumpton, Cely and Armburgh family papers being the very valuable exceptions.

For a transcript of this document and fuller explanation see the online edition of this publication.

survived. Just as literate subjects were writing several times a day, so too were the Crown's officials and agents, the secretaries of great lords and bishops, the clerks of mayors, captains of castles, etc., etc. The exchange of news and gossip through letters was but one part of written culture. Anyone with administrative responsibility for themselves or someone else was also creating memoranda, accounts, notes, receipts, inventories and copies of legal records, and communicating about them with specialists like lawyers, notaries, sheriffs, stewards or churchwardens.

The organisation of record-keeping

Everyone with something to record and preserve set up their administration around three basic functions: a secretariat for letters and orders; a finance office for managing income, spending and making or checking accounts; and some provision for legal business to organise and defend rights and resources. The evolution of these functions has occupied many historical studies, but a quick overview of how the Crown administration was set up will provide an outline on to which other functions can be placed.

Originally, the king's house and court contained all the unrefined functions that would form the elements of the later medieval administrative state. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, the churchman who wrote the king's letters and charters became his secretary. His knowledge of royal concerns made him the monarch's chief adviser. As guardian of the king's institutional memory this official kept the seal that authenticated the letters sent out on his master's behalf. As the king's responsibilities for the whole nation emerged in the Anglo-Saxon period so these functions grew out of offices

within his royal household. They also developed quickly as the Crown demanded flexibility and legally-binding remedies to problems arising from war, trade, natural disaster, disease and social unrest. Those functions had to become more sophisticated once written records began to replace personal and communal memory as the way that events, rights and decisions were remembered.

Over time, as business expanded, more officials joined the secretary – now known as the chancellor – to share the workload, linking with colleagues in the finance and legal offices to form the core of a medieval civil service. When the king gifted or granted away his rights, asked for information or issued reprimands, it was the chancery and the other departments of record that drafted, wrote and archived his letters. Instructions and orders were accompanied by explanations and outlines of what must be done to correct problems or issues. The bureaucracy was itself an insurance against fraud, since documents went through several stages of drafting and sealing before being sent out. We now have many ways of linking into archival collections to intercept drafts, copies, duplicates and triplicates of the same information. The processes of order, request and response; explanation, justification and excuse were created and handled by people no different from us. For that reason, administrative records can capture the exasperation, delight or boredom of being involved in administration as personal comments, annotations, rhymes, poems, doodles and more elaborate pictures occasionally make their way into the formal written documents.

Record-keeping and the law: unexpected glimpses of medieval life

The chancery had to police its officials and the processes they were in charge of. Hence it developed a legal jurisdiction. People also petitioned the crown with problems and grievances that could not be sorted out in parliament or at the common law. The king delegated resolution of these issues to the chancery. By the mid-fourteenth century a new system of law was beginning to emerge based on 'equity and conscience', where cases were decided by weight of evidence and argument. Suitors often overloaded the incidental detail in their petitions. Witness statements responding to questions frequently digressed to provide wonderfully rich information. Such evidence from chancery and other courts allows us many glimpses of medieval beliefs, possessions, emotions and behaviours in everything from adultery-murder plots or how the dyeing industry worked, to what was in a fifteenth-century medicine chest or belief in magic. These are still administrative records, but in them we hear voices from the past.

The secretariat and the law were therefore very closely linked, not least because the chancery issued the documents (original writs), that started cases in the main medieval legal system, the common law. Medieval society was not in a permanent state of lawlessness. Civil war was rare and while the lords, gentry and top merchants always sought ways to extend their influence, private violence was stamped down rapidly because it destabilised the king's interests and control. The common law existed to offer remedy and dilute conflict without violence. It demonstrated good rule because justices were highly trained professionals who worked independently of the king (but on hand to provide legal guidance to his actions). Unrest, rebellion and threat of war sometimes meant these connections did not run smoothly, but kings were bound within this legal system as much as their subjects.

Effective communications and the development of archives

The exchequer was a court of law, too. Just like the other common law courts of King's Bench (criminal) and Common

Pleas (civil) at Westminster, exchequer had a Great Seal and so could manage its own business and make prosecutions. Much of the chasing of the Crown's money was done locally by sheriffs and bailiffs of liberties, so exchequer business dealt with auditing of accounts (in the Upper Exchequer) and handling cash and receipts (the Lower Exchequer). As a court, it adjudicated on disputes that arose as it followed the trail of what was owed to the Crown. We know that the exchequer started to operate before 1118. It travelled with the king and its officials quickly became financial experts long before it settled at Westminster in Henry III's reign (1216-72). Part of its role was to safeguard the Crown's most valuable items like the king's jewels and money, Domesday Book and other documents of fundamental rights, treaties, dies for coins and the standard weights and measures.

In the eleventh–thirteenth centuries the main communication tools for administrative and legal instructions were writs sent to sheriffs or nobles with responsibilities as local Crown agents. Their response was written on the back and the writ returned to the office that originally sent it. This was the system that kept the king's secretariat, exchequer and the law courts functioning smoothly. Diplomatic or more personal letters would be sent by the king's secretary with one of his private seals attached for authentication. Over time in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, these signet or privy seal letters became the main way that the king transmitted urgent, private or secret news and orders. Offices grew up around these functions as they became more specialised to cope with the volume of business. Writs remained integral to the processes that had always used them, but new techniques came on top to refine what the Crown wanted to achieve.

The rolls produced by the chancery, exchequer and the law courts supported the Crown's business because they contained duplicate text of what was sent out in the king's name. Enrolment in this way created a formal archived record that tested the accuracy and honesty of officials. Beyond Crown service, as well as within it, financial records like household accounts and the papers of stewards of manors, allowed income from similar activities to be aggregated, helping to plan for large-scale expenditure, including building works or warfare.

Once subjects realised that the Crown was storing information in this way, they paid to have their own important records copied on to the back of the close rolls in chancery, in sections of the plea rolls in Common Pleas and the memoranda rolls in the exchequer. Their information then became a formal record as part of government and could be accessed if rights or decisions were challenged. This process became really important in relation to title, transfer or sale of property. Many legal cases between citizens involved the detention, theft or forgery of title deeds. Keeping papers safe was precarious when fire and damp were threats. We know from surviving chests and strongboxes how personal archives were kept in medieval houses. From legal cases where private papers were produced as evidence in court, it is possible to reconstruct how some families arranged their small archives of documents. People's admirable administrative thoroughness allows us to reach right to the heart of how everyday medieval life was organised. Managing relationships through a common, linked system of documents and procedures made it easier for all subjects to understand legal requirements (joining inquests or delivering accounts), the exercise of influence (bonds, or the threat of legal action), or cementing friendships (property deals secured through fictitious legal cases or bequests in wills).

Involvement in government by the commons through their representatives in parliament, along with the idea that parliament represented the whole nation in conversation with the king, did not make much headway until the mid-thirteenth century. Concessions were wrung from the king at key

This document reminds us that people in the past were not one-dimensional – even the most celebrated of people. Here, on 15 October 1385, Geoffrey Chaucer gives evidence in a chivalry dispute between Sir Richard Scrope and Sir Robert Grosvenor over the right to bear certain heraldic badges. Alongside other leading soldiers appearing at the inquest, Chaucer supplies his name and age and lets us know that he has been a soldier for the past twenty-seven years. Chaucer had also already worked as one of the customs officers in the port of London, as a royal ambassador in Italy, and as a member of King Edward III's household. He would go on to become clerk of the king's works – responsible for the king's official building projects. All the while, he found time to write the poetry for which he is now so famous.

The document is in French but very clearly written. Like other official records charting Chaucer's life, it makes no mention of his literary interests or skill. Without his surviving works we would have no idea from these and other administrative documents that this Crown official was also one of England's greatest writers. We should be mindful that administrators could be multi-talented and had a variety of roles. Other medieval poets, like John Gower and Thomas Hoccleve, shared a similar career path to Chaucer. Perhaps we should think of them as we do ourselves – not identified by one career choice or situation for our entire lives. We see in records containing sketches and drawings that some other clerks were talented artists. We might wonder, therefore, if in other circumstances any other administrators might have contributed at the highest level of England's medieval culture as well as keeping the wheels of government turning.

For a transcript of this document and fuller explanation see the online edition of this publication.
TNA reference is C 47/6/2. m. 33
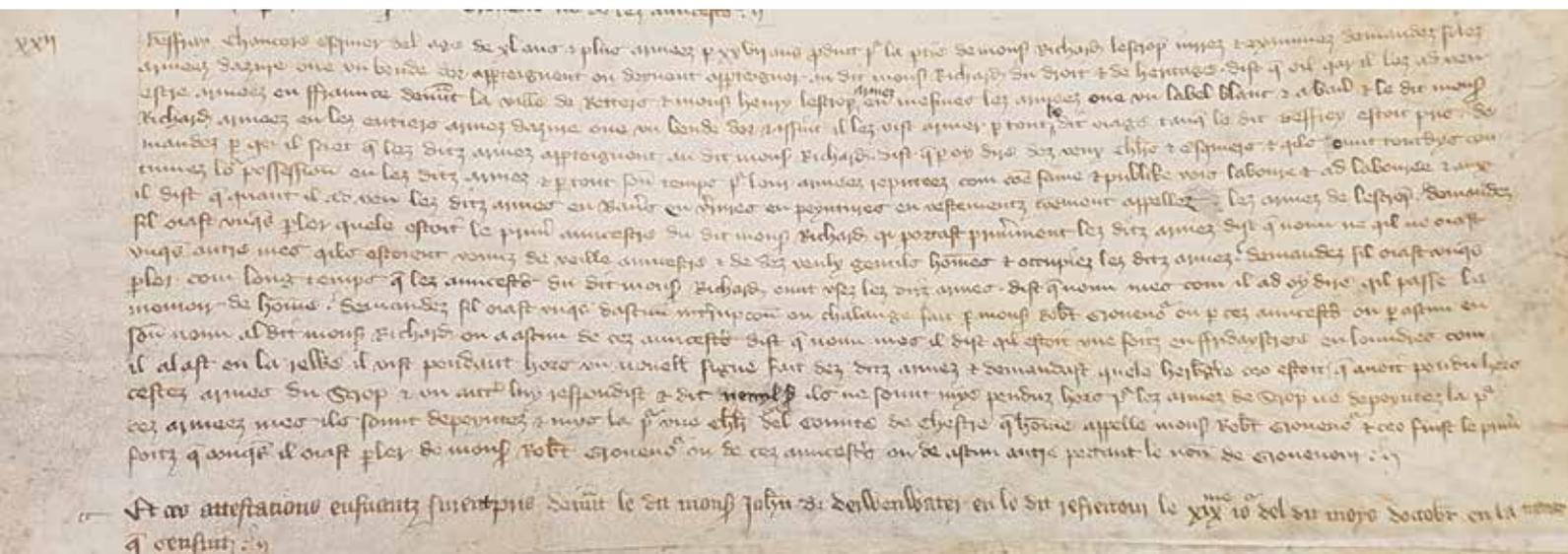
moments that produced Magna Carta (1215, 1216, 1225) or the Provisions of Oxford (1258). By the end of the century, the idea had been planted that discussion between the king, lords and representatives of the rest of the nation was the way to make government work most effectively. Of course, parliament was called only when the king wished, often to grant him taxes for war but parliament was a huge opportunity to create legislation that genuinely improved the country's condition. As today, medieval parliament made new laws, regulations, prohibitions and responsibilities. These agreed measures were then policed by career officials appointed directly by the Crown, like customs officers searching vessels in ports, or temporary agents, like sheriffs or JPs who ran the law in their counties when selected. The royal council or even the king directly, might also by-pass consultation to change behaviour by public proclamation or through letters sent to individuals or a specific group like town corporations.

Snapshots of everyday life

Just one example shows how the official record disguises a rich seam of versatile evidence. The Crown's administrative processes often swept up huge amounts of information incidental to the specific business under way, but which provide wonderful snapshots about medieval life. We can see some of the overlap between memory and writing in the ways that local juries proved the age of heirs when they were set to inherit property held from the Crown. Inquests called inquisitions *post mortem* dated past events based on people's memory of things like lightning strikes, sudden deaths, drunkenness, accidents, christenings or marriages on the manor and in the parish. The formal process drew in a huge range of evidence on folk beliefs

and local superstitions, social gatherings and celebrations, concepts of time and its measurement, local customs and family relationships. In certain periods, like the 1380s, the information from proof-of-age jurors can be studied alongside personal taxation records to make the written record more dynamic. Similar inquests into the fitness of tenants-in-chief to hold lands tell us about communal attitudes to mental illness and disability. When historians link administrative records imaginatively we can get a little closer to how medieval people thought and acted.

Record structures & historical insights

Administrative records offer an important window on the Middle Ages, but historians must think carefully about what the records are saying and what their **purpose** was. Those produced by the Crown, or filtered through its layers of officialdom, often reflect the king's concerns and interests. That bias sometimes makes it hard to spot what other people were trying to say. Up and down the social scale, the authors of administrative documents were only in control of what their masters instructed them to write. The documents do offer us a great range of official information, but we should ask how they reflect the input or memory of the people who were involved? How should we use them to build historical stories and narratives? Can we be sure that they are 'truthful'? Clearly, for documents like records of legal disputes we get two sides of an argument and can sometimes see how courts made judgements. Elsewhere, it is rare to find the end of the paper trail because so many of the dispersed documents sent out from centres of writing have not survived (or are not yet found). That helps skew our view of the medieval world, and is the point where we

turn to other types of sources to redress the balance a little.

Realistically, it would be unusual if the **language and handwriting** of documents were not disconcerting at first sight. Most formal records of administration, law and finance were created using Latin throughout the Middle Ages. Around 1300 and again during the reigns of Henry IV and Henry V (1399-1422), an English form of Norman French (Anglo-Norman) was used extensively. Middle English occasionally appears from the 1250s, but had to wait until the later fourteenth century to find its way into regular use, and then often in less formalised documents. In all forms, clerks and secretaries wrote in an abbreviated code that saved effort when everything had to be handwritten. The structure of handwriting – its palaeography – is a key skill needed to work with medieval sources. The good news is that it can be learned quickly, as can the basics of language to work out key names, dates and places. From a shared starting position of little ability, all historians who work with manuscripts have built their expertise in a cumulative learning process. There are now many shortcuts and aids thanks to democratising online resources, summaries, transcriptions, interpretations and translations. Many archives also offer source-related visits, introductions and training to scholars at all levels, which help ease students into the world of research.

All historians who use archives have also spent time learning the administrative processes and structures that produced these records. This is because the **format** of many administrative documents reflects directly the structure of the bureaucracy. Records of, for example, criminal indictments in law courts, lists of tenants on manors or accounts of household spending, look very similar regardless of who wrote them and where they were produced geographically. They had to conform to a standard format, shape and layout to serve their intended purpose. Learning a format from an example in one location is something that can be transferred elsewhere. Many historians can quickly spot an indenture or distinguish an original letter under the king's privy seal from a private lease of land. Working with original sources is an endless journey of discovery that maintains the fun of being a medieval historian.

Physical challenges related to document **condition** exist, too. The level of subsequent care and attention medieval documents received has meant that some are damaged, vulnerable and difficult to handle. It is remarkable that more are not unusable, given their variable storage conditions since they were created. Documents come in all shapes and sizes: from massive unwieldy sheets compacted into packets, to rolls made from sheets sewn top and bottom or tied only at the top. Other files contain tiny strips of parchment (prepared sheepskin) still pierced by their original gut ties, or fragile paper fragments in small bundles. Some were created or assembled to be part of a working archive. Many were meant to be discarded. The knowledge of how the system worked was passed on between generations of clerks without the need to write manuals or guides to how their administration worked. Works like the *Dialogus de Scaccario*, which explains the complex functions of the twelfth-century exchequer in the form of a conversation between a lawyer and his pupil, are rare. With other processes, historians have had to reconstruct this method and practice in reverse by unpicking the products of the system – often the documents themselves – but the more we know, the easier it is to map the bureaucratic system and pinpoint where the process is most likely to yield up required information.

Conclusions

The value of these records lies most directly in the history of how central and local government has evolved. The chancery, exchequer and royal council were the direct ancestors of the modern Home Office, Treasury, Privy Council and Cabinet. The links between historic versions of the departments of state, through their documents and processes, reveal how the country has developed. Some medieval functions, like public appointments by warrant or letters patent, still happen today. The links between the centre and localities were also important, since these spokes on the administrative wheel strengthened the country and allowed different people to take a role in running it. Yet administrative records have a far broader role in understanding society centuries ago. The ruling system absorbed information like a sponge: some was directly relevant to business in hand, other parts incidental. All was recorded and most was kept. Only a fraction has been made accessible and easily usable. The rest is still waiting to yield up its secrets.

The documents that poured out of the writing offices of the Crown, monasteries, noble households, town corporations, merchant offices, churches, dioceses, gilds and parishes have survived in their millions. Beyond the main collections (often summarised in book form by Victorian archivists and earlier antiquarians), many have never been worked on systematically. Archives still have documents from the medieval period that remain sealed, unsorted and completely unread. We should be thankful England suffered no major destructive invasion after 1066 or violent attacks on government institutions during periods of civil war. Over time, rats, damp, fire and human neglect have taken a toll on what was originally created by medieval administration. Despite that, the volume awaiting thorough investigation in national collections alone really is staggering. In less well-known or accessible places, who knows what treasures of information await? Our collective challenge is to mine this mountain of administrative output and add new depth to our understanding of lives and events in the medieval past.

Further reading

A.L. Brown, *The Governance of Late Medieval England, 1272-1461* (Arnold, London, 1989). The ways in which Crown authority was enforced in areas like parliament, customs and taxation.

M. Brown, *Disunited Kingdoms: Peoples and Politics in the British Isles, 1280-1460* (Routledge, London, 2013). State and government development throughout Britain – how the machinery of government acted as a platform for the political ambition of rulers.

G.L. Harriss, *Shaping the Nation, England 1360-1461* (OUP, Oxford, 2005). One of the best summaries and a great way to see how administration, government and politics interacted in running the country at all levels.

A. Macfarlane, *A guide to English historical records* (CUP, Cambridge, 1983). A clear explanation of how the parts of government fitted together.

W.L. Warren, *The Governance of Norman and Angevin England, 1086-1272* (Arnold, London, 1987). Shows how central government responsibilities and processes affected the lives of all the king's subjects.

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Archaeological evidence:
changing perceptions of the Middle Ages

Carenza Lewis

The kinds of knowledge and understanding of the period *c.*1000-*c.*1530 which are currently most strongly developed through archaeology relate to everyday life, ordinary places and personal histories as well as big pictures of landscapes and long-term change. These are aspects which the textual records are least useful for, so the disciplines of archaeology and history complement each other well.

Archaeological investigation is changing overall perceptions of the medieval period because it foregrounds the real lived experience of ordinary people and place, giving a voice to – and a view from – the vast majority of people overlooked in most documents. It shows them to have been more capable, resourceful, innovative, adaptable, resilient, caring and even humorous than would otherwise be suspected. It also shows us the impact medieval society had on the landscape and how it responded in the long term to opportunities and set-backs, including the most significant episode of climate change experienced in the last 1,000 years. And it vividly reveals how how the places we all inhabit today were shaped by medieval people.

An aerial photograph of the deserted medieval village at Gainsthorpe, Lincolnshire, showing plots with house sites visible.

How important is archaeology as a source?

Archaeology is the study of the human past using *physical* evidence. In studying the medieval period, evidence from archaeology and documents complement each other, with different sources affected by different biases, which is helpful as they can be used to cross-check inferences. Using different sources together can fill in gaps, tell different stories and identify new lines of enquiry.

Archaeology contributes to our understanding and knowledge of the Middle Ages in particular ways: it can show what actually happened (rather than just recording what people wanted others to know); it can reveal activities which documents do not record (such as alterations to buildings); it provides evidence about the lives of ordinary people (who are often overlooked in documentary records); it reveals information which individual human writers would not have been aware of (such as the causes of disease); it provides data covering long periods of time enabling developments such as climate change to be reconstructed. Archaeology also has the benefit of being tangibly present in the world we inhabit today which can help bring history learning alive.

Including archaeology in history teaching at Key Stage 3 gives learners a more complete picture of the past, engages them through the tangible authenticity of physical remains

such as human bones and enables them to learn how to approach different kinds of sources. Every town and most villages will have some recorded archaeological discoveries, usually available online through sites such as Heritage Gateway. Tangible archaeological evidence can connect curriculum topics to learners' local knowledge, and it can also provide engaging and effective kinetic learning opportunities for children with different abilities, including those who struggle to engage with the predominantly literary sources typically used for history learning.

What sort of evidence do archaeologists study?

Although the common perception of archaeology is of buried remains, the range of evidence is much wider, including artefacts and buildings which have never been buried as well as sites which have not yet been excavated. Evidence can range in size from single molecules to entire landscapes, from the highly intimate to the loftily impersonal. Scientific analysis of bones can now reveal more intimate details about a person's parentage or medical history than they would have known themselves, while ice cores from remote places where no medieval person ever even walked can contain evidence about climatic changes which profoundly affected medieval communities across the world.

Excavation can reveal details of the creation, destruction and daily life of towns, villages, churches and castles through unearthing features such as walls, floors, ditches, graves and

rubbish pits as well as portable artefacts including items of pottery, stone, metal, wood, leather and so on. On most sites only inorganic material and bone will usually survive and perhaps 90% of what was originally present will have disappeared. But in waterlogged conditions such as in ponds, lakes, marshes, drains, pits or wells, preservation can be almost complete. Non-invasive archaeological techniques include contour survey which can record landscape features such as field boundaries as well as 'humps and bumps' which are the remains of buried features such as wall footings or building platforms visible while still covered with vegetation or soil. Even if ploughed flat, the lines of former walls can show as scatters of stone or brick while former ditches may be visible as they have filled with soil darker than the surrounding natural geology. Such features can be recorded through measured survey at ground level using tapes or electronic measurers, or from the air using conventional photography as well as infra-red or laser imaging which can reveal below-ground features or those concealed by woodland. Features invisible to the naked eye can be detected using a range of 'geophysical' techniques such as resistivity, magnetometry, and radar which record differences in sub-surface dampness, magnetism or solidity. In some cases the only clues for the existence of a site are spreads of pottery identified from field-walking, but these can usefully date sites as pottery from different medieval centuries looks different due to changes in technology and fashion.

Scientific analysis is where technology is having the most impact on what archaeologists can discover about the past. Radiocarbon analysis can date anything which has ever been alive. Environmental analysis of seeds and pollen from buried soils can show what plants were growing in the area and how this changed over time. Analysing animal bones can show what species people were rearing, eating or living with and the ages at which the animals died, while cut marks show how they were processed – for food or for a secondary product such as fur. Visual analysis of human remains can identify a person's height, build, biological sex (in adults) and age at death and sometimes show injuries, disease or occupational wear and tear. Chemical analysis of differing ratios of isotopes of oxygen and strontium in teeth and bones can show where people lived at different points in their lives, while carbon and nitrogen isotopes tell us about their diet. DNA analysis is familiar as a process to establish parentage and relatedness, but can also identify diseases through recovering bacterial aDNA (ancient DNA). These techniques are mostly still quite new, but they are already transforming our understanding of the medieval period and have almost infinite potential to continue to do so as they become more sophisticated and affordable.

Medieval archaeologists also use maps and documents – it would be foolish to ignore such valuable evidence which prehistoric archaeologists (with no text-based evidence) would love to have!

Archaeological contributions to understanding life in the medieval period

The rise and fall of villages

Ninety per cent of medieval people lived in the countryside. Archaeology at villages such as Cosmeston (Glamorgan) tells us when these places were founded, how they developed and what life in them was like. It's shown that nucleated villages (where people lived in the same place) didn't exist in Britain until the late ninth century: before this people lived in small hamlets and farms which were dispersed across the landscape. Archaeological evidence shows that most nucleated villages

were associated with arable open field systems and together these were most common in central England and eastern Scotland. Archaeology (e.g. Raunds, Northants) suggests the 'nucleated village with open fields' 'package' was a late Anglo-Saxon or Danish introduction. It involved completely reorganising the landscape – relocating settlements and removing field boundaries – but there is no documentary evidence whatsoever for this pre-Norman agricultural revolution.

Nucleated villages continued to appear after the Norman Conquest as the population grew, shown by excavations (e.g. Gomeldon, Wiltshire; Riseholme, Lincolnshire) which reveal nothing predating the twelfth century. In areas where there was more pasture or woodland, dispersed settlements remained more common, including remote hamlets (e.g. Hound Tor, Devon) and informal 'squatter' settlements along the edges of commons (e.g. Hales, Heckingham and Loddon, Norfolk). We can see how well medieval people understood the landscape by the way in which medieval settlements avoided land prone to flooding. Fields were ridged to improve drainage or minimise soil erosion.

Not all these places survived: around 3,000 medieval villages became entirely (e.g. Gainsthorpe) or mostly (e.g. Woughton on the Green, Bucks) deserted, often in the century or so after the compound catastrophes of the fourteenth century including the Black Death of 1348-49. It's difficult to identify Black Death cemeteries (e.g. Thornton Abbey in 2016) because the dead were mostly buried in parish graveyards just like everyone else, but test pit excavation in today's villages and towns shows that 90% of today's towns and villages also shrank in size after the fourteenth century by an average of more than 40%, not recovering for more than 250 years.

The development of towns

Towns are densely-inhabited places which rely on commerce to survive. Archaeology shows that such places disappear from Britain after the Roman period (e.g. Silchester, Berks) and only return from the later ninth century (e.g. Wallingford, Oxon). It shows that many of the 112 'boroughs' recorded in Domesday Book do not seem to have been very urban in character and were actually more like large villages (e.g. Ashwell, Herts; Clare, Suffolk). This changed in the post-Conquest era with increasing evidence for manufacturing and trade shown in finds from places such as Ely. Towns grew considerably in size in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, both by expanding outside their walls as suburbs developed along approach roads, and through intensification inside them as plots were subdivided and land along waterways was reclaimed. The plans of medieval towns typically show them to be densely inhabited and very cramped (e.g. St Ives, Cambridgeshire; Church Close, Hartlepool) demonstrating how desirable urban property was. Archaeology shows that as a result, many towns were enlarged in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries (e.g. Saffron Walden, Essex; Salisbury, Wiltshire), while others were founded anew, such as New Buckenham, Norfolk and Castleton, Derbyshire, both laid out in the twelfth century and dominated by their castle. Although not needed for defence, many towns invested in encircling walls or banks which showed off their urban status. Towns where excavation and settlement plan analysis has revealed their medieval development include York, Saffron Walden (Essex) and Winchelsea (Hants).

Trade and economic development

The importance of trade as the stimulus for urban growth is evident from analysing plans which show medieval towns centred on market places (many larger towns acquired several market places as they grew) and along waterways (water providing a much easier way of transporting goods than roads).

Skeletons excavated at the Thornton Abbey Black Death cemetery.

Excavation at Trig Lane in London shows three successive phases of timber revetments built increasingly far into the River Thames to create space for warehouses and ever-deeper waterfront moorings. Their landward side was packed with rubbish to build up a solid surface – conveniently providing archaeologists with dates for this reclamation as well as a wealth of evidence for life in towns. The greatest amount of reclamation in London took place from *c.*1120 to 1220, showing how dynamic this period was. Analysing finds has shown how widely people traded – fish was brought to London from the north Atlantic from the thirteenth century as ship-building technology improved and demand for fish soared. Excavations in cities such as London and York reveal finds traded from across Europe. And trade didn't just involve towns – isotope analysis shows that although peasants in landlocked rural villages like Wharram Percy didn't use much foreign pottery, they ate Atlantic fish

Excavation reveals 'rags to riches' stories and highlights stark differentials of wealth in towns such as Norwich. Here, Dragon Hall on King Street was a modest river-side commercial complex used for herring processing in the tenth to thirteenth centuries, redeveloped into a large L-shaped domestic house with an undercroft in the early fourteenth century hall and enlarged again in the early fifteenth century into a massive wharf-side residence and trading hall for textiles, ironware, wines and spices. In contrast, Alms Lane lay outside the Anglo-Saxon city, was used for refuse dumping until *c.* 1275 when leather-workers moved in, a smelly business using urine which was invariably confined to the poorest, down-wind margins of towns. A century later the street was developed for housing and the unpleasant tanning workshops were again pushed away to the new margins of the still-growing city.

Medieval use of the landscape

Archaeology shows how intensively the medieval landscape was exploited. Aerial photography shows ridges and furrows indicative of arable open fields covering most of many parishes in central England (e.g. Milton Keynes). Pottery sherds found in medieval fields (e.g. Barton Bendish, Norfolk)) shows that from the twelfth century people manfully spread the contents of their manure heaps (accidentally including pottery) on their
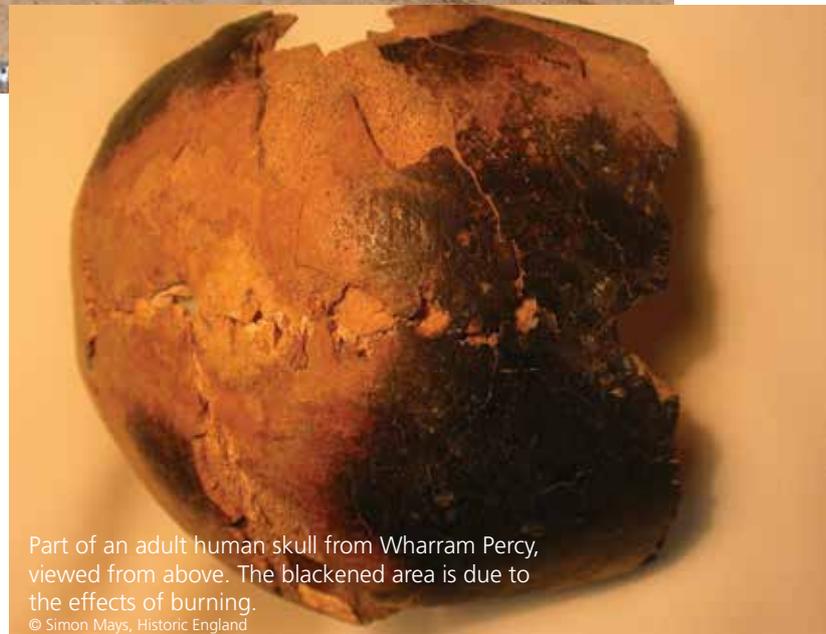
Part of an adult human skull from Wharram Percy, viewed from above. The blackened area is due to the effects of burning.
© Simon Mays, Historic England

arable land in backbreaking attempts to maintain soil fertility. The distribution of this pottery also shows that lords' fields received more of this valuable fertiliser than peasant strips did and would have acquired correspondingly higher crop yields (e.g. Whittlewood, Bucks/Northants).

Archaeological survey shows that a warm climate and rising population levels encouraged upland landscapes on poor soil to be increasingly densely populated by farms and hamlets in the eleventh to fourteenth centuries (e.g. the southern Mendip escarpment, Somerset), with ploughed fields present at higher levels than has ever been the case since. Archaeology shows how woodlands were cleared (e.g. Rockingham Forest) and wetlands were drained (e.g. Somerset Levels) to increase the amount of land which could be used for arable cultivation. But woodland was valuable (timber was needed for purposes ranging from fencing and tool-making to house construction and ship-building) and archaeo-botanical surveys (or indeed a recreational walk) show how carefully this was managed, with trees still alive today showing those along verges pollarded above head height to prevent animals eating their re-growing shoots and those in woods protected by banks running around these 'tree fields'.

The interior of Wharram Percy church nave during excavations, showing the standing walls and the line of an earlier wall.

How did people practise their religious beliefs?

Texts can tell us what people were told, but archaeological evidence shows what they actually did. Excavation shows how important religion was to medieval people – at Wharram Percy, excavation showed the parish church of this unremarkable, small, remote rural village was substantially extended at six different times between the mid-eleventh and early fourteenth centuries. At Barton-on-Humber the fifteenth-century church was nearly ten times the size of its tenth-century predecessor.

Archaeology also reveals 'unofficial' superstitious practice. Graffiti inscribed on church stonework including symbols such as ships, daisy wheels, ladders and W's appear to be invoking help from the saints. More sinister, at Wharram Percy the bodies of ten individuals including two women, a teenager and two young children were mutilated and burned shortly after death in the eleventh–thirteenth centuries. References in medieval texts suggest such practices may have been intended to prevent the dead from returning as 'zombie' revenants to harm the living. Without texts we could not understand the meaning of such burials, but without archaeology we would not know that these rites were practised.

Standards of living

Archaeology provides vivid evidence for medieval standards of living. Excavation at Milk Lane in London shows how crowded medieval towns were, with rubbish pits so tightly packed they cut into one another and were sited alarmingly close to wells. Human parasites including intestinal worms are found in excavated cess deposits. In Friary Lane Norwich, mud imprinted with horses' hooves was 10cm thick.

Excavation on rural sites has shown longhouses (where humans lived in one end and cattle housed in the other) existed in all parts of the country. This might sound insanitary, but rural houses were kept very clean, with floor surfaces regularly brushed clean at High Worsell (Yorkshire). Such sites yield few finds, with those from Wharram Percy mostly practical items associated with farming, but did include a Nine Men's Morris game board scratched on to a stone tile: most villages will turn up musical items such as jews' harps, showing that people did have time and desire for recreation.

Analysis of animal bones shows that town dwellers consumed more meat than rural populations, and more from younger animals whose meat would have been more tender. Finds of larger numbers of 'exotic' objects such as glazed and imported pottery, gilt brooches, musical instruments and even fragments of silk have been used to suggest higher living standards in towns than in the country, but this is now questioned by evidence from metal detecting which is turning up similarly exotic objects from the countryside.

Change in living standards over time

The number of metal-detected coin finds from the countryside rises from an average of nine per year from 1170 to 1200 to 30 per year in 1270 to 1300, reflecting the increased use of coin in markets and for some rentals. This suggests that the average peasant in the thirteenth century might have routinely carried coins with them to the value of a day's wages. The production of mass-produced pewter items such as buckles, strap ends, decorative mounts and even toys soars from the mid-fourteenth century, showing that some of this money was spent on non-essentials.

Excavation also shows attempts to mitigate the health issues of crowded town living from the late fourteenth century as urban waste disposal changed from single-use pits and back-yard refuse tips to reusable stone-lined or wicker-lined pits and communal extra-mural tips. In Friary Lane Norwich, the muddy road was replaced by a gravel metalled surface where the use of carts is shown by deep wheel ruts. In the fourteenth century in Gomeldon (Wiltshire) people moved from living in longhouses with cattle byres at one end to farmhouses with livestock in separate buildings.

From the later fourteenth century improvement in kiln technology enabled pots to be fired at higher temperatures, reducing their porosity and making glazing easier. Metal pots became more widely used for cooking as wages rose. All these innovations would have reduced the potential for food poisoning. Increasing use of chimneys in domestic houses from the early sixteenth century made air within houses cleaner.

Carpentry also raised living standards. Excavation (e.g. Okehampton, Devon) has shown that most peasant domestic houses until the thirteenth century were supported by timber posts dug into the ground to keep them upright. In constant contact with wet ground, these posts soon rotted and buildings had to be rebuilt every few decades. During the thirteenth century innovations in carpentry enabled timbers to be held together by complex engineered joints creating a frame which didn't need to be dug into the ground to be stable, but could be rested on the ground surface (e.g. Westbury, Milton Keynes) or raised clear of it on padstones or low walls (West Whelpington, Yorks). Houses built this way could be built higher and last for generations, increasing living space and also anchoring people in one place. Improvements in carpentry made a wide range of other structures more effective, including bridges, ships, ploughs and mills, improving agricultural production as well as transportation and communication – and eventually, made the printing press possible.

Health and sickness

Archaeology provides a wealth of data on medieval health and sickness, notably from human bones such as those from St Peters Church, Barton on Humber. We see that about 50% of people died in childhood, and that children grew more slowly than today, probably because of poorer nutrition. But by the age of 25 medieval people were on average only a few centimetres shorter than adults today, and broadly the same height as in the Victorian period.

Osteological evidence suggests 15-20% of people suffered from tuberculosis and we can see that the incidence of this rose from the early fourteenth century (this may have contributed to a decline in leprosy which can be seen in excavated skeletons at St Mary Magdalen, Winchester, as TB exposure can confer

immunity to leprosy). We infer that smoke pollution could be a serious health hazard in some towns as significant differences are noted in rates of sinusitis (one side-effect of atmospheric pollution) between rural Wharram Percy (50%) and urban St Helen on the Walls, York (72%). Spitalfields cemetery in London includes mass burials resulting from climate change caused by a volcanic eruption resulting in crop failures and famines.

Archaeology shows that class-based distinctions in the living standards and health of rural populations are not always as great as might be expected. At Wharram Percy isotope analysis of skeletons shows higher-status people (those buried inside the church) to be better *nourished* than the rest of the population, but osteological and dental analysis indicates little distinction in *health* between these two different social groups. At West Cotton (Northants) there was little change in animal bone or pottery use when one plot changed after the mid-thirteenth century from manor house to hamlet, suggesting that some rural lords may have been little better off than wealthier peasants.

Monastic populations seem to be better nourished than most people, but not always to their advantage. Skeletons from Merton Priory and Wells Cathedral are statistically more likely to suffer from diffuse idiopathic skeletal hyperostosis (DISH) (including Giso, the last Anglo-Saxon bishop of Wells). DISH is caused by a rich diet, is associated with obesity and possibly diabetes, and its symptoms include new bone growth, particularly on the spine which can lead to back pain, loss of mobility and increased susceptibility to fracture.

Such evidence can contribute to specific historical debates. The significantly higher prevalence of DISH among monastic populations is interesting in the context of documented criticisms of monks for over-indulgence being used to support the suppression of the monasteries by Henry VIII. The identification in London of syphilis in a child (who must have acquired it from its mother) dated by radiocarbon to 1273-1300 disproves the theory that this disease was introduced to Europe by people returning from Columbus' first voyage to America in 1492-93.

Excavation also provides evidence for medical practice. Finds in the drains of Paisley Abbey of seeds including greater celandine (used in eye surgery for removing film from corneas and for treating corns and warts), caper spurge (a laxative) and bog moss (absorbent moss used for dressing wounds) (and as toilet paper). Burials are sometimes accompanied by medical appliances such as dressings. Rickets in child skeletons from rural sites (e.g. Wharram Percy) suggests sick children were kept indoors as a lack of sunlight is unlikely to have been experienced otherwise. Surgery was rarely practised with none evident from skeletons at St John's College, Cambridge, although occasional examples of procedures such as trepanning (cutting a hole in the skull) are found (e.g. Wharram Percy), which some patients survived.

Summary

The technology of archaeological investigation is constantly developing, particularly in respect of the scientific techniques available for remotely surveying landscapes and analysing biological remains. New ideas about how to apply archaeological techniques are equally important: 30 years ago no one had considered excavating test pits in medieval villages and battlefield archaeology was in its infancy; 20 years ago, without DNA we could have identified neither Richard III nor the cause of the Black Death; ten years ago no one was giving a second thought to medieval graffiti, an entirely new corpus of written evidence hidden in plain sight for 800 years.

Thousands of new archaeological discoveries are made every year such as from the Crossrail excavations in London or from community projects such as Trellech in Wales, and an almost infinite amount more remains to be found, in every place in the UK. Archaeological remains can be detected and analysed in increasingly diverse and sophisticated ways, and with advances in computer technology capable of handling big data, it is no exaggeration to say that the potential for archaeology to advance understanding about the medieval period in the future is almost limitless.

Acknowledgements

Further reading

www.archaeology.co.uk/ (website with hundreds of news reports about archaeological discoveries of all dates, searchable by keyword such as 'medieval', 'Black Death', 'village' or by place-names.

www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/ (searchable list of sites and monuments open to the public in England with information about their archaeology).

https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/ (searchable database of important (scheduled) sites and monuments in England with descriptions of their history and archaeology).

www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/ (portal to online lists of known archaeological sites covering most counties parish by parish and often including detailed descriptions).

www.medieval-graffiti.co.uk/

www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london/permanent-galleries/medieval-london

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The development of castles

Oliver H. Creighton

Castles were among the most imposing features of the medieval world and the most characteristic institutions of the Middle Ages. But any overview of academic research on castles — sometimes known as 'castellology' — throws up some immediate points of difference between the way the subject is taught in schools and how scholarship on the same topic has developed and where it is going. While the attention of schoolchildren often focuses on defences — fortified walls, great towers and arrow-loops, for example — academic research instead investigates castles and the society which produced them from a wide variety of different perspectives, extending far beyond their military architecture and uses. The castle at war is one research direction among many; equally important is our developing understanding of the castle as a high-status residence whose domestic planning reflects the organisation and outlook of elite society and whose architecture symbolises the power of lordship.

Notoriously difficult to define but broadly seen as a high-status defended private residence, the term 'castle' (in Latin: *castellum*) was actually elastic and was applied to a wide variety of different structures and fortifications. As well as describing great stone-built fortified complexes constructed for the medieval great and the good – kings, queens, bishops, earls and dukes – the word castle was used to describe relatively lightly defended farmsteads built for lords of the manor and even temporary military strongpoints constructed to besiege other castles.

Besides their overarching functions of defence, residence and display, castles fulfilled a variety of other more specific purposes. Many castles hosted courts, including manorial courts controlled by the lord of the manor, and some contained jails within their walls. Castles were also central to the administration of estates and lordships; some were in effect working farms. Many contained granaries or stood near mills run by lords, while others were centres for markets and trading. Defining the castle is a perennial issue, but one thing is certain: there were many more of these sites dotted across the English and Welsh landscapes than most people realise. An important and thoroughly researched gazetteer of castles published in the early 1980s counted 2,413 examples in England and 688 in Wales,[1] but there were probably many more, including numerous lost or disputed sites which were never mentioned in medieval documentary sources.

Construction and evolution

Some deeply held beliefs and assumptions about castles and their development can be challenged — that the castle was imported into England by the Normans in 1066; that the supposedly 'humble' timber motte and bailey castle was superseded by increasingly sophisticated forms of stone castle in an evolutionary sequence driven by military factors; and that the late medieval period saw the castle's decline in the face of gunpowder artillery on the one hand and ever-heightening standards of domestic comfort on the other.

The debate over castle origins is particularly keenly fought. Were castles an entirely alien species of fortification introduced by a heavily militarised incoming Norman regime, or did castle construction in the years following 1066 build upon existing traditions? On the one hand, Norman chronicle sources are clear that the Conquest was achieved partly because the English did not have castles, and while a small number of castles on the border between England and Wales were built by Norman favourites of Edward the Confessor before the Norman Conquest, it seems clear that the motte and bailey form (whereby an elevated mound, supporting a tower, stood over a palisaded courtyard containing the hall and other domestic buildings) was largely unknown in the English countryside before 1066.

On the other hand, however, archaeological excavation has shown several clear examples where Norman castles were built on top of the earlier residences of Anglo-Saxon noblemen (or 'thegns') comprising halls enclosed within banks and ditches (these sites are often referred to as 'ringworks', which the Normans also built in large numbers in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries). The excavated site of Sulgrave in Northamptonshire is a clear example of a Norman castle which perpetuated an earlier centre of Anglo-Saxon lordly power.[2] Whether these Anglo-Saxon sites can be viewed as 'proto-castles' is a highly controversial area. Whatever take we have on this debate, it seems indisputable that the Conquest signalled a major change in the overall appearance of lordly sites, which became far more defensible and visually imposing than before.

The earliest Norman castles to be built in England and Wales were extremely diverse in terms of their scale, plans, architecture and the technologies used in their construction. Some early Norman castles were built at least partly in stone, although this material was often reserved for particularly high-status or visible elements, as with Exeter's gatehouse of the late 1060s, which blends Norman and Anglo-Saxon architectural styles, while the Tower of London was built with high-quality Caen stone imported from northern France. Timber was, however, the more characteristic building material, certainly in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, being more readily available and permitting speedier construction. It was used in defensive features such as palisades and wooden towers surmounting mottes, but also to build halls and other domestic structures, and continued to see widespread use into the later medieval period.

Archaeological excavation has played a particularly critical role in revealing the appearances of Norman timber castles. Our foremost case study is the site of Hen Domen, in

Figure 1: Plan of the northern half of the bailey of Hen Domen, Montgomeryshire, approximately mid-twelfth century, showing defensive and domestic structures revealed by excavation. Image from R. Higham and P. Barker, *Hen Domen, Montgomery: a timber castle on the English-Welsh border* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), by permission of R. Higham.
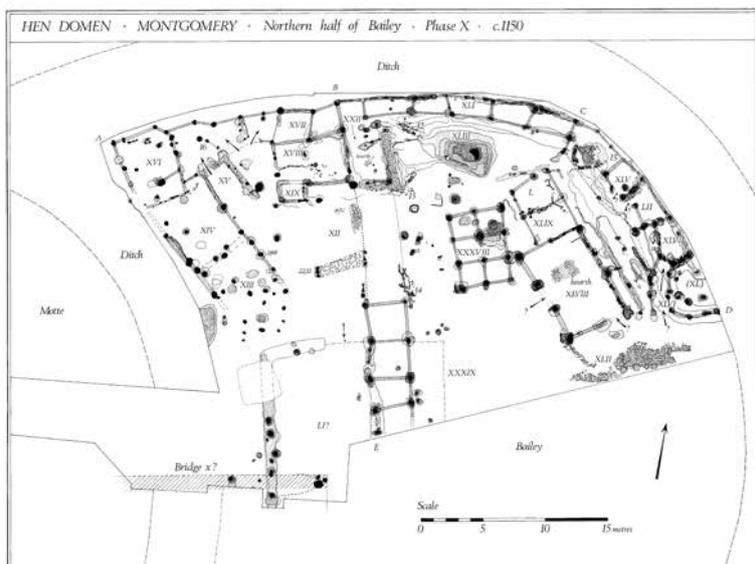
Montgomeryshire, on the borderlands between England and Wales (the name means 'old mound' in Welsh), where a long-term programme of painstaking excavation over many seasons revealed how the site was continuously redeveloped between the late eleventh and thirteenth centuries.[3] The bailey (see Figure 1) was packed with buildings including a hall, granary and ancillary structures, and the overall impression was of a busy, imposing and militarily formidable site. A key lesson from the excavation is that timber castles need not be viewed as somehow inferior to their better-studied masonry counterparts. Timber castles were not necessarily temporary, visually unimpressive and militarily vulnerable, although fire clearly presented a serious threat in war. It is exceptionally rare for actual timber components of a Norman castle to be recovered archaeologically, however (where this does happen it is usually because a site is waterlogged so that organic remains preserve well). Tracing the plans of Norman timber buildings and structures through archaeological excavation usually therefore means recognising and recording discolourations in the soil where timber posts have long since rotted away.

Another longstanding debate concerns the motivations behind castle-building and the extent to which in different contexts this was inspired by military imperatives as opposed to social and symbolic considerations. This debate concerns individual sites, but also particular features of castle architecture, such as so-called 'keeps'. For most people the word 'keep' means the castle's central and most heavily defended residential tower and a final point of retreat. However, some scholars, pointing out that the word 'keep' is not authentically medieval, prefer the labels 'great tower' or 'donjon' (the latter derived from the Latin for 'lordship'). Recent studies show how several great towers were intended primarily as great ceremonial buildings rather than grim strongholds, with architecture and internal planning intended to proclaim majesty and to impress and even overawe contemporaries.

A striking and surprising feature of recent scholarship on medieval castles is that close re-analysis and critical re-appraisal of the standing remains of even the better known and supposedly better understood sites can overturn long-held interpretations. An excellent example of an important reappraisal is Chepstow castle, Monmouthshire (See Figure 2a), where detailed analysis of the standing remains and documentary sources suggests that the first Norman great tower was primarily a ceremonial building rather than a lived-in space, and that it was built for one of the early Norman kings (probably William the Conqueror) rather than Earl William fitz Osbern, as was long assumed. Even the early form of the Tower of London has been radically re-appraised: new interpretations suggest that the hall was also ceremonial and that the tower's upper storey had 'dummy' windows, giving the impression that the building had an extra top floor and added grandeur to the structure's imposing appearance (see Figure 2b).[4] Rectangular keeps or great towers such as these two examples

Figure 2a: Chepstow Great Tower, Monmouthshire.
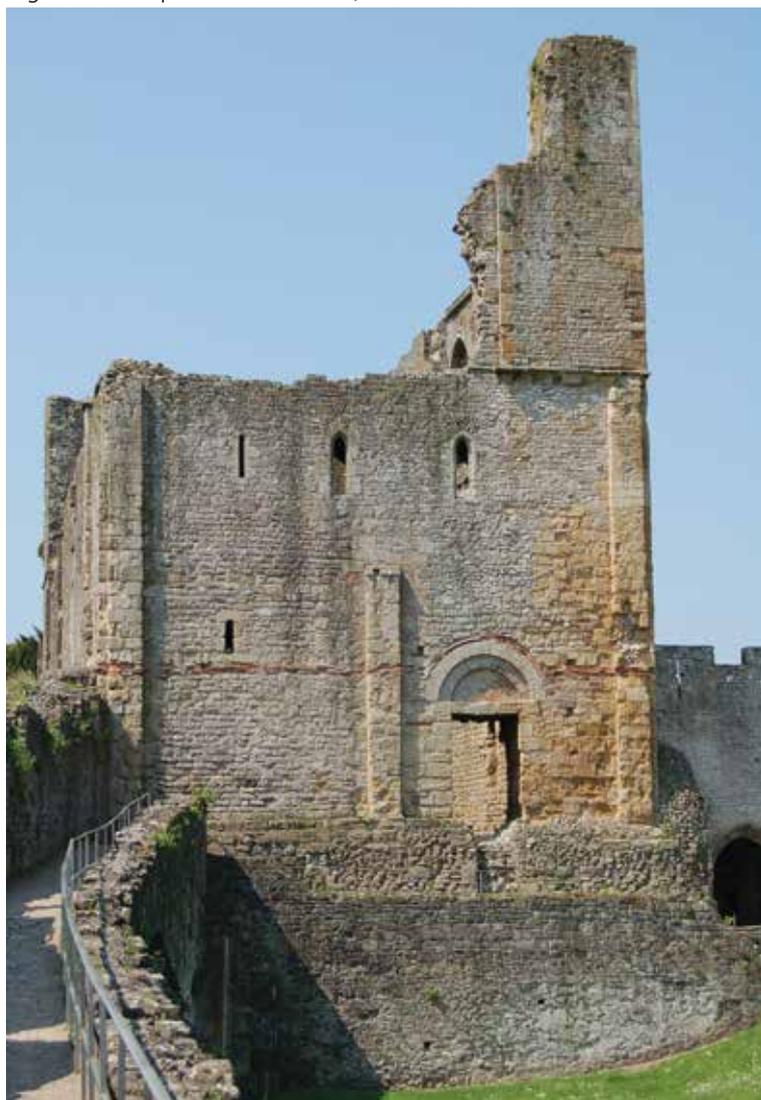
Figure 2b: Detail of the Tower of London, showing 'dummy' windows.

Figure 3a: Launceston High Tower, Cornwall.
Photograph © Oliver Creighton
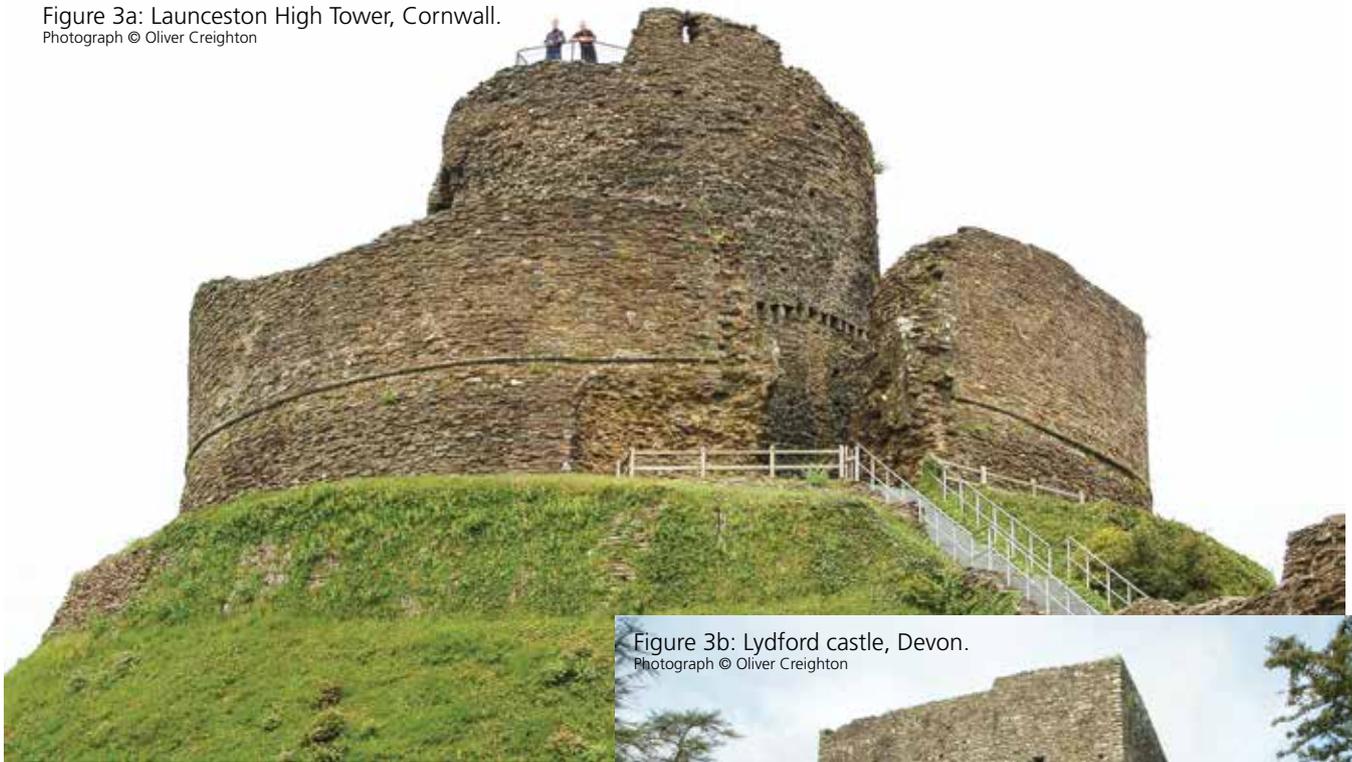
Figure 3b: Lydford castle, Devon.
Photograph © Oliver Creighton
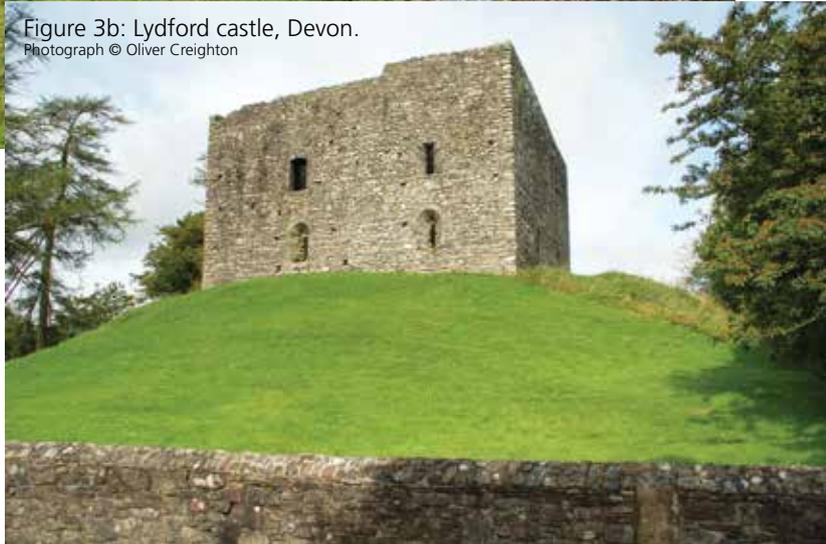
were characteristic of the early Norman period, while the second half of the twelfth century saw experimentation with cylindrical designs (New Buckenham, Norfolk) and polygonal forms (Conisbrough, South Yorkshire). Such changes in design exhibit their lords' desires to express power and display wealth as much as any quest for military advantage. Shell keeps, comprising a walled enclosure on top of a motte with buildings built around its inner face, are found primarily in England and date mainly from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries.

In considering the evolution of castles through time we are naturally drawn to developments at the 'sharp end' of castle-building – searching, for example, for the earliest adoption of a certain architectural form, or the first plan of a given type. But even in the case of the greatest and wealthiest castle-builders, not all fortifications were at the cutting edge of fashion. An illustrative example is the castle-building strategy of Richard, Earl of Cornwall in the middle years of the thirteenth century. One of Europe's richest men, Earl Richard (1209–72, earl from 1227) was the brother of the king (Henry III), a celebrated Crusader and the only Englishman ever to be proclaimed 'King of the Romans'.[5] Richard's principal castle, at Wallingford (Oxfordshire) was re-built around the 1250s with a plan incorporating elements of 'concentric defence' (where the defences are arranged in successive rings). Innovative and unusual for the time, the design may have been inspired by developments in the Crusader territories, especially given that Earl Richard was personally involved in the building of a double-walled castle at Ascalon (now in Israel) in 1240. But elsewhere on his estates, the earl's castles drew on different influences: at Mere (Wiltshire), Richard's only *new* castle resembled a classic European hilltop fortress comprising a simple rectangular walled enclosure, while at Launceston his re-building of an older Norman castle was a one-off design incorporating a striking triple-tiered tower (See Figure 3a). Other designs looked not forwards but backwards: Richard's re-building of Lydford 'castle' resembled a (by then) very old-fashioned rectangular tower appearing to rise on a motte (See Figure 3b), while his refurbishment of Tintagel castle (Cornwall) drew upon the place's past mythical associations in a design with little architectural pretension. The designs of and inspirations behind this 'group' of castles were thus immensely varied, with any search for enhanced defensibility proving quite a limited factor in decision-making.

Another essential aspect to any sophisticated understanding of the castle's development is that in any period we see a huge level of variation in the types of new castles depending on the wealth and status of their owners and the environments and cultures of the regions in which they were built. Different types of lordship also meant different modes of occupation. Itinerant lords might move between different favoured residences, while royal castles would only very occasionally see the presence of the king and the full royal household. We therefore need to remember that each site was quite unique and its form and development equally a response to specific factors. Different localities provided access to different sorts of building materials, for example, while levels of military threat varied immensely between regions and through time. The designs of some castles were wilfully idiosyncratic and expressed the personalities and identities of individual lords. An illustrative example is Wardour castle (Wiltshire), with its striking and hexagonal tower of the late fourteenth century. Its owner and builder was Lord Lovel, a veteran of the Hundred Years War who seems to have been intrigued and influenced by what he had experienced in France to express his identity and status through a highly unusual design.

Despite these variations in castle-building practice, scholarship shows that castles in specific regions sometimes display certain commonalities in design as castle-builders emulated one another and built fortifications that were strongly embedded within regional cultures. For example, on the borderlands between England and Scotland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries we see a proliferation of defended residences such as 'bastle-houses' (thick-walled defensible upper-floor houses). These were built by farmers with the

means and (given the insecurity of the zone), the motivation to build what were in effect miniature castles, long after private fortification had died out across most of central and southern England. Other good examples are the preference for rounded/circular great towers and shell keeps in south-west England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and the brick-built castles of later medieval central and eastern England, with Ralph, Lord Cromwell's magnificent fifteenth-century tower at Tattershall (Lincolnshire) a prime example.

Sources of evidence

The sources of evidence available for castle study are also immensely varied and pose different sorts of challenges for researchers. Castle studies are a strongly interdisciplinary field, meaning that researchers must take on board and integrate the evidence of history, archaeology and architectural studies.

The archaeological study of castles has driven forward our understanding of the subject in a profound way.[6] It is important to emphasise that 'castle archaeology' means much more than digging to reveal the lost below-ground remains of lost walls. Archaeological approaches to castles incorporate the recording of above-ground remains, in the form of earthworks (such as the banks and ditches of defences) as well as surviving stonework (which inevitably shows evidence of multiple phases due to refurbishment and repair). Excavation also has the capacity to reveal pre-castle occupation; many castle-builders took advantage of locations whose qualities had been long recognised, and examples of castles inserted into Iron-Age hillforts, mottes raised on prehistoric burial mounds and others situated in the corners of Roman and Anglo-Saxon defensive sites are all well known.

Besides uncovering buried structures, castle archaeology also recovers different forms of material culture that can reveal information about everyday life. Military items, such as arrowheads and weaponry, are naturally found in castle excavations, but are usually far outnumbered by everyday artefacts associated with cooking, eating and storage (most obviously fragments of ceramic cooking pots); with dress and appearance (brooches, buckles); furnishings (locks, keys, fittings for caskets and chests); agriculture (tools); and sometimes leisure and industry (thimbles, metal-working debris). Further, what archaeologists term 'environmental evidence' can shed light on what castle communities were eating and what was being grown in surrounding fields. Animal bones from castle sites provide indications of high-status through the presence of game species (primarily fallow deer, but also occasionally wild boar), pig (pork was a favoured aristocratic foodstuff) and a wide range of birds, including species that would never normally be eaten today.

Different categories of documentary sources provide different, and often complementary, insights, although broadly speaking the source material becomes richer through the centuries. For the Norman castles of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, chronicles are the cornerstone of historical scholarship; Domesday Book speaks little of castles other than to record the damage that their construction wrought to urban environments, as at Lincoln where 166 houses were cleared to make way for the new castle. The range of administrative records grows from the middle years of the twelfth century: Pipe Rolls (the annual financial records of the Crown, so named because they were rolled up pipe-like for storage) provide an invaluable record of building work on new royal castles and the endless refurbishments necessary to maintain those already in existence; details concern not only the cost of works, but sometimes the names of builders and the sources of raw materials.[7] The quality and range of documentary sources for the study of 'private' (as opposed to royal) castles is inevitably

far patchier, although where available household accounts can provide vivid detail on day-to-day staffing and expenditure within these sites. Where they do survive, building accounts remind us that many great castles were in effect permanent building sites whose structures required constant maintenance and upgrading in the face of weather and wear – not necessarily war.

A great deal of debate has focused on the purposes and meanings of 'licences to crenellate' – written permission from the king to fortify a building (not necessarily a castle, as licences were also granted to other institutions, such as cathedrals) – which are known from the middle of the thirteenth century, although not all resulted in the actual construction of a fortified building. On the one hand licences embody the authority of rulers to regulate the construction of fortifications when and where it was in their interests, and when the distribution of licences is plotted through time it is evident that certain peaks coincide with periods of insecurity, most notably during the Hundred Years War, when England faced a military threat from France and insecurity grew on the borderlands with Scotland. In the case of the licence granted to Sir John Cobham for Cooling Castle in Kent in 1381, part of the text of the royal permit was displayed on a copper plate plaque featured proudly on the twin-towered gatehouse of his new castle.[8] This shows how the receipt of a licence to crenellate also had great symbolic currency as a show of royal favour, and many were granted to families who had recently acquired their wealth and status. It is also in the second half of the fourteenth century that we see the new technology of gunpowder artillery reflected in castle architecture – at first through the provision of keyhole-shaped gunloops in walls, towers and gatehouses, and later through more advanced forms of artillery fortification including bastions and thickened walls.

Symbolism, sophistication and the wider landscapes of castles

A great deal of debate has concerned the symbolic importance of castles, especially those of the late medieval period. It is perfectly true that, as a rule, castle architecture became more 'showy' so that by the end of the Middle Ages in some cases militarism was little more than a façade, with the trappings of, for instance, gunloops, crenellations and machicolations masking what were in essence great country houses. But, equally, symbolism was present from the earliest years of castle-building, as these structures represented the social standing of elite families. Detailed study and reconstruction of the internal planning of late medieval castles show how much effort was put into ensuring high standards of domestic comfort and privacy for higher-ranking members of the household. We see increasingly sophisticated provision for guests (who were afforded their own suites of chambers and sometimes halls) and the increasing popularity of private chambers for lords (where they could eat and entertain in seclusion).[9]

Not only does archaeological and historical research underline the role of the castle as a vehicle for social display, but we are also becoming increasingly aware that the landscapes within which these buildings were set showcased the power and sophistication of their lords.[10] Many castles were accompanied by private deer parks which were 'live larders' and spaces for hunting. Dovecotes and rabbit warrens were characteristic features of the 'demesne' (the area farmed directly by the lord). All these features provided elite products for the lord's table, but just as importantly they were assets that advertised aristocratic status and which only a lord could build and manage. While we often think of the medieval garden as a small enclosed space, landscape archaeologists are questioning whether the settings of late medieval castles comprised designed garden-like

Figure 4: The landscape around Kenilworth castle, Warwickshire.
Image from O.H. Creighton, *Castles and Landscapes: power community and fortification in medieval England* (Equinox, 2005).
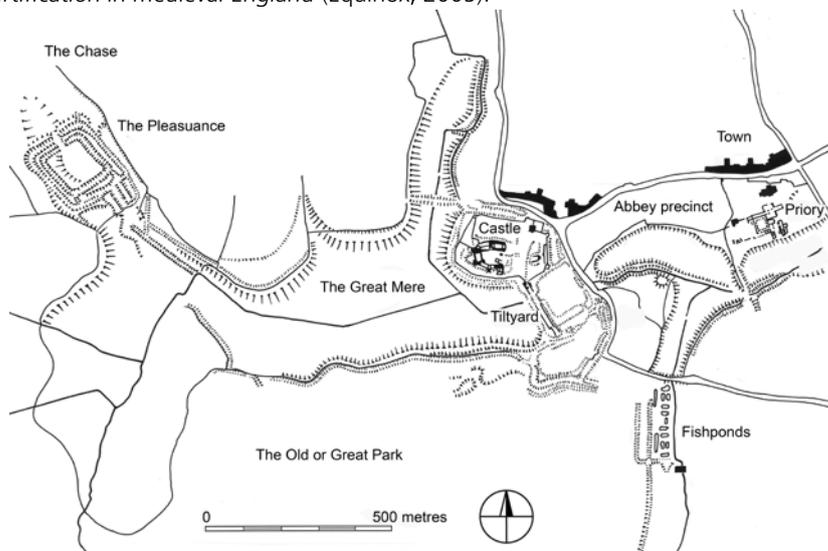
arrangements. The magnificent brick-built fifteenth-century castle of Herstmonceux, East Sussex, is an exemplar. It stood secluded within an intricately designed parkland landscape complete with fishponds, a heronry, a rabbit warren, stables and a lodge. Moats often doubled as fishponds, while large expanses of water could magnify the experience of noble architecture. An especially clear example of a later medieval castle landscape designed for leisure, pleasure and impact upon the senses (as well as defence) is the area around Kenilworth castle, Warwickshire.[11] The castle was set within a vast artificial lake ('the mere', long since drained) at the opposite end of which stood 'The Pleasance in the Marsh', a moated banqueting house and garden built in the early fifteenth century, which could be reached by boat.

It might seem surprising how little provision was made for soldiers in castle planning, although guards' chambers provide an example of one sort of space dedicated to military personnel, while many baileys and outer wards contained stables for horses. Often, castle research focuses on the owners and builders of castles rather than the full communities that lived in and around them, including peasants who might bring their produce into the castle, townsmen who might trade at the castle gate, and the miscellany of servants, officials, retainers and clergymen who made up great households.

These considerations provide insight into the renewed vibrancy of castle studies and highlight how varied research is continuing to cast new light – and create new debate – about these enduringly popular and fascinating monuments.

Further Reading
Books
O. Creighton and R. Higham, *Medieval Castles* (Shire, Princes Risborough, 2003)

Concise, handy and accessible guide to castles, including their architecture, archaeology and surrounding landscapes.

J. Goodall, *The English Castle 1066–1650* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2011)

Masterful and beautifully illustrated architectural history of the English castle.

R. Liddiard, *Castles in Context: power, symbolism and landscape, 1066 to 1500* (Windgather Press, Bollington, 2005)

Revisionist overview of castles and castle-building spanning the entire medieval period.

Liddiard, R. (ed.), *Anglo-Norman Castle* (The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2003)

Edited collection of previously published landmark papers on early castles.

Liddiard, R. (ed.), *Late Medieval Castles* (The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2016)

Companion volume to above, re-presenting some of the most influential work on later castles.

R. Higham and P. Barker, *Timber Castles* (Batsford, London, 1992)

The definitive guide to timber castles, highlighting the contribution of archaeology to castle studies.

Websites
www.gatehouse-gazetteer.info/home.html
Gatehouse: The comprehensive online gazetteer and bibliography of the castles, fortifications and palaces of England, Wales, the Channel Isles and the Isle of Man

www.castlestudiesgroup.org.uk/
Website of the Castle Studies Group

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2 For an overview of the archaeology of Norman timber castles, see R. Higham and P. Barker (1992) *Timber Castles,* London: Batsford.
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5 O.H. Creighton (2015) 'Castle, landscape and townscape in thirteenth-century England: the "princely building strategies" of Richard, Earl of Cornwall' in J. Peltzer, ed., *Rank and Order: the formation of aristocratic elites in Western and Central Europe, 500–1500,* Osfildern: Thorbecke, pp. 309–41.
6 The best overall synthesis of castle archaeology is J.R. Kenyon (1990) *Medieval Fortifications,* Leicester: Leicester University Press.
7 The definitive guide to royal castle-buildings as attested through the documentary sources is R.A. Brown, H.M. Colvin and A.J. Taylor (1963) *The History of the King's Works, Volumes I and II: The Middle Ages,* London: HMSO.
8 On the design symbolism of this castle and others like it, see M. Johnson (2002) *Behind the Castle Gate: from medieval to Renaissance,* London, Routledge.
9 For some excellent examples of analyses of late medieval domestic planning see papers re-printed in R. Liddiard, ed.(2016) *Late Medieval Castles,* Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, especially those by P.A. Faulkner, G. Fairclough and P. Dixon.
10 For an overview, see O.H. Creighton (2009) *Designs upon the Land: elite landscapes of the Middle Ages,* Woodbridge: The Boydell Press.
11 For an overview of this landscape see E. Jamieson and R. Lane (2005) 'Monuments, mobility and medieval perceptions of designed landscapes: The Pleasance, Kenilworth' in *Medieval Archaeology, 59,* pp.255–71.

Based at the University of Exeter, Professor Oliver Creighton's research focuses on buildings, landscapes and townscapes in medieval Britain and Europe. His work has a strong interdisciplinary dimension, researching at the interface between history and archaeology, and he has interests in the study of castles and fortifications (especially in their wider settings); in elite and designed landscapes; in medieval towns and townscapes; and in conflict archaeology and medieval warfare. He has written widely on these and other themes and has published the following books: *Castles and Landscapes: power, community and fortification in medieval England* (hardback 2002; paperback 2005), *Designs upon the Land: elite landscapes of the Middle Ages* (2009) and *Early European Castles: aristocracy and authority, AD800–1200* (2012), (with Robert Higham) *Medieval Town Walls: an archaeology and social history of urban defence* (2005) and *Medieval Castles* (2003 and 2012), (with Duncan Wright) *The Anarchy: war and status in 12th-century landscapes of conflict* (2016) and *Castles, Siegeworks and Settlements: surveying the archaeology of the twelfth century* (2016), and (with Neil Christie) *Transforming Townscapes: from Burh to Borough: the archaeology of Wallingford, AD 800–1400* (2013).

What caused the Norman Conquest?

Stephen Baxter

The Norman conquest is better illuminated than any preceding period in English history. There are several narrative sources – chronicles, histories, biographies and saints' lives, written by monks and other members of the clerical elite – some of which have the merit of being a function of the politics they describe, and are therefore interestingly partisan. For example, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for the reign of King Edward the Confessor, consists of three distinct nearly-contemporary texts, which describe events in politically-inflected ways: one version is royalist and establishment in tone, another is partisan in favour of the family of Earl Godwine of Wessex, and a third conspicuously favours their rivals, the earls of Mercia. To that extent these chronicles are not unlike *The Times, Telegraph* and *Guardian*. The reign is also illuminated by historical texts composed at the behest of two queens: the *Encomium Emmae Regina*e, written for King Edward's mother, Emma, and the *Vita Edwardi Regis*, composed for his wife Edith. The deeds of the dukes of Normandy are narrated by William of Jumièges and William of Poitiers, both completed in the immediate aftermath of the conquest of England by authors sympathetic to the duke. Among the fascinations of the Bayeux Tapestry is that its political prejudices are less obvious, for although it was almost certainly commissioned by Duke William's half-brother, Bishop Odo of Bayeux, and its version of events is closely aligned with Norman propaganda, the embroidery was almost certainly made at St Augustine's, Canterbury and it treats all the critical moments in the story in intriguingly ambiguous ways.

These narratives are supplemented by historical texts written in the late eleventh and early twelfth century, including those written by Eadmer of Canterbury, Orderic Vitalis, Florence and John of Worcester, William of Malmesbury and Symeon of Durham. These writers often drew on written sources, oral testimony and memory now otherwise lost; some of them knew each other, and each other's work; and that work represents a flowering of historical writing which was in large measure stimulated by the trauma of conquest but resulted in some of 'the greatest advances in the study and understanding of Anglo-Saxon history made before the nineteenth century'[1]. The period is further illuminated by the records of royal government, including law-codes, charters, coins, records of law suits, and Domesday Book; and by saints' lives, records of church councils, the archives of religious houses, letters sent to England and Normandy by the papacy, the letter collection of Archbishop Lanfranc and by the cathedrals, churches and castles which continue to make a deep impact on the English landscape.

All these sources are of deep intrinsic interest, and should be studied in their own terms without the teleological drive of

Figure1: The representation of Harold's death is among the Bayeux tapestry's many ambiguities. It is not clear whether its designers intended to show Harold receiving a fatal arrow wound in this scene, or a fatal sword blow delivered by a mounted warrior in the next, or both. The matter is complicated by the fact that tapestry has been repaired and restored in the modern period in ways which remain poorly understood; it may be significant that drawing and engravings made of the tapestry in the early eighteenth century appear to interpret this scene as a warrior wielding an outgoing spear, not one wounded by an incoming arrow.

grand narratives; but it is nonetheless inevitable that historians have often turned to them with two big questions in mind: what caused the Norman Conquest and what were its effects? This article concentrates on the first of these questions; a companion article on the effects of the Conquest can be found in the extended on-line version of this publication on the Historical Association website.

The Anglo-Saxon state: strengths and weaknesses

At the start of the twentieth century, historians tended to take a dim view of late Anglo-Saxon government; indeed,

King Edward
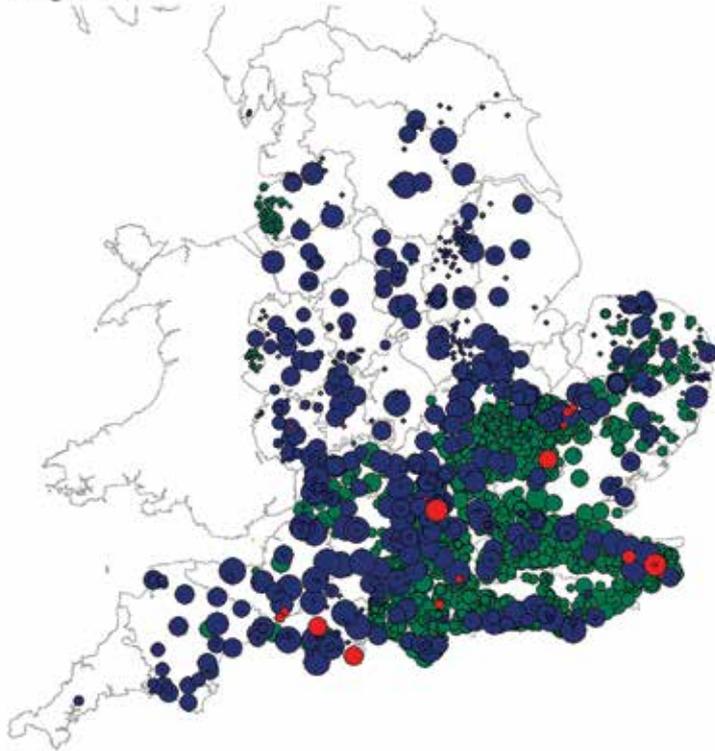
Earl Harold
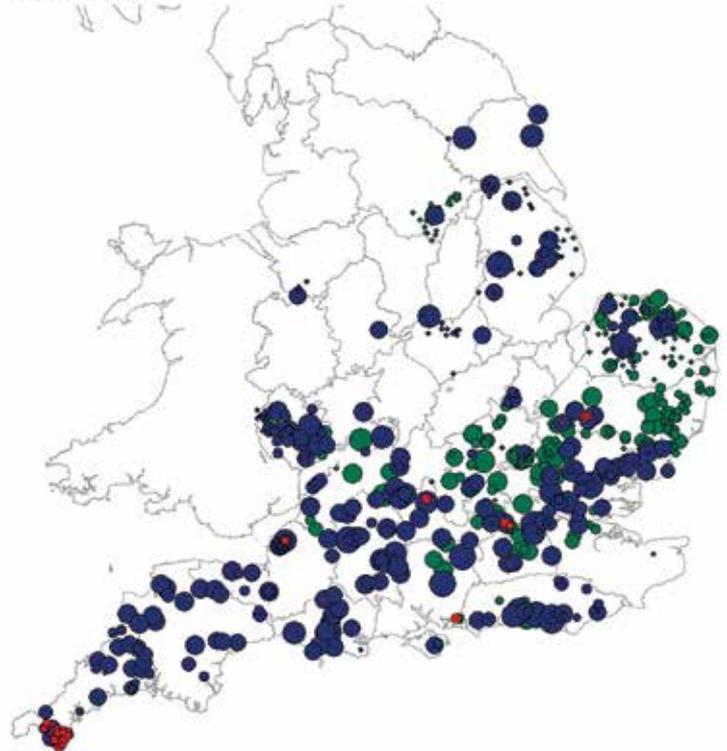
the prevailing view was that the Conquest demonstrated the weaknesses of the late Anglo-Saxon state. That view is epitomised by Frank Stenton's biography of *William the Conqueror*, published in 1908. This asserts that, in 1066, England was 'found utterly lacking in all qualities which make a state strong and keep it efficient'; indeed, 'the Old English state' was 'trembling to its fall' before the Normans landed on English soil. By the end of the twentieth century, historians were making precisely the opposite case, arguing that late Anglo-Saxon state was a wealthy, powerful and sophisticated. It followed that the conquest of England was not caused by any structural weaknesses, but was simply the outcome of a freak dynastic crisis and a single decisive battle. On this view, the Conquest does not need to be explained: it can simply be described.

An alternative view advanced here is that the Norman Conquest was indeed caused by structural weaknesses in the late Anglo-Saxon polity, though paradoxically these were a function of its strengths. England was a relatively wealthy kingdom in the mid-eleventh century. Domesday Book proves that its economy was not so much developing as highly developed. The rural landscape was extensively and intensively exploited, providing not only for subsistence of a large population already in excess of two million, but also generating substantial surpluses (the profits of farming, made in cash and in kind as agrarian produce) for prosperous farmers and lords. These surpluses generated demand for a complex economy in which towns, specialised production, long-distance trade and money were important elements. An abundant, high-quality silver currency circulated at high velocity, changing hands rapidly both in the context of trade, and the rural economy which was monetised to the extent that peasants routinely paid rent in coin.

England was also intensively governed. The essence of royal power was the king's ability to attract leading members of the nobility to royal assemblies; and the chronicles and witness-lists of royal diplomas (sheets of parchment recording grants

of property made or sanctioned by the king before witnesses) combine to demonstrate that noblemen from throughout the kingdom regularly attended such assemblies. This was partly because royal assemblies transacted much important business, including decisions about war and peace, law and justice, taxation and appointments to high office; but it was also because kings possessed sufficient landed resources to exercise patronage on a major scale. The king himself was sufficiently wealthy that he could afford to give away land worth the modern equivalent of millions by granting bookland (property recorded in royal diplomas) and he could loan property worth the equivalent of billions by appointing earls and by lending them the vast estates which went with that office. The estates of the wealthiest lords were not concentrated in particular parts of the kingdom, but tended to be scattered through many shires: for instance, although Harold was earl of Wessex, he held estates in 29 different shires, including several shires in the Midlands and the north which lay outside his earldom. Harold was exceptionally wealthy, but estates of many other secular and religious lords were more dispersed than concentrated,[2] and this tended to align their interests with the kingdom as a whole as distinct from particular regions.

Royal authority became manifest in the localities in various ways. The silver currency was tightly controlled as a royal monopoly, administered through a network of mints distributed within a day's ride of each other. This distribution made it possible regularly to draw the currency into the mints in order to introduce a new coin type; this elaborate process, known as *renovatio monetae*, was not practised anywhere else in the west at this date. Unlike most of their continental counterparts, English kings regularly issued written legislation in the tenth and eleventh century, and there is good evidence that lawmaking had a major impact on the way law itself was practised. By the early eleventh century, there existed a hierarchy of local courts – shires subdivided into hundreds – administered by earls, bishops and sheriffs. All free men over the age of twelve were expected to swear oaths of loyalty to the

Figure 3: The end of the annal for 1051 in the D-text of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. The text reads 'Þa sone com Willelm eorl fram geondan sæ mid mycclum werode frencisra manna, 7 se cyning hine underfeng, 7 swa feola his geferan swa him to onhagode, 7 let hine eft ongean' ('Then forthwith Duke William came from beyond the sea with a great host of Frenchmen, and the king received him and as many of his companions as suited him, and let him go again'). This may have been the occasion that Edward undertook to make William his heir.
© British Library, MS. Cotton Tiberius B. iv., folio 74r

Figure 4: A page from the *Liber Vitae* of New Minster, Winchester. Names were entered on this page on numerous different occasions throughout the eleventh century, in the hope that the same names would be inscribed in the celestial 'Book of Life' which was to be opened at the Day of Judgement (Rev. XX, 12, 15). The fact that 'Eadweard rex, Eadgyð regina, Edgar clito' (King Edward, Queen Edith and Edgar Ætheling) are entered together as a group is suggestive evidence that Edward was then grooming Edgar to be his heir, probably in the late 1050s.
© British Library, MS. Stowe 944, folio 29r).

king and to abstain from serious offences, and simultaneously to join local surety groups known as tithings which made men jointly responsible for one another's behaviour. This made deep inroads into private justice – where recourse to justice was dominated by kinship, lordship, feud and self-help – for although these remained important elements in judicial processes, they became closely integrated with the machinery of public justice. Domesday Book contains further evidence of the strength and intrusiveness of the state, for it proves that all of England south of the Tees was assessed for military service, the construction and maintenance of fortresses, and the payment of taxation, and chronicles and coins combine to demonstrate that English kings regularly levied a land tax known as the geld, often on a major scale.[3]

The problem was that all of this made England an attractive and vulnerable target. Because England was rich, it attracted invaders like bees to honey; because it was effectively governed with strong institutions, the state was relatively easy to take over as a going concern; and because the king enjoyed powerful instruments of patronage, the aristocracy formed factions to compete for its benefits, and this meant that there were often political divisions within the English elite for its enemies to exploit. These considerations help to explain why England was invaded and conquered by the Danes in 1016 and by the Normans fifty years later.

Edward the Confessor and the succession question

A more immediate cause of the Norman Conquest was that King Edward the Confessor (1042-66) died without an heir, leaving rival candidates with claims to be his legitimate heir. In late Anglo-Saxon England, kings were conventionally made in peacetime as follows: anyone descended in the male line from a former king enjoyed the status of 'ætheling', that is, a prince who could be elected as king; when a king died, leading members of the aristocracy gathered together to elect one of the æthelings as king; and the chosen ætheling was subsequently anointed king in a coronation ceremony. This system had the advantage of making dynasties more secure, for the royal family and its collateral branches usually created a plentiful supply of æthelings; but it had the disadvantage of engendering succession crises, for factions often formed to promote the interests of rival claimants; and succession crises were all the more dangerous because they created divisions which made the kingdom more vulnerable to invasion and conquest.

Edward returned to England in 1041 having spent 25 years in exile in Normandy. He had little choice but to seek an alliance with Earl Godwine of Wessex, the most powerful

Figure 5: Maps illustrating the approximate structure of King Edward's earldoms in the 1060s (shires with coloured lines indicate particularly uncertain attributions).

© Professor Stephen Baxter
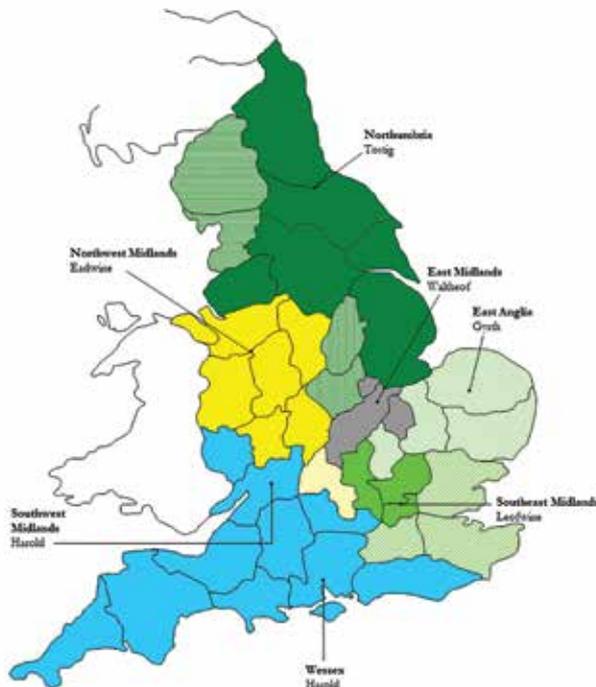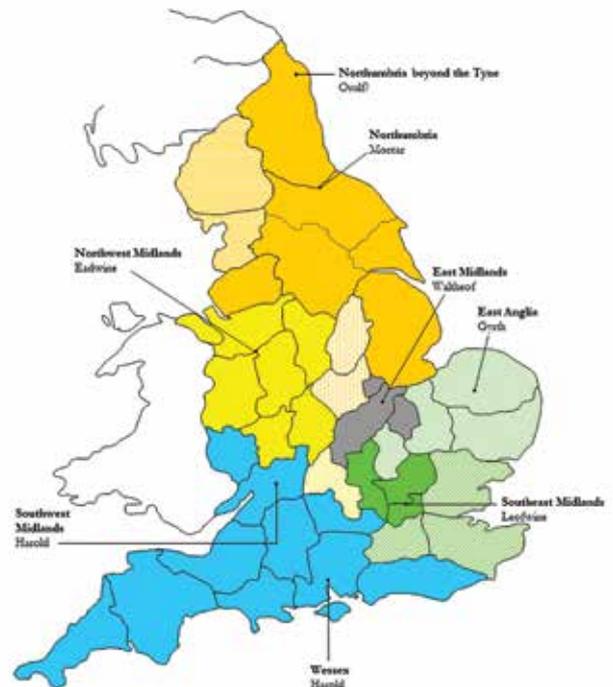
lord in the kingdom, and did so by marrying Godwine's daughter Edith in 1045. Their marriage proved childless, and this contributed to a build-up of tension between Edward and Godwine's family that was eventually released in a spectacular crisis in 1051, when Godwine and his sons were driven into exile. In need of new allies, Edward made overtures to his distant kinsman, Duke William of Normandy, and probably made him his heir, even though he was not descended in the male line from a former king of the English (his tenuous dynastic connection was that King Edward's mother, Emma, was the daughter of Duke Richard I, William's great-grandfather [d.996]).

However, the following year, Godwine and his sons sailed a fleet up the Thames and forced Edward to restore them to power. The death of Godwine in 1053 gave Edward new scope for manoeuvre, and he now arranged for his nephew and namesake, Edward the son of King Edmund Ironside (d. 1016), to return from exile as a prospective heir. Edward 'the Exile' died shortly after his return to England in 1057, leaving a young son named Edgar, who was now the only living ætheling. We know that the king initially took Edgar's claims seriously, because King Edward, Queen Edith and Edgar *clito* (the Latin translation of ætheling) were entered as a group into a solemn record known as *Liber Vitæ* of New Minster – Winchester (see figure 3). However, in the last decade of Edward's reign, four of Godwine's sons obtained earldoms, becoming the dominant political force in the kingdom, and two of them – Harold, earl of Wessex and Tostig, earl of Northumbria – began eyeing the throne.

Threatened by these developments, their rivals in the Midlands and the north rebelled in 1065: they rallied behind Eadwine, earl of Mercia, mobilized an army and demanded that Eadwine's brother Morcar should replace Tostig as earl of Northumbria. Sensing his chance, Harold betrayed his brother and sided with the Mercian faction, forcing Tostig into exile. King Edward was powerless to prevent any of this and, shortly afterwards on his deathbed, he committed the kingdom to Earl

Harold, who was duly crowned king on 6 January 1066 – the same day as Edward's funeral. Edward had thus exploited the fact of his childlessness for short-term political and diplomatic gain at different stages throughout his reign, but in doing so he failed to resolve the kingdom's most pressing political issue, and ended up leaving two of the most powerful lords in north-western Europe, Harold and William, convinced of their right to succeed him.[4]

The growing strength of Normandy

That mattered because Normandy had never been so powerful as it was in 1066. Having survived the crisis of his minority, Duke William had shaped the Norman nobility into a formidably cohesive lordship. Norman ducal power was less heavily institutionalised than English kingship. The framework of Carolingian government disintegrated less rapidly in Normandy than in it did in some parts of France in the tenth and eleventh century. Norman dukes delegated authority to counts and viscounts in administrative districts still known as *pagi*; they exercised considerable judicial powers including the right to punish political disobedience with exile and the confiscation of property; they raised revenue through collecting toll, the profits of justice and levies in cash and kind to help finance and feed its armies and they enjoyed a near monopoly on the right to strike coin with mints in Rouen and Bayeux. Unlike English kings, however, Norman dukes did not issue legislation, they did not possess a central agency for the production of charters (an index of bureaucratisation), their coinage was of lower quality and less tightly controlled and they did not levy a land tax.

Norman dukes were however the dominant landholders in the duchy, possessing an extensive network of estates distributed throughout the duchy, and in this respect like English kings, they were able to exercise patronage on a scale that was sufficient to ensure that the leading members of the Norman nobility regularly sought their court. This

meant that ducal power was heavily dependent upon the abilities of the duke himself, as the reign of Duke William II (William the Conqueror) before 1066 illustrates. William was a child of eight years old when his father, Duke Robert, died on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1035. William's person and authority was entrusted to a small group of advisers who managed to protect the young duke, but ducal authority and the cohesion of Norman society collapsed rapidly during his minority: unauthorised fortifications flourished as barons sought to territorialise their power, and the ducal entourage itself confronted a series of rebellions led by collateral members of the ducal dynasty. However, once the most serious of these rebellions was put down in 1047, William's rule became increasingly secure. He began to surround himself with a new group of trusted advisers – men such as William fitzOsbern, Roger de Montgommery, Roger de Beaumont and the duke's half-brothers, Count Robert of Mortain and Bishop Odo of Bayeux. The duke planted them in extensive lordships which covered most of the duchy in a series of overlapping north-south strips, each responsible for a stretch of the sensitive southern frontier defended by castles. William also ensured that each of Normandy's sees were run by capable bishops who increased the amount of land with which their bishoprics were endowed, built new cathedrals, intensified the internal organisation of their dioceses, and developed a growing sense of corporate identity in a series of church councils. Monasteries also multiplied: whereas there were 12 Benedictine abbeys in Normandy in 1035, there were 30 by 1066, many of them founded by members of William's inner circle. These major investments are a measure of the Norman nobility's growing self-confidence. Normandy's border also became more secure as 1066 approached. In about 1050, William formed a durable alliance with Count Baldwin of Flanders by marrying his daughter Matilda; in the early 1050s, William withdrew his formal allegiance to King Henry of France, who responded by invading Normandy twice in the 1050s, each time suffering a humiliating defeat; in the early 1060s, the deaths of King Henry of France and Count Geoffrey of Anjou and Count Herbert of Maine enabled William to go on the offensive, conquering Maine in 1063 and attacking Brittany in 1064. Throughout this period, the Norman aristocracy acquired plentiful experience of warfare and its new technologies – the castle, war-horse and crossbow – and William himself acquired a reputation for being a successful military commander. All this help to explain why William was able to secure the support of a large army, recruited from Normandy and her neighbours, and overcome the immense logistical difficulties of sailing it to England in 1066.[5]

1066: the perfect storm

That year blew a perfect storm to England. Because Edward left William and Harold convinced of their right to succeed him, this placed Normandy and England on a collision course. This was partly because succession customs in England and Normandy were different: in Normandy, a bequest made publicly was irrevocable, whereas in England a bequest made on the death-bed superseded all earlier arrangements; so, if Edward promised his throne to William in c.1051 and then to Harold on his deathbed, both of them had grounds for considering their own claim to be superior. In addition, because the wealth of England was both considerable and readily extracted, the kingdom also became the target of another great warlord, King Harold Hardrada of Normandy, so the English were compelled to fight on two fronts. Because English politics were prone to factional rivalry, there existed deep divisions within the English nobility for its enemies to exploit: Tostig attempted to recover his earldom in Northumbria by

joining Harold Hardrada's armada; Eadwine and Morcar were defeated by them at Fulford Gate and did not fight for Harold at Stamford Bridge or at Hastings. The battle of Hastings was closely fought, but was won by an army which possessed greater experience of warfare: in military terms, the Normans were more match-fit than the English, who had enjoyed several decades of peace.[6] In all these respects, the English were victims of their own success.

Further reading

D. Bates, *William the Conqueror* (Yale University Press, London, 2016): the best and most recent biography, written with deep expertise in, and sympathy for, the Norman evidence

G. Garnett, *The Norman Conquest: a very short introduction* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009): trenchantly argued

B. Golding, *Conquest and Colonisation: the Normans in Britain, 1066–1100*, 3rd edition (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2013): the best of the many textbooks, with much original insight

The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography contains articles on all the principal protagonists (available online in many areas to holders of public library cards).

REFERENCES
1   Campbell, J. (1986) *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History*, London: The Hambledon Press, p.209.
2   This can be seen by consulting the maps of Domesday landholders on the *PASE Domesday* website http://domesday.pase.ac.uk/
3   Williams, A. (1999) *Kingship and Government in Pre-Conquest England c. 500–1066,* London: Palgrave Macmillan is a lucid introduction to these matters.
4   This case is developed in Baxter, S. (2009) 'Edward the Confessor and the Succession Question' in *Edward the Confessor: the man and the legend*, ed. R. Mortimer, Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, pp. 77–118.
5   Bates, D. (1982) *Normandy before 1066,* London: John Wiley; *idem* (2016) *William the Conqueror,* London: Yale University Press, chs 1–6.
6   S. Morillo, ed. (1996) *The Battle of Hastings: sources and interpretations*, Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, is a useful collection; the article by R. Allen Brown remains the best short account of the battle.

Stephen Baxter is Clarendon Associate Professor and Barron Fellow in Medieval History at St Peter's College, Oxford. His research is principally concerned with England and Normandy in the long eleventh century. His first book, *The Earls of Mercia: lordship and power in late Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2007), explores how one leading family survived the vicissitudes of English politics between the 990s and 1070s, and studies the relationship between government, lordship, land tenure, religious patronage and the course of politics. He is currently writing a book about the Norman nobility in the long eleventh century, which inverts the usual focus of enquiry by examining the effects of the Conquest on Normandy and the Normans. He has recently directed two large-scale publicly funded projects. One of these resulted in the publication of *PASE Domesday*, an online database of Domesday landholders, linked to mapping resources (http://domesday.pase.ac.uk/); its long-term goal is to identify all of the landholders named in Domesday Book, thus laying empirical foundations for a book on landed society in 1066 and the impact of the Norman conquest upon it. The other project aims to publish a facsimile, text, and translation of *Exon Domesday* freely available online (at http://www.exondomesday.ac.uk/), and a book concerned with the making and purposes of Domesday. He has also written and presented television documentaries on Domesday and on Medieval Childhood for the BBC. Many of his articles are accessible online at www.academia.edu/

The First Crusade

Susan B. Edgington

Background and motives

When Pope Urban II made his famous speech that launched the expedition we now know as the First Crusade on 27 November 1095 it met with an extraordinary response from his intended audience and beyond. In considering the 'Why?' of the crusade there are therefore two aspects to consider: why the pope made the speech and why the response was so enthusiastic. The weight given to different factors in each case varies from one historian to another, but the following are the more important.

Why did Urban II call for a crusade?

- He was responding to an appeal for assistance from the Byzantine emperor, Alexios I Komnenos, who was alarmed by the proximity of the Seljuk Turks. This tribe from central Asia had adopted Islam and defeated Byzantium at the battle of Manzikert in 1071. They advanced westward across Asia Minor and by 1092 were established in Nicaea, just across the Bosphoros from Constantinople. Emperor Alexios sent envoys with an appeal for military assistance against the Turks and the pope received them at Piacenza in March 1095. A recent reinterpretation that focuses on this aspect is Peter Frankopan, *The First Crusade: The Call from the East* (2012).

- A component of the 'Byzantine' motivation may have been the pope's desire to mend the rift between the Eastern and Western Churches that originated in 1054, the 'Great Schism'. Reasserting the primacy of Rome over the whole of Christendom was an aim of the Reform Papacy, which was also pushing an agenda in the West that included attacking the right of secular monarchy to invest bishops with their badges of office, the 'Investiture Contest'.

- Jerusalem was in Muslim hands, and although this was nothing new, it seems that after the city was captured by Seljuk Turks in 1073 Christian pilgrims were subject to some persecution, from tolls charged to enter the city to physical violence. This was stressed in most of the accounts of the pope's speech (see below for these), but it is disputed how accurate these reports were. Persecution in Jerusalem may have been a reason for Urban's speech, or a pretext he used for recruitment reasons or a rationalisation by the various writers after 1099 when the reports were written.

- It used to be thought that Urban wanted to motivate unruly knights in the West to direct their disruptive energies against a non-Christian foe. The chronicler Guibert of Nogent believed so: 'The knightly order and the errant mob who were engaged in mutual slaughter would find a new way of earning salvation.' A variation of this idea, expressed by Steven Runciman among others, was that these were landless and restless younger sons of noble families, but this is no longer credited since Jonathan Riley-Smith pointed out in *The First Crusaders* (1997) the enormous expense of equipping a knight.

Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont. Illustration from Sébastien Mamerot's Livre des Passages d'Outre-mer (Jean Colombe, c. 1472–75, BNF Fr. 5594). This image, along with that on page 40, was created long after the events supposedly depicted. Despite this, these images can be used productively by asking students to explain why they are misleading in their portrayals of these two events.

Why did people of all ranks respond with such enthusiasm?

Undoubtedly the mixture of motives varied from individual to individual, but key components are likely to have been:

- **Genuine religious piety**. Pilgrimage to Jerusalem had become increasingly popular through the Middle Ages, following the excavation of the 'True Cross' by the Roman emperor's mother St Helena in the 320s. The church of the Holy Sepulchre was built on the site of the discovery and by the eleventh century it attracted thousands of pilgrims from western Europe. Many who took part in the First Crusade were probably seizing the opportunity to make the journey in a group of thousands. It is important to note that pilgrims had customarily been unarmed, so the inclusion of knights in their number was a big and potentially provocative change.

- **Remission of sins**. The doctrine of purgatory was being formalised at the time of the crusade. According to this, sins committed during one's lifetime would be paid for by suffering after death. Conversely, by undergoing penance (i.e. suffering sanctioned by the Church) while still living,
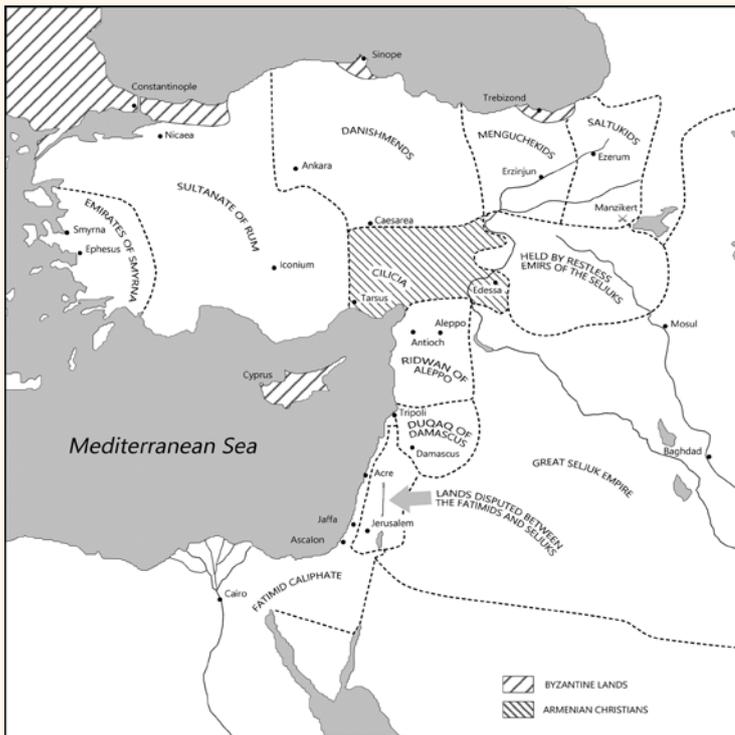
- The **Byzantines** were ruled by Emperor Alexios Komnenos (1081-1118). He had asked for assistance against the Turks and so the crusading armies converged on Constantinople as the first stage of their campaign.

- The **Seljuk Turks** dominated Asia Minor. They had defeated the Byzantine army at Manzikert in 1071 and swept westward, capturing Nicaea in 1092. This brought them too close to Constantinople and led to the appeal for a western army to fight them.

- **Other Turkish groups** nominally recognised the Seljuks as overlords, but following the death of Malik Shah in 1092 his empire disintegrated and rival, independent rulers emerged.

- The **Armenians** were Christians and were nominally ruled from Constantinople, but they maintained a precarious quasi-independence by playing off Byzantines and Turks.

- The **Fatimids** of Egypt (usually called Saracens by the crusaders) were Shi'ite Muslims while the Turks were Sunni Muslims. They sought to profit from the collapse of order among the Turks by invading Syria and Palestine from the south.

a person could 'buy' time off purgatory. Pilgrimage was a widespread form of penance imposed by priests for serious sins. In his speech at Clermont in 1095 Urban II declared a plenary indulgence, that is, that anyone who had made full confession of his sins would earn full remission by participating in the crusade.

- **Apocalyptic ideas**. The Book of Revelation in the Christian Bible foretold the Second Coming of Christ after a thousand years. The place would be Jerusalem. As the millennium passed and nothing happened, one explanation was that Jerusalem was in the hands of infidels and needed to be delivered by Christendom to usher in the final days. A recent history that centres on this aspect is Jay Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven: the First Crusade and the Quest for Apocalypse* (2011).

- **Looking for a better life**. This applied more to the crowd of non-combatants who joined Peter the Hermit's crusade or tagged along with the main armies later. Guibert of Nogent wrote of general famine on the eve of the crusade and people setting off as families with their scant possessions. Whenever the children spied a town ahead of them they would ask, 'Is that Jerusalem?'

- **Ambition**. The pre-eminent example of the ambitious noble was Bohemond of Taranto. He had no prospects at home, since he was the son of Robert Guiscard's first marriage that had been annulled and Robert's second wife provided at least three sons. He seems to have set out on the crusade with the intention of carving out a lordship for himself in the East, and by cunning and force of personality he acquired Antioch. Raymond of Saint-Gilles signalled his intention to stay in the East by taking his wife with him, as did Baldwin of Boulogne. It was more common among the nobility to leave wives at home in charge of the estates, and the majority of crusaders who completed the journey did indeed head for home when they had fulfilled their pilgrimage vow by praying at the Holy Sepulchre.

- **Adventure!** We might suspect this was an incentive, but no one owned up to it.

- **Opportunism**. Likewise, there must have been people escaping local feuds or unhappy family circumstances; petty criminals and prostitutes on the make. How many cannot be estimated.

How did the crusade succeed?

As indicated above, Urban's appeal of November 1095 attracted many more people than he intended. His letters to different communities following the speech show rather desperate attempts to limit participation. For example he wrote to Bologna in September 1096 that clerics and monks must not go without the permission of their bishops or abbots; parishioners must get advice from the clergy; young married men had to have the consent of their wives (letter in Peters, p. 44, see page 41). However he was too late to prevent a great number (perhaps tens of thousands) setting out with the unofficial crusades in the spring of 1096, three months before the appointed day for departure, 15 August.

Given the array of motives among the crusaders and the lack of control from the top, the fact that the expedition succeeded in reaching Jerusalem and capturing it needs explanation.

- Part of it lies in the situation in the Middle East, that had changed during the 1090s, (see figure 1, Political complexities in 1095). There is debate among historians as to how aware the westerners were of this as an opportunity to march into a power vacuum, but there is no doubt that it assisted them. An accessible article was published in *History Today*, 67 issue 3, March 2017: Nicholas Morton, 'Was the First Crusade Really War Against Islam?' At the time of writing it was available online: http://www.historytoday.com/nicholas-morton/was-first-crusade-really-war-against-islam [accessed 22 July 2017]

- **Religious faith** was a major, if incalculable, part of the crusaders' success. They believed they were doing God's work and that He was fighting for them as they were for Him. There was widespread belief in miracles. The two most important took place at Antioch. The first was the discovery

The conquest of Jerusalem in the First Crusade. Illustration from a ms. of Guillaume de Tyr, *Histoire d'Outremer c.*1280, Bibliothèque municipale, Lyon
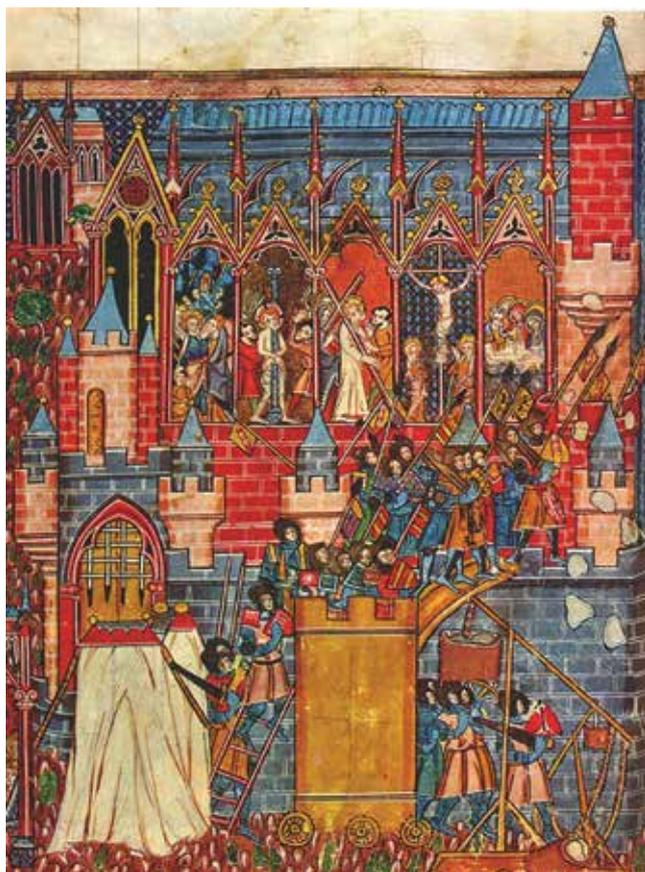
of the Holy Lance after the dream of a Provençal peasant while the crusaders were under siege within the city. Most contemporaries and many modern historians believe that, regardless of the relic's dubious authenticity, faith in it enabled the enfeebled crusaders to defeat the massed army of Turks at the Battle of Antioch in June 1098. It should be noted that the lance was widely discredited after the event, and its efficacy as a morale booster has been thrown into doubt, e.g. by Thomas Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History* (2004). The second widely attested miracle was the appearance of St George and other military saints leading a ghostly battalion against the Turks in the same battle.

- **Effective leadership?** This is discussed in the next section.

Leadership

One remarkable and much debated aspect of the First Crusade was its lack of an overall leader and whether this helped or hindered its progress. It's easy to find instances of disputes and disagreements between the leaders and the different participating armies, but in the end, John France has argued (*Victory in the East*, 1994), the leaders who captured Jerusalem in 1099 had established good working relationships and an effective 'war council'.

- **God** was, of course, the real leader: see the title of Guibert of Nogent's chronicle, *Dei gesta per Francos* – 'The deeds of God through the Franks'.
- God's representative on earth was **Pope Urban II**, who launched the crusade but did not join the expedition.
- The pope's deputy, or legate, was **Bishop Adhemar of Le Puy** who was much admired but died on 1 August 1098, soon after the battle of Antioch, leaving the crusaders with no clear spiritual leader.

- **Count Raymond of Saint-Gilles** (aka of Toulouse) was almost certainly in on the pope's plans for the expedition. Bishop Adhemar travelled with Raymond's Provençals, the largest of the armies on the crusade. One of the fault-lines in the crusader host was the rivalry and distrust between Raymond and the rest, especially Bohemond.
- An army from northern France was led by a number of counts – **Robert of Normandy**, **Stephen of Blois**, **Robert of Flanders**, **Eustace of Boulogne** – and the king of France's brother, **Hugh 'Magnus'**. These were recruited by the pope, who toured northern France to preach the crusade.
- **Godfrey of Bouillon** (in the area of modern Belgium) was not among the invitees as he had supported the German Emperor in recent conflicts against the pope. He was, however, very pious and became the first ruler of Jerusalem. He was accompanied by his brother (and heir) **Baldwin of Boulogne** who struck out on his own in 1097 and became the first Latin (i.e. western European) ruler of the county of Edessa. After Godfrey died in 1000 Baldwin became king of Jerusalem.
- **Bohemond of Taranto** was a Norman of southern Italy. His motives in joining the crusade were suspect from the very beginning, as he had attacked the Byzantine Empire with his father in the 1080s. His later activities confirmed his ambitions, as he engineered the capture of Antioch in 1098 and kept it for himself, failing to join the other leaders who went on the besiege Jerusalem. Bohemond's nephew **Tancred** travelled with the Italian Normans. He was a rival of Baldwin of Boulogne, but when the two fought over territory in Cilicia (Christian Armenian territory) he had to give way to Baldwin and joined the other leaders in the siege of Antioch. He later continued to Jerusalem with Godfrey's army rather than stay with his uncle in Antioch. We should add:
- **Peter the Hermit**. Peter led the so-called 'People's' or 'Peasants" Crusade (there were a number of knights too). His charismatic preaching attracted an enormous number of followers whom he led overland. His big mistake was to leave in the spring, before the main armies, when food was short. Nevertheless, he kept reasonable order until his crowd came to Constantinople, where their numbers alarmed the emperor. They were shipped across the Bosphoros, and in Peter's absence they provoked an attack by the Turks and were massacred. Peter himself joined the main crusade and remained a respected figure. However, other less disciplined groups followed in Peter's footsteps and these were responsible for attacks on the Jews of the Rhineland cities. Most members of these rabbles deserted or were killed in Hungary and never reached Constantinople.
- **Alexios I Komnenos** expected to command the western armies when they arrived in Constantinople and he tried to assert his authority over them by eliciting an oath from their leaders. This was to cause a rift in the leadership after the capture of Antioch, which according to one interpretation should have been surrendered to Alexios, but was in fact appropriated by Bohemond.

Success! What next?

A four-year, gruelling campaign brought the crusaders to Jerusalem at the beginning of June 1099. On 15 July they broke into the city and massacred most of the inhabitants – although the widely reported 'blood up to the crusaders' ankles' or 'their horses' bridles' is now discredited. However strong their beliefs, the success of the First Crusade (which was unique in this respect) was surely unexpected, and the crusaders had to deal with many problems in the short and longer term. The most immediate were:

- **Governing the city**. After a debate, Godfrey was elected as ruler. He refused to wear a crown 'where Jesus had worn a crown of thorns', i.e. to take the title of king, but he became defender of the kingdom of Jerusalem (not, as used to be written, Advocate of the Holy Sepulchre). A controversial character called Arnulf of Chocques, a Norman priest, was appointed patriarch (archbishop) until the pope could be consulted.
- **The Egyptian threat**. The Saracens commanded many of the coastal cities, including Ascalon, and they soon invaded from Egypt. On 12 August the crusaders defeated the Egyptian army in battle.
- **People wanted to go home**. The majority of crusaders had signed up only to deliver the Holy City. When they had spent Christmas 1099 fulfilling their vows (and no doubt celebrating their success) they prepared to leave as soon as the ports were open for their departure, in spring 1100. This left very few to defend and expand the new kingdom.

Reference Section

Primary Sources

The success of the First Crusade gave rise to an impressive number of accounts written (in Latin) within ten or twenty years of the capture of Jerusalem. The more prominent of these can be accessed in translation via the Medieval Sourcebook hosted by Fordham University: (see link provided below) or in Edward Peters (ed.), *The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*, 2nd edn (Philadelphia, 1998). See below for a summary list.

Because there is such a number, you might think that they can easily be reconciled to establish a reliable narrative. Students will be accustomed to source analysis, but there are a few pointers to bear in mind:

- These accounts were written by the winning side, as was (and is) usually the case. They were all written after the capture of Jerusalem and therefore interpreted events in the light of the crusade's success. See, for example, conflicting accounts of the contents of Urban II's speech at Clermont. Did he focus on Jerusalem as the goal of the crusade, or not?
- The exception to this hindsight bias is a handful of letters written during the crusade. These are invaluable, but a medieval letter sent by one high-born noble or cleric to another was very different from a modern letter. For a start it wasn't private, it was more like an official report to be delivered publicly. It was carried by a courier and might well fall into enemy hands, so no sensitive information could be included (though it might be conveyed orally by the courier). Look for exaggerations or obvious attempts to reassure. Stephen of Blois' letter to his wife Adela from Antioch is a good place to start: http://history.hanover.edu/texts/1stcrusade2.html [accessed 18 July 2017]
- Returning to the narrative sources, be aware that the authors shared a very narrow world view: they were all western European clerics and therefore part of an educated, male elite. (The same is true of Caffaro, who was not a cleric but a Genoese civil servant, see below.)
- The sources are not independent of one another, even those written by participants. Almost all of them had access to the anonymous *Gesta Francorum* ('Deeds of the Franks') and made use of it.
- In a related point, even if an author was a participant, he wasn't necessarily an eye-witness to all the events he described. A good example is Fulcher of Chartres, who was with Baldwin of Boulogne in Edessa while the main body of crusaders captured Jerusalem and so he had to borrow from the *Gesta Francorum* and probably also used oral evidence to relate that part of the story.

Key dates

1071	The battle of Manzikert. The Seljuk Turks defeated the Byzantine army and founded the sultanate of Rūm in Asia Minor.
1081-1118	Alexios I Komnenos ruled as emperor of Byzantium.
1088-1099	Urban II reigned as pope.
1092	The Seljuk Turks captured Nicaea.
1095	**March.** Council of the Roman Church at Piacenza. Pope Urban II is thought to have received an appeal for assistance against the Turks from Emperor Alexios. **27 November.** Following another church council at Clermont, Urban II called for an army to go to the East
1096	The Fatimids of Egypt recaptured Jerusalem from the Seljuk Turks. **March.** The so-called **'People's Crusade'** set out. **May/June.** Some of them killed Jews in the Rhineland cities. **October.** Most were massacred near Civetot in Asia Minor. Meanwhile, **15 August**, the main armies set out on the appointed day. **November-December**, they assembled outside Constantinople.
1097	**19 June.** The crusaders captured Nicaea from the Turks. **1 July.** They were victorious in the battle of Dorylaeum. Baldwin of Boulogne left the main armies and became count of Edessa. **20 October.** The crusaders began to besiege Antioch.
1098	**3 June.** They finally captured Antioch after a long, hard siege. **4 June.** A Turkish relieving army, commanded by Kerbogha, besieged Antioch, trapping the crusaders inside. **28 June.** The crusaders won an amazing victory in the Battle of Antioch. Bohemond succeeded in making good his claim to the city.
1098-99	The leaders spent the winter quarrelling and raiding around Antioch. The lower ranks and non-combatants were increasingly discontent with the delay in advancing towards Jerusalem.
1099	**16 May.** Finally the crusaders set out for Jerusalem. **7 June.** Their first sight of the Holy City. **15 July.** The capture of Jerusalem. **22 July.** Godfrey elected the first ruler of the kingdom of Jerusalem. **12 August.** The crusaders defeated the Fatimid army at the battle of Ascalon.
1100	**After Easter** most of the survivng crusaders left for home. **18 July.** Godfrey died and his brother Baldwin was summoned from Edessa to be the first king of Jerusalem.

The Latin authors

- We do not know the author of the **Gesta Francorum**. It is an account of the crusade to 1099 written in a straightforward style. It used to be assumed the *Gesta* was by a layman, but more recently it has become accepted that it was written by a cleric. There is some evidence that it reached western Europe when Bohemond was recruiting for a new crusade in 1106. It is very closely related to **Peter Tudebode**'s chronicle and was formerly thought to be an abbreviated version of it, but Peter's chronicle is now considered to be a version of the *Gesta* with some details added from personal experience. Peter was rather less admiring of Bohemond than the *Gesta* author.

- **Raymond of Aguilers** was chaplain to Raymond of Saint-Gilles, leader of the Provençal army. His first-hand account of events to 1099 was written soon after they occurred, but he also used some details from the *Gesta*. Raymond was fiercely protective of Raymond of Saint-Gilles' reputation and a passionate advocate of the Holy Lance found at Antioch. He comes across as pious but credulous.

- **Fulcher of Chartres** continued writing about the affairs of the Latin East into the 1120s. He set out with the northern French in 1096 but joined Baldwin of Boulogne's diversion to Edessa in the autumn of 1097 and so did not experience the siege of Antioch or the capture of Jerusalem. Recent research has demonstrated that Fulcher revised his account of the First Crusade considerably in the 1120s and it therefore reflects later political attitudes rather than contemporaneous ones.

- Three northern French Benedictine monks rewrote the *Gesta Francorum* in the first decade of the twelfth century. **Robert the Monk**'s account became very popular (in medieval terms) though, as its recent editors observe, this was largely by chance: the copying of a manuscript based on its availability tends to increase the number of copies exponentially. Robert's *History* added a number of anecdotes to the tale, and some heroic exaggeration. **Guibert of Nogent** retitled the 'Deeds of the Franks' to make it clear that they were God's deeds and the Franks were only God's agents. After he had completed his rewriting of the *Gesta*, Guibert came across an early version of Fulcher of Chartres' history and added a seventh book to include some additional information from Fulcher and from hearsay. This included an assessment of Peter the Hermit and gossip about the popular crusade. **Baldric of Bourgueil**'s *History* is the least well known of the three, although this should change now that there is a new edition and translation.

- **Albert of Aachen**'s *Jerusalem History* used to be greatly undervalued because Albert was not a participant and because his information and attitudes sometimes contradicted the other Latin sources. However, as has been shown above, these were all interdependent while Albert wrote without knowledge of them. As an independent source he often provides an important corrective to them, and – importantly – other non-Latin sources that were not available before the last century corroborate his account. Nevertheless, any collection of sources written before about 2000 will probably use only Albert's first and second books, which recount the overland journeys of Peter the Hermit and Godfrey of Bouillon respectively.

- Other Latin accounts are less likely to crop up. **Caffaro of Genoa** and **Ekkehard of Aura** both visited Jerusalem in 1101 and incorporated short narratives of the crusade into longer and more general histories.

Other languages

There are no strictly contemporary sources in Arabic, perhaps showing that the Saracens attached less importance to the western invasion than the invaders did. The Turks, who were on the front line, had no written culture at the time.

- **Anna Komnene**, the daughter of the Byzantine emperor Alexios I Komnenos, wrote (in Greek) a biography of her father (*r.* 1081-1118) that conveys vividly her own reaction as a teenager to the arrival of the various armies from the West. She wrote in the 1140s. The old Penguin Classic translation of Anna's *Alexiad* has been revised by Peter Frankopan (2009).

- **Ibn al-Qalanisi** (*c.* 1073-1160) wrote a *Damascus Chronicle* that covers the period of the First Crusade, but not in any great detail: it becomes more important for the later period. It was used by other, later Arabic chroniclers.

- **Matthew of Edessa**, an Armenian Christian monk, concentrated on events in his home city and was less well informed about the events in Syria and Palestine. He was fiercely anti-Byzantine.

- There are three **Hebrew sources** describing the Rhineland massacres of 1096. Their relationship has been much debated, as has their nature: are they history or liturgy? Extracts may be found in the collections cited above.

Secondary works

Some titles on particular aspects or with particular focuses have been mentioned above. A readable and reliable narrative is: Thomas Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History* (London: The Free Press, 2004; pbk Simon & Schuster, 2005).

Internet resources

All of the following were secure and available at the time of writing.

- For a sound narrative account, regularly updated, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Crusade

- or see: www.historytoday.com/jonathan-phillips/crusades-complete-history

- Podcasts by Jonathan Riley-Smith are available at https://www.history.org.uk/ (The Historical Association). A search on 'First Crusade' will reveal more resources for members.

- Similarly, see the BBC History Magazine site at www.historyextra.com (more resources available for subscribers)

- A range of primary sources in translation is available at: http://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/Halsall/sbook1k.asp#The First Crusade (Stephen of Blois' letter from Antioch is at http://history.hanover.edu/texts/1stcrusade2.html)

- For secondary sources, follow the links at deremilitari.org for (a rather random selection of) articles.

- For biographies of modern historians of the crusades, see www.crusaderstudies.org.uk (The site is 'under development' but has not recently been updated.)

- You should also look at www.youtube.com/results?search_query=first+crusade – if you don't, be sure your students will!

The First Crusade has been Susan B. Edgington's passion since university. Her PhD thesis, an edition of Albert of Aachen's *History of the Journey to Jerusalem*, was published with an English translation in 2007. Susan continues to work on primary sources for the crusades, with a translation of the history by Baldric of Bourgueil forthcoming in 2018, and to publish articles and chapters on aspects of the twelfth-century crusades. She is currently writing a biography of King Baldwin I of Jerusalem (1100-18). She is a Research and Teaching Fellow at Queen Mary University of London and a Fellow of the Historical Association.

How successful was Edward I as king?

Andy King and Claire Etty

Was Edward well prepared to be king?

When Edward became king in 1272, he had already established himself as a military and political leader, both in England and on a European stage. He had gained experience of raising, financing and leading armies in Wales and on crusade to the Holy Land. In the 1260s, Edward had taken a leading role against Simon de Montfort's rebellion and subsequently played an increasingly important role in the government of his father, Henry III.

What were Edward's personal qualities?

Chronicle and record evidence suggests Edward was a loving husband and indulgent father to his daughters. He regularly paid the gambling debts of his daughter Mary (a nun who frequently visited the court), and, although furious at his daughter Joan's secret marriage to a lowly knight, following the death of her husband, the earl of Gloucester, Edward soon forgave the couple, allowing Joan's new husband to use the Gloucester title.

His relationship with his son (the future Edward II) was more difficult. In 1307, when Edward learned he had tried to grant the French county of Ponthieu to his friend, Piers Gaveston, he abused him as a 'base-born whoreson', pulling his hair out in hanks. Edward's dominant personality was also apparent in his relationships with his subjects. At the parliament of 1296, a chronicler describes Edward publicly haranguing representatives who hesitated to grant a tax to fund his wars, impugning their honour.

One quality frequently attributed to Edward – even by generally commendatory historians – is vindictiveness. In 1296, when Edward took the Scottish town of Berwick by assault, he massacred its inhabitants. William Wallace, condemned as a traitor for leading the 1297 rebellion in Scotland, was hanged, disembowelled and his body divided into quarters and displayed around the kingdom. In 1283, the Welsh prince Dafydd ap Gruffudd, condemned to the same fate on the same charge, was similarly displayed: 'the right arm with a ring on the finger in York; the left arm in Bristol; the right leg and hip at Northampton; the left [leg] at Hereford'. He exhibited Mary, sister of Robert Bruce (now Robert, King of Scots), and Isabella, Countess of Buchan (who had assisted at Robert's inauguration), in cages on the walls of Roxburgh and Berwick castles. And, in 1306, when John of Strathbogie, earl of Athol, sought clemency on the grounds of kinship with Edward, he was hanged from a gallows 30 feet higher than standard, in deference to this illustrious lineage.

How did Edward view his role as king?

At Edward's coronation, when the Archbishop of Canterbury placed the crown on his head, Edward removed it, declaring he would not wear it until he had recovered the lands his father had granted away. Pursuit of the lands and rights adhering to

Figure 1: Edward I's Great Seal, the obverse showing him sitting in judgement, the reverse showing him as a knight. Apart from coins, this is the only image of their king that most of Edward's subjects would have seen.
Copyright (King's College, Cambridge)

the Crown by Divine Providence would be central to Edward's conception of his rule.

Edward's views on kingship were shaped during his father's reign. In 1258, Henry III's barons forced a reform programme (the 'Provisions of Oxford') on him and Edward; in 1264, their leader, Simon de Montfort, seized control of the government – an overruling of the king's authority unprecedented in English history. Edward defeated de Montfort at the Battle of Evesham in 1265, and was determined to restore the authority of the Crown. He was equally determined not to repeat the mistakes which had provoked this crisis. Henry was easily led and overly-partial to his favourites; his government was corrupt, arbitrary, partisan, militarily incompetent and resorted to financial expedients akin to extortion. Edward may have had some genuine sympathy with the complaints – if not the methods – of the reformers (he had, indeed, briefly been one of their number).

What motivated governmental reforms and how involved was Edward in these developments?

Recent historiography on Edward's reign has focused on his activity as a reformer. Monastic accounts recording bribes to royal officers illustrate the extent of local corruption. Barely two months after his coronation, Edward 'sent inquirers everywhere to inquire how the sheriffs and other bailiffs had conducted themselves' (the 'Hundred Roll' inquiries), and at his first parliament in 1275 he issued a statute ('Westminster I') addressing misgovernment. In 1279, Edward launched a further inquiry into 'encroachments made on us and others, rich and poor', and on his return from Gascony in 1289, appointed auditors to receive complaints about maladministration. Forty officials were imprisoned and fined for misconduct; the chief justice of the Common Bench was sent into exile, and most of the other senior judges were dismissed and fined. One truly innovative measure was the acceptance of petitions at

Figure 2: Caernarfon, built by Edward I as part of an enormously expensive chain of castles, intended to overawe the newly-conquered Welsh

parliaments. Individuals or communities from across Edward's territories might now seek justice or redress directly from the king, a privilege previously restricted to those with access to his person.

When Edward became king, England was perceived as facing a crisis of law and order. The principal mechanism of royal justice outside Westminster was the eyre: royal justices periodically sent on circuits around the counties. However, the eyre dealt with all legal cases, criminal and civil, and was increasingly overwhelmed with the weight of business. Edward developed alternative, more specifically focused and flexible methods. In 1304-5, he began a deliberate and concerted campaign to tackle crime on a nationwide scale: appointing special commissions of 'trailbaston' to inquire into crime and disorder and to try cases arising. Of perhaps greater significance were the commissions of *oyer et terminer* issued by Edward to local justices and knights, to 'hear and determine' cases arising from individual complaints or petitions. The practice of commissioning local men to provide royal justice was an important step towards the development of the office of Justice of the Peace.

One of the most important aspects of Edward's reign was the continuing evolution of parliament. Originally a council, to which individual magnates, bishops, abbots and royal servants were summoned at the king's discretion (which would become the House of Lords), representatives from the shires were first summoned in 1254, and burgesses from the towns in 1265 (together, these would become the House of Commons). In the first half of Edward's reign, these representatives were summoned only to a minority of parliaments. But from the 1290s, as Edward needed more frequent tax grants, they were summoned more frequently. By the end of the reign, parliament was settling into a regular form, and the principle had been firmly established that lay taxes could not be imposed without the consent of the Commons.

Edward's reputation as a law-maker is derived partly from his practice of having his laws formally promulgated as statutes, generally at parliaments. Previously, new laws had usually taken the form of writs (instructions sent to judges and royal officials), recorded only haphazardly. Their new statutory basis gave them authority and standing, and – on a practical level –

publicity. This would establish the process for law-making in England.

A medieval king was expected to rule 'with the prudent counsel of good and wise men' (a virtue for which Edward was praised). It is difficult to assess the extent of Edward's personal involvement in these reforms: many may have been developed by his chancellor, Robert Burnell. And Edward's chief justice, Ralph Hengham, certainly played a large part in formulating his statutes: he once rebuked a lawyer in court: 'do not gloss the statute, we know it better than you, for we made it'. But if the detail of his government's measures were devised by others it was Edward who initiated them, Edward who directed them and Edward who pushed them through. His personal view of the matter is probably summed up in a writ he issued in 1260, long before he became king:

If...common justice is denied to any one of our subjects by us or by our bailiffs, we lose the favour both of God and man, and our lordship is belittled. We wish therefore that common justice shall be exhibited to everyone.

How effectively did Edward manage his nobles?

The art of medieval kingship was very much the art of patronage. A king had to be able to reward and encourage service without arousing jealousy and discontent, and without giving away too much. Henry III's prodigal generosity to a clique of favourites was one of the main causes of the crisis of 1258, and Edward's fury with his heir in 1307 was probably because the latter was displaying his grandfather's tendencies. By contrast, Edward kept his patronage within reasonable bounds: rewards were earned through loyal service, and no one was favoured to the exclusion of others. Nor were the recipients treated as above the law. In 1302, Anthony Bek, Bishop of Durham, one of Edward's oldest and most trusted servants, laid siege to the monks of Durham Priory. Edward seized the bishopric's lands, and Bek never regained his favour.

Edward was no absolute monarch: Magna Carta – the English nobility's touchstone of good governance and safeguard against the arbitrary exercise of royal power – dictated that the Crown should rule through 'common counsel', and that

the king might not tax his subjects without first gaining their consent. Violation of these principles left a king open to the gravest charge a medieval monarch could attract: tyranny. And it was over these principles that Edward would face the major political crisis of his reign. In the spring of 1297, Roger Bigod, earl of Norfolk, led Edward's nobles in refusing to go on campaign to Gascony unless Edward himself headed the expedition. Edward's response serves to illustrate his relationship with them. He swore at Bigod, 'By God, sir Earl, you shall either go or hang'. The earl swore back, 'By the same oath, lord king, I shall neither go nor hang'. In the event, the earl neither went, nor hanged.

Edward then decided to lead an expedition to Flanders instead, claiming that parliament had granted him an unprecedentedly generous tax to fund it. But the commons had not been summoned to this parliament, nor were the lords summoned in proper form; indeed, one chronicler claimed Edward had obtained the consent only of 'the people standing around in his chamber'. That August, Bigod and the earl of Hereford protested, in the name of the community of the realm, that 'if ...[the tax] were so levied it would lead to the disinheritance of them and of their heirs ... and they would in no wise suffer [it]'.

In September, Edward's government summoned another parliament. Representatives received royal confirmations of Magna Carta and Edward's council issued the 'Confirmation of the Charters', proclaiming that he would not in future tax: 'except with the common assent of all the realm and for the common profit of the same realm'. In return, parliament granted him a slightly less generous tax.

The 1274 Hundred Roll inquiry revealed that, under Henry III's lax government, many nobles had arrogated franchises, a form of lordship which devolved many of the functions of royal government to the lord. Edward was determined to redress this usurpation of Crown authority. In 1278, he launched the *Quo Warranto* inquiries, to discover 'by what warrant' such franchises were held. The nobility's response was vigorously voiced by Earl Warenne. Summoned before the royal justices, he brandished 'an ancient and rusty sword', proclaiming:

Here is my warrant! For my ancestors came with William the Bastard and conquered their lands with the sword, and with the same sword, I shall defend those lands from anyone who wants to take them.

Ultimately, Edward was forced to accept existing franchises, but he successfully curbed any further such encroachments. And he had firmly established the principle that franchises in England derived from royal authority.

In his relationships with his English subjects, Edward was, above all, a politician, with the political insight to know when to make concessions.

Why was Edward at war so much? Were his wars successful?

Edward's wars in Wales, France and Scotland were driven by issues of overlordship and sovereignty. In 1276, Edward raised an army against Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, Prince of Wales, because the latter refused to do homage, as agreed in the 1267 Treaty of Montgomery. In 1291-92, he used a Scottish succession dispute to make English claims to overlordship of Scotland a reality, and in 1296, invaded Scotland to enforce his rights as King John (Balliol)'s overlord (upholding his own judgement in a legal appeal from the Scottish courts). As Duke of Aquitaine (though not as King of England), Edward was Philip IV of France's vassal. Thus, when Philip summoned Edward to his *Parlement*, he was making the same point: his confiscation of Gascony when Edward refused to attend sparked off war between the two realms.

Figure 3: Portrait in Westminster Abbey c. 1300, thought to be of Edward I.
Angelo Hornak / Alamy Stock Photo

Conqueror of Wales and Hammer of the Scots, Edward was undoubtedly generally successful in his military campaigns. This was partly due to his ability to mobilise far larger armies than his predecessors. There was no professional, standing army in England: a new force had to be raised for each campaign. Henry II, Richard and John had relied heavily on the services of foreign mercenaries, but Edward succeeded in recruiting the local landowners of England to serve him as mounted men-at-arms on a regular basis. He also adopted new methods of recruitment for foot soldiers: his commissions of array employed royal clerks and local grandees to conscript specified numbers from each county or region. The army that marched to Scotland in 1298 was perhaps the largest raised in Britain before the seventeenth century, including some 25,700 foot soldiers (11,000 of them from Wales). And from the 1290s Edward adopted a new method, the indenture: a contract sealed by captains to raise a fixed number of men, to serve for a fixed term, at a fixed fee. Edward had used indentures to raise his crusade army and now used them to staff his garrisons.

Edward was hailed by his contemporaries as 'a king well versed in war', but his campaigns were won less by military brilliance than by the careful marshalling of superior resources and supplies – and sheer relentless perseverance. On a number of occasions, for example, contrary to custom, Edward insisted on fighting on through the winter, employing resources from across all of his lands to feed his men.

But the question arises: if Edward's wars were so successful, why did he have to keep returning to the same theatres? This may perhaps be explained as a failure of government rather than a failure of war. Contemporary legal theory held that

overlordship entailed the supervision of justice, and following his 1278 settlement in Wales, Edward rode roughshod over existing local jurisdictions, extending the authority of the royal courts into his newly conquered Welsh lands, and introducing English criminal law. Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was able to cast the 1282 rising as a struggle to preserve the identity of the native Welsh: 'as a matter of common right the Welsh...ought to have their own laws and customs according to their race'. In addition, the many Welsh rulers who had supported Edward against Llywelyn saw little return, and a failure to properly reward them (at least in their eyes) accounts for the risings of Dafydd ap Gruffudd in 1282 and Madog ap Llywelyn in 1294.

Ultimately, though, Edward's conquest of Wales was successful. By contrast, his wars in Scotland have been characterised by some historians as unwinnable – but many of the issues were the same. The 1290 Treaty of Birgham had laid out the concerns of the community of the realm of Scotland that 'the rights, laws, liberties and customs of the same realm... [should] be preserved in every respect...completely and without being impaired'. Six years later, Edward effectively abolished the Scottish kingship, ruling Scotland as a 'land' administered by Englishmen, including an avaricious treasurer determined to extract the maximum profits. His second settlement in 1304 allowed the Scots a greater role in their own government, with the most powerful of the magnates, the Comyns, permitted to retain much of their influence. Unfortunately, the need to win over the Comyns served to preserve existing fault lines in Scottish politics; their great rival Robert Bruce had submitted to Edward first, but felt he had gained nothing by it. This dissatisfaction led Bruce to murder John Comyn and to have himself inaugurated as king, repudiating English overlordship. To be fair to Edward, however, it was probably impossible to produce a settlement which would have satisfied both parties. The following year, Edward would die leading yet another campaign to subdue Scotland.

What are the most significant aspects of Edward's reign?

The Great Seal of England symbolised the twin aspects of Edward's rule: the king enthroned in judgement on one side, and mounted as a warrior knight on the other. Through his legal reforms, and his development of parliament, Edward transformed the government of England, making it more responsive to his subjects. He consolidated parliament's role as a representative forum where grievances could be aired; and used it to gain consent for vastly increased taxes. In this way, Edward established a new basis for royal taxation, diverting more of England's wealth into the royal coffers. Edward also restructured government in the regions, recruiting the great and the good of county society to its service, and thus setting the pattern of English government for centuries to come.

On the war front, Edward's '"re-militarisation" of the gentle-born' (as one historian has dubbed it) was to prove a cornerstone of England's war effort during the Hundred Years War, while the indenture became the standard means of raising English armies for the rest of the Middle Ages. Edward's vigorous pursuit of his claim to the overlordship of Scotland launched an Anglo-Scottish conflict which persisted until Union of the Crowns in 1603, shaping the history of both nations. And his permanent subjection of Wales to English rule was arguably the longest-lasting change to the power structure of the British Isles since 1066.

What does Edward's reign tell us about medieval societies and ideas?

Edward's kingship was rooted in contemporary legal and political ideas common across Western Christendom. An increasingly elevated view of monarchy saw armed resistance to a king as a fundamentally illicit act, which should be met with condign punishment. The severity of Edward's punishments was unprecedented, especially given the rank of his victims. But the ritual execution of traitors was part of a growing Europe-wide trend. In France, too, treason was punished with hanging and quartering – or by flaying alive. It is in this context that Edward's public executions of men he regarded as incorrigible rebels should be considered. Edward's actions at Berwick in 1296, too, were in accordance with contemporary customs of war: inhabitants of towns that refused to come to terms with their lord were held to be rebels, who had no right to quarter. Edward's vigorous prosecution of his overlordship was driven by similar developments in legal and political views of the rights of a superior lord over his vassals' territories.

In dismissing Welsh native law, and in 1304, the 'custom of the Scots and the Brets' (i.e., Gaelic customary law), Edward countered the older 'natural law' argument espoused by Llywelyn (which supported diversity of custom for different peoples) with the contemporary counter-argument that these laws were fundamentally 'displeasing to God'. This sentiment reflected a society increasingly intolerant of customs and practices which differed from the mainstream Francophile culture of Western Christendom. Such intolerance was also displayed in the anti-Semitism, whipped up by Crusade mania, which made Edward I's expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290 such a popular measure.

Which aspects of Edward or his reign are we least clear on and why?

England was perhaps the most bureaucratic government in Western Christendom; vast quantities of its records are preserved at The National Archives. Historians can also draw on a rich chronicle tradition. But English government records preserved information about the English Crown's interests, while chronicles were largely written by monks from wealthy monasteries or clerks attached to noble households. Our picture of Edward's reign is thus inevitably top-down, overwhelmingly masculine and frequently very Anglo-centric. Edward's other subjects paid his taxes; fought for, or against him; or had their crops seized to feed his armies. Their lands were devastated in his wars and their lives affected by his policies. Though some of their complaints survive in petitions, their voices remain largely inaudible.

How is Edward assessed by historians?

Writing soon after Edward's death, one English chronicler eulogised him as 'the worthiest knight of all the world in his time'. For the English, Edward I came closer than most to fulfilling the medieval ideal of a great king. Modern historians apply different criteria, but, while his reforms have recently been criticised as having rather more show than substance, Edward is still generally judged to have been an able and effective king.

The views of historians of Wales and Scotland are rather different: largely because Edward, as ruler of those countries, was a very different proposition. In 1360, a Scottish chronicler condemned Edward in no uncertain terms: 'this king stirred up war..; he troubled the whole world by his wickedness, and roused it by his cruelty;...he invaded Wales; he treacherously subdued unto him the Scots and their kingdom'. These views still have resonance for historians of both countries today.

Further reading

Michael Prestwich, *Edward I* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1997) – the standard biography. Includes thematic chapters covering topics such as the Welsh and Scottish wars, and English government and parliament.

Andy King, *Edward I: a new King Arthur?* Penguin Monarchs series (Penguin, London, 2016) – a brief overview.

R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales, 1063-1415* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991) – covers the Welsh background, with an excellent account of Edward's conquest.

Michael Brown, *The Wars of Scotland, 1214-1371* (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2004) – provides the Scottish background, with good coverage of Edward's wars.

Michael Prestwich, 'Edward I (1239–1307)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8517]. There are also entries on other major figures in this period.

There are also a number of articles on Edward I and his reign on *Oxford Reference Online*.

(NB. 90% of UK public libraries offer free remote access to *ODNB* and *ORO*:

http://global.oup.com/oxforddnb/info/freeodnb/libraries/)

There are some excellent, freely available, downloadable resources on Edward and Wales on the Open University *Welsh History and its Sources* unit (including some primary sources):

www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/history/heritage/welsh-history-and-its-sources

The National Records of Scotland (NRS) Scottish Archives for Schools has a unit on the Scottish Wars of Independence (including some primary sources):

www.scottisharchivesforschools.org/WarsOfIndependence/Index.asp

Andy King and Claire Etty co-wrote *England and Scotland, 1286-1603*. Andy is a lecturer in medieval history at the University of Southampton, wrote *Edward I: a new King Arthur?* and edited and translated Thomas Gray's *Scalacronica*. He has published widely on fourteenth-century politics, warfare and chronicles. Claire is a researcher at the *Oxford English Dictionary*, has also published articles on the Anglo-Scottish Marches, and is co-editing *A Companion to Late Medieval Scotland*, with Andy.

Time-line

Year	Event
1239	Edward born
1254	Marries Eleanor, half-sister of Alfonso X, King of Castile
1258	Political crisis over favouritism and partiality of Henry III's government; a reform programme (the 'Provisions of Oxford') forced on Henry III
1259	Treaty of Paris; Henry III does homage, as Duke of Aquitaine, to Louis IX, King of France, for Gascony
1264	Civil war ('Baron's War'); Henry defeated by Simon de Montfort at Lewes; Edward imprisoned
1265	Edward escapes; defeats Montfort at Evesham
1267	Treaty of Montgomery; Henry III forced to recognise Llywelyn ap Gruffudd as Prince of Wales; Llywelyn does homage for Wales
1270	Edward goes on crusade
1272	Henry III dies
1274	Edward returns to England; 'Hundred Roll' inquiries
1276-77	Edward declares Llywelyn ap Gruffudd a rebel, invades Wales and forces Llwelyn to submit
1279	*Quo warranto* inquiries, to investigate 'by what warrant' barons hold various legal jurisdictions, and whether they should rightfully belong to the Crown
1282-83	Welsh rising; Edward invades Wales; Llywelyn killed in battle
1286	Alexander III, King of Scots, dies leaving Margaret of Norway, his three year-old granddaughter as heir
1290	Treaty of Birgham; Margaret to marry Edward's son Edward (the future Edward II); but Margaret dies on ship from Norway
	Edward expels Jews from England in return for grant of tax in parliament
	Eleanor of Castile dies
1291-92	'The Great Cause': At request of Scots, Edward adjudicates in Scottish succession dispute; decides in favour of John Balliol; Balliol inaugurated as King of Scots; does homage to Edward for Scotland
1294	Philip IV, King of France, confiscates Duchy of Aquitaine; Edward declares war
1295	Rising in Wales; Edward cancels expedition to Gascony
1296	Edward declares John Balliol, King of Scots, a rebel; invades Scotland and deposes him
1297	Rising in Scotland; beginning of the 'Wars of Independence'; Edward at war with Scotland for next seven years
1297	Political crisis in England over taxation
	Edward leads expedition to Flanders, and makes concessions over tax
	Scots, led by William Wallace, defeat English at Stirling Bridge
1298	Edward defeats Wallace at Falkirk
1299	Peace with France; Edward marries Margaret of France
1304	Scots, led by Comyn family, submit to Edward on terms.
1306	Robert Bruce kills his rival John Comyn, and has himself inaugurated as king of Scots
1307	Edward dies while leading an army to Scotland

Which ideas mattered to people in the Middle Ages?

Benjamin Thompson

No society is entirely well ordered, but most societies have ideals of good order to which they aspire, and the Middle Ages were no exception. To explore medieval notions of good order we will follow the classic medieval division between the spiritual and temporal, based on the dualism of body and soul – although we will find this, as they did, to be inadequate.

Religion provided a rich source of aims, stories, beliefs, precepts and practice. The ultimate end of the Christian soul was to attain the salvation of eternal bliss in heaven; the only alternative was the everlasting fires of hell. Images of the Last Judgement in which the souls of humanity were sorted, with vivid portrayals of torments, were abundant in medieval churches. The view of some eleventh-century thinkers that only monks could be saved is unlikely to have been shared in popular perception, and there are plenty of signs that the not-entirely-bad could be purged and eventually find heaven. This scheme was formalised from the twelfth century into the doctrine of Purgatory, which offered eventual salvation for all but the irredeemably wicked. Although the pains of purgation were not to be taken lightly, and could be very long indeed, the psychological outlook was surely more optimistic than earlier.

Christianity offered a fund of stories, not least the whole history of the world. It was created by God's imposition of order on chaos, but soon marred by the fall of Adam and Eve into original sin. It then ran through the history of Israel to the incarnation of God as a human in Jesus the Christ, and his redemption of humanity through crucifixion and resurrection, which were followed by the sending of the Holy Spirit and the foundation of the church. The Last Judgement, the end of time, was in the future. This lineal scheme gave a direction to the human story and provided, especially in the Gospels, the stories which formed the basic material of religious communication. These were supplemented by the lives of saints such as the apostles, fathers and early Christian martyrs, especially women such as Catherine on her wheel and Margaret being fed to a dragon. These human biographies could also be recent, and local, such as Becket in England and Francis in Italy; they attest to a shift in twelfth-century thinking away from the earlier distant and vengeful God towards a human Christ, neatly reflected by the cult of the Virgin Mary which also burgeoned exactly then.

Beliefs and ethics

These stories were conceptualised as beliefs, which were set out in the early Christian creeds with their itemised articles of faith. From beliefs were derived precepts, the essential substance of the ethical order. Based on the Ten Commandments of the old law and the Two of the new (love God and your neighbour as yourself), these were elaborated in systematised schemes such as the Seven Virtues and Seven Vices (or Deadly Sins). Sermons proceeded from the Christian stories to overwhelmingly moral instruction, focused upon the sinfulness which threatened souls to hell. The temptations of money and sex manifested in greed and lust loomed large in preaching and penitentials. But, especially in later-medieval confession manuals, there is as much emphasis on social sins, such as the oppression of the poor by the rich, of peasants by lords. The pride of the elite and its material expression in lavish goods and buildings, clothing and feasts, was a constant source of complaint, as were the malpractices of officials in defrauding rent- and tax-payers or perverting the law; and the clergy equally denounced their own sins (albeit rarely in front of the laity), of lack of attention to duty (sloth), worldliness in avarice, gluttony and unchastity, pride in position and competitiveness in wrath and envy. No punches were pulled, therefore, in the critique of the socially powerful, so that both popular rebels and heretics could claim to be drawing on entirely orthodox sources in their challenge to authority.

Communicating routes to salvation

Given that the liturgy was performed in Latin, preaching was the main form of communication of Christianity to the unlettered people. In the absence of a universal system of education for the majority of priests, as opposed to the elite friars and a small proportion of graduates, we cannot be confident that what was transmitted was particularly sophisticated, a suspicion reinforced by the need for vernacular model sermons. Yet confession-manuals suggest that detailed annual probing of the individual sinner was possible and even normal. And there were other media, some of which bypassed the clergy. Much of the growing late-medieval literature of devotion was in the vernacular. The miracle and mystery plays from English towns which tell the whole story of salvation from Creation to the Apocalypse show how the laity could internalise and appropriate religious instruction. Similarly, the images – especially of saints, but also Dooms, sacraments, virtues and vices – which adorned churches in sculpture and paintings, on walls and screens, pulpits and fonts, were largely paid for by parishioners in acts of self-instruction. By the end of the Middle Ages society was thoroughly Christianised.

Christian practice operated two parallel tracks towards salvation. Reception of the sacraments was a prerequisite, such as the baptism which conferred membership of the church, and the eucharist which was a regular channel of God's grace: annual reception by all Christians was enjoined in the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, and this led to an increasingly high-profile cult of the mass. But the state of the Christian soul was

Doom paintings such as this from Wenhaston Church, Suffolk, provided constant reminders of the perils of sins.
Photograph © Angela Leonard

also determined by the balance between good works and sins. 'Alms extinguish sin as water quenches fire' (Ecclesiasticus) was a common tag. In fact, all sins could be effaced by confession, absolution and the performance of penance (a sacrament), and penitentials such as that administered to the Norman conquerors of England in 1070 prescribed the tariff for each sinful act, including one year for killing an opponent in battle. This document also laid down other remedies, or substitutes for personal good works, notably the endowment of churches, which fuelled the great age of monastic foundation by the aristocracy. The emphasis given by Peter Abelard to intention in sinful action led to the greater interiority of confession procedure in the later period, as it also became an annual requirement for Christians in 1215. The crystallisation of the doctrine of Purgatory catalysed the late-medieval system by which the living reduced the purgation of the dead through prayers, masses and alms. Practices such as contributions to the building, furnishing and ornamentation of parish churches or membership of local guilds which guaranteed masses at and after death encouraged participation in the pursuit of salvation across the social spectrum.

The social functions of Christian practice

Christian practice performed a range of functions which were much wider than purely religious. Saints' cults were market-driven, and thrived according to whether they met particular needs, from the political (Becket, Simon de Montfort, Thomas of Lancaster) down to the highly localised, for instance St Walstan, who brought fertility to the farming of a few villages in mid-Norfolk. Saints were the focus of communal identity, as was the parish itself: parish processions such as those at Easter and Corpus Christi embodied the community, and at Rogationtide the bounds of the parish were beaten to mark out its territory. Guilds provided space for sub-groups within the parish to define their own identity, according to occupation, age or gender. Christianity also provided the fundamental ceremonies of the life-cycle, from baptism, through confirmation and marriage to the last rites. It also marked out the ritual year, with more festivals in the leaner winter – especially the midwinter festival of light and the spring celebration of new life – than the busy summer. Prayers interceded for the state of souls but also for such things as good harvests and trade or to ward off evils such as plague and war; the cult of saints and pilgrimage overwhelmingly concerned the search for good physical and also mental health. Scholars have found it hard to diagnose how much 'pagan' or folkloric survival there was, but it seems certain that there was a syncretic absorption of older practices even into thoroughly-Christianised later-medieval practice: blessed holy bread could ward off toothache, or holy water keep devils from the house. The church was not just the clergy in spiritual authority, but increasingly the people who internalised and appropriated its stories and especially its practices; religion was not just imposed from above, but deployed by the people, for the people.

Critiques of Christianity

Medieval Christianity is sometimes seen as a hypocritical ideology designed above all to give the clergy control over the credulous people. Powerful princes of the church like Wolsey seem to embody the antithesis of a religion based on humility, poverty and charity. But this was a critique deployed at the time too: church reformers routinely inveighed against the pride and power of prelates and even of communally rich monasteries. Exposing hypocrisy was a literary staple, attested by Chaucer's Monk, Friar, Prioress and Pardoner. Thus a critique of churchmen was always available and they were at least to some extent held accountable to their high ideals. In another way Christianity can be seen as a profoundly self-interested religion in which concern for the fate of one's own individual soul became a dominant motive in life. Certainly setting aside resources to pay for perpetual masses for individual souls has an individualistic element; but these masses were also understood to be of benefit to the founder's nearest and dearest, and ultimately to all the faithful departed.

Order, security and the rise of reason

Secular ideologies placed a high premium on order: security and stability were highly valued, especially in societies which seemed at the mercy of forces beyond their control. One explanation for the enserfment of much of the population in the tenth and eleventh centuries is the breakdown of public authority in parts of Europe and the need for protection. Powerful local figures, the local thugs or castellans, evolved into lords or barons, providing security even while extracting new dues and taxes. But even for the unfree, customs and norms provided some degree of predictability and protection, more evidently so when the Black Death shifted the balance of economic power down the social scale.

Before the twelfth century the educated elite could interpret the uncontrollable world only through the revealed truths of religion; and monastic movements sought to escape the world and create their own islands of order. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries confidence grew in human power to comprehend the world through reason and change it through the imposition of rational order. The basic tools of education – reading, writing/speaking and logic – took a scholar to a university Bachelor's degree; these could then be applied to the body, society and the soul in the form of medicine, law and theology. Commentary on received Roman law expanded and applied it; the great corpus of canon law was created and systematised; and the application of reason to the Bible and the writings of the fathers produced systematised theology, culminating in vast thirteenth-century theological *summae*, above all those of Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican friar at the University of Paris, which attempted to order the whole of human knowledge into a highly organised system. At the same time, humanity imposed itself on the landscape in the building of castles and especially cathedrals, which through a complex mobilisation of society's resources created a visible embodiment of both authority and community, unity and diversity.

Society – stable or fluid?

Society was imagined in the eleventh century into the three orders, or three functions of prayer, warfare and labour. This deployed both a hierarchical distinction between rulers and ruled and the secular and sacred dichotomy to place the ruling orders of clergy (for spiritual welfare) and nobility (for secular protection) over the working population which supplied the material needs of all. In principle, society was static, but in practice there was always social mobility, varying in extent between societies and times. The tensions between imagined stability and fluid reality were manifested in increasing gradations of society, as in the development of eight titles of aristocracy from the simpler earl, baron and knight. Debate over the nature of nobility testifies to the same tension: acquisition by birth suggested a more static society than the increasing acknowledgement of promotion by virtue and service. The development of a more complex society, with merchants, lawyers, administrators, artisans and many others not encompassed by the three-orders model, enforced the articulation of a much wider range of social types, as in Chaucer's *General Prologue*: but the aim of these conceptualisations was still to comprehend and classify society.

Mutual dependence, loyalty and trust

Society was understood to be held together by bonds which were as much mutual as they were hierarchical and coercive. Members of a family played different but interlocking roles, and even if there was a (usually male) head to whom others must be obedient, he owed them duties of provision, protection and love. (For gender roles see page 56.) The wider family or familia of those higher in society encompassed members of the household and servants, and beyond them retainers and tenants. The bonds of loyalty which held together the early-medieval warband were transplanted into the feudal lordship and the late-medieval bastard-feudal affinity. Lords owed patronage and protection in return for service: mutual interest was articulated in ideals. This was nowhere more explicit than in the culture of chivalry, which evolved from the earlier military context in which ferocious courage was highly prized, through its reconceptualisation by the church as the protection of the weak in society, to the courtesy of manners and behaviour in the twelfth-century court. In all these contexts social standing was judged by peers, inferiors and superiors. Retaining trust through keeping one's word was central both to baronial followings and to the creditworthiness of merchants and indeed artisans and trading peasants. The leaders of late-medieval village society were the trustworthy men, the local 'worthies'. Among the aristocracy the culture of honour – acquired by prowess, wealth and followers – evolved into the late-medieval English 'worthship' or worship. All these cultures essentially measured perceived social standing; and practitioners needed to be seen to be behaving according to the norms appropriate to their social station.

Law and justice

Society was increasingly regulated by formal law. The law of God was partly revealed in sacred texts, and partly by rational perception of the eternal or natural law. (Systematic law-codes developed from the application of scholastic reason in the twelfth century.) Positive human law was assessed by its conformity to natural law. Legal theory embodied the golden rule, 'do as you would be done by' (Matthew, 7:12), the fundamental principle of social reciprocity. Or it saw justice as distributive, protecting the rights to which each is entitled. From one perspective this was a conservative justification of social inequality, since those who had no rights had no protection. Nevertheless, it was also the foundation of an ordered society of rights and obligations which enabled individuals and collectives to act on the basis of protected expectations. Increasing security of property was one foundation of the economic growth of the eleventh to fourteenth centuries; and predictable patterns of inheritance facilitated capital investment and expenditure beyond the current generation. Security of person and property was central to criminal law: common-law felony proscribed arson and larceny, rape and homicide. The last was taken particularly seriously by legal processes, even when committed by accident. Neither King John nor Richard III got away with killing their nephews in terms of the public opprobrium their suspected

crimes attracted. In practice the implementation of the law was influenced by inequality of power, as the discourse of complaint (seen for instance in Robin Hood) persistently articulated. Nevertheless not only did each particular jurisdiction regard those it protected as equal before it – all free men in England from the late-twelfth century – but many also generated mechanisms to implement natural justice when the law failed to do so, such as Equity in late-medieval England.

Ideals of kingship

Law required legitimate authority for its enforcement. Over time public authority replaced interfamilial feud with a concept of a crime against society as a whole. The ideal of a just monarch depended on rule according to law, in contrast to the tyrant who ruled according to his own will. Rulers were increasingly therefore not possessors of private lordships but public officials with a social function. 'It is an office in which he ministers to his realm defence and justice', wrote Sir John Fortescue in 1471. Kings were ordained by and accountable to God for the protection of their people. This did not preclude them pursuing their private interests, such as those in France, but this was not the underlying purpose of their kingship, which could no longer be understood as the possession of a private lordship.

Kings acquired great powers and prerogatives to enable them to fulfil their functions but these were justified by the positive uses to which they put them. By imposing regulation on the sometimes unruly private lordship, kings protected the weak from the strong and made lords subject to the law. Yet rulers still had to use their powers within prescribed limits; this included both physical coercion by officials and the taking of subjects' property. Taxation and military service were justified by necessity; in Edward I's England a legitimately convoked representative assembly had to give 'common assent' according to its assessment of the 'common profit'. Parliament thereafter increasingly held the government to account for the precise use of royal expenditure. Even the king's private finances came to be treated as a legitimate public concern: the efficient and honest use of the fisc was the headline concern of the Good Parliament of 1376 which invented both the speaker of parliament and impeachment of royal officials. Notions of the common good evolved to the more general fifteenth-century 'common wele' or commonwealth, a general measurement of the quality of rule. All power, whether public authority or private lordship, had to be exercised within accountable parameters, for acknowledged functions. Irresponsible and burdensome oppression – and especially violent and corrupt action – was routinely denounced in literature, from Robin Hood to Langland's Lady Mede. Those who opposed kings equally had to justify opposition and rebellion, from the feudal declaration of diffidatio against a lord failing to provide protection to the deposition of Edward II, Richard II and Henry VI on the grounds of unfitness to fulfil the functions of kingship, or tyranny in oppressing their subjects.

The community of the realm

The late-medieval political community expanded. The Angevin conferral of legal rights backfired into a demand for the community of the whole realm, comprised all free men, to hold rights *against the king*. The increased economic power conferred by the Black Death on labourers forced governments to take account of their interests more systematically, especially after they flexed their muscles in revolt from 1381. In both cases, local experience of political structures was generalised in national action. For local societies too were a mass of jurisdictions and authorities. These were sometimes called 'liberties', representing the freedom from some other authority, to engage in specific activities and to self-govern: such was the freedom of towns, to prioritise trade and industry over paying their lords. But village communities too were accustomed to a level of autonomy, for instance in the way they determined who should pay national taxation, and newer bodies such as guilds created ever more structures of community, jurisdiction and identity in local society.

Two final questions

To the question, were medieval people largely self-interested, one might answer, show me a society where they aren't. That is not the point. Rather, the historian diagnoses how interests were both perceived and regulated. Some self-interests are more socially destructive than others; tilling the soil for one's livelihood is positively beneficial, but killing someone else is rarely so. 'Self-interest' conjures up images of the miserly or violent pursuit of individual gain; but self-interest is often communal, for the family, village, town, lordship or kingdom. All of these bodies have legitimate interests, although when they compete they need to be regulated by both collective ethics and a coercive higher authority. This extends to the means by which legitimate interests are pursued, which can cross the bounds of acceptability. Legitimation is therefore also crucial. There is always a potential gap of hypocrisy between claims and action, and ideas can be manipulated to suit specific circumstances and ends. But ideas do provide some constraint on action, by providing socially accepted limits to the untrammelled exercise of power.

How oppressive was medieval society? The period between the Conquest and the Reformation witnessed contradictory trends. On the one hand the 'Europeanisation of Europe' (Robert Bartlett) saw the spreading of a common culture led by the chivalric nobility and the centralising papacy, in an expanding western Christendom. This homogenisation was partly manifested in what R. I. Moore has called a 'persecuting society' with its increasing intolerance of difference, seen in the crusades, pogroms against Jews and persecution of heretics. Yet other forces led to diversification. Religious orders proliferated in the church and lay movements took up the baton. Universities developed thought through freedom of discussion: indeed the dialectic of thesis and antithesis positively revelled in exploring the counterargument before moving on to the synthesis. Above all, an increased economic division of labour created a complex society containing more different types of people, a higher proportion living in freer urban spaces. The medieval church provides the model and key to this paradox: the increasing authority of early modern governments was required precisely to maintain order in the increasingly complex world generated by the Middle Ages.

Further reading

Wim Blockmans & Peter Hoppenbrouwers, *Introduction to Medieval Europe 300-1550* (Routledge, 2007)

Julia Crick & Elisabeth van Houts (eds) *A Social History of England, 900–1200* (Cambridge, 2011)

S. H. Rigby (ed.), *A Companion to Britain in the Later Middle Ages* (Blackwell, 2003)

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Was everyday life in the medieval countryside simply about survival?

Christopher Dyer

A common picture of ordinary people in the Middle Ages concentrates on their grim struggle for the daily necessities of food and shelter. Journalists reporting on modern famines will often use the word 'medieval' to describe the plight of the victims. These perceptions of general misery do not, however, fit with reminders of the medieval world that still exist around us. The skilfully-built and well-designed parish churches suggest that the parishioners had some resources and ambitions beyond seeking the bare necessities. Even closer to the daily lives of the population, thousands of timber-framed houses dated to the period 1380-1520 can be seen all over England and Wales. Ordinary country people lived in these buildings, and they paid the carpenters from their own resources. Evidently not everyone was destitute.

Most people, between nine-tenths and three-quarters (depending on the period and the region), lived in the countryside, and we know a great deal about their way of life. Numerous surveys compiled by the state and by the lords of manors record the amount of land which was held by tenants on which crops could be grown. Between 1100 and 1348 (with most information from around 1300) a small minority held more than 30 acres, more than a half had between 15 and 30 acres, and a sizeable minority were smallholders who might have had as much as 12 acres, but in many cases lived in a cottage attached to a quarter-acre patch of land. To indicate these areas of land in relation to our own experience, a modern football pitch contains rather less than 2 acres. Holdings tended to be smaller in eastern England, but the tenants were not necessarily poorer as the land was fertile and there were other sources of income. In the uplands of Wales and northern England even those with larger holdings had a hard time as the land was poor, the climate tended to be cold and wet, and the main crop, oats, ranked well below wheat in food value and in price at market.

A family living on 15 acres of arable land in lowland England was able to practise mixed farming because they would be allowed a share of a meadow (for hay) and access to grazing for animals on the common pasture, which included the corn fields after the harvest and before they were planted. They could expect to gain each year 50 bushels of grain which would feed a family of two adults and three children with a sufficient quantity of pottage (made with peas, oats or barley), wheat or rye bread and some ale brewed from barley or oats. As they would own a pig or two, poultry, a cow and sheep (which included some milk-yielding ewes) they could supplement their mainly cereal diet with cheese, eggs, bacon and occasional meat. They grew small quantities of vegetables in their garden, and might have an apple tree and a hive or two of bees. Most of the grain that they did not consume had to be kept back for seed or sold to help to pay rents and taxes. The livestock were most likely to produce a saleable surplus (of wool and cheese for example) to pay the rent and enable them to buy cloth, implements and utensils.

Figure 1: Villagers sowing seeds, scaring crows, and harrowing, two of many illustrations of rural life frome from the Luttrell Psalter (c. 1325-35).
Luttrell Psalter, British Library, British Library Add. MS 42130, f.170,

A house for a family cultivating 15 acres would measure in length 10 or 15 metres (30 or 45 feet) and be 5 metres (15 feet) wide. Except in the south-east, the house was usually of one storey, and had two or three rooms, with a hall for eating meals and sitting around a fire, furnished with a trestle table and benches, a chair for the head of the household, and a painted cloth on a wall. The chamber, primarily for sleeping, was provided with beds with a variety of textiles, including a mattress, linen or hempen sheets, blankets and a colourful coverlet. Clothes and extra bedding were kept in wooden chests. Meals would be cooked in the hall or in a kitchen, using metal cooking pots (the most valuable possession in many homes), less durable pottery vessels, wooden containers and metal knives. By our standards, houses were dark, cramped and uncomfortable. But they were not squalid and totally lacking in refinement, as the earth floors were regularly swept, meals were served on table cloths and, in superior households, hands were washed before meals with the aid of a basin and ewer.

A middle-sized holding of land was adequate to support life, but a substantial minority had less land, and their lives were much more uncertain, as they had to earn wages working for the lord, or the rector of the parish church, or wealthier neighbours. In the right places, on the fringes of woodlands for example, they could find employment in industry, wood-cutting or mining, or they might be involved in retail trade selling ale or bread. Those without land and smallholders were very vulnerable if harvests were reduced by bad weather, as this pushed up the price of the grain that they bought. The middling peasants would also have to reduce their food and other expenditure in years of shortage. The worst harvests we know, caused mainly by excess rainfall, were in 1315, 1316 and 1317 when grain yields fell by two-fifths in some parts of the country, provoking a crime wave (according to the court records) and deaths from diseases related to hunger. To complete the misery after the famine, a virulent disease killed a high proportion of cattle, including many of the oxen who pulled the ploughs and wains on which cultivation depended.

The rural population were not hopeless victims of the fluctuations in the weather. They avoided risk by managing the land responsibly. The fields were rested regularly by fallowing to prevent damage to the soil by over-frequent cropping. The cultivators manured the land and weeded, growing a variety of crops so that in a year when wheat yields were low, for example, there was a hope that barley or oats would do well. They ensured that everyone's allocation of land lay in separate scattered strips on different types of soil. Barns were built soundly to protect grain in storage from damp and vermin. When a bad harvest came they could stretch their grain supplies by eating bread baked from barley rather than wheat: barley was normally used for brewing, and when baked for bread tended to be heavy and unpalatable. In bad years they borrowed money, and some sold part of their land, which made life harder subsequently, but kept the family alive. We know about these emergency measures because we have the records of courts held by the lords of the manor which supervised transfers of land and enabled those who lent money to recover cash from bad payers.

The threat of famine receded from the mid-fourteenth century. One factor was the fall in population, as in 1348-49 an epidemic of plague killed 2.5 million out of a total of 5 million. Land became plentiful, holdings increased in size, and the number of smallholders was reduced. Those without the land needed to support a family could earn higher wages (as workers were scarce), and in all sections of rural society people ate wheat bread and more meat, wore woollen cloth worth more than 2s. per yard, and lived in well-constructed houses.

Changes to the fields and farming

Historians emphasise the traditions and customs which tended to perpetuate the techniques used by medieval farmers, but there were many adaptations and a few transformations in the long term. The documents often mention that land cultivated by individual tenants lay in (for example) the North Field and the South Field, showing that there were two large blocks of land containing all of the strips which made up the holdings of the village. An alternative was to spread the holdings over three fields. The strips were not fenced, so the land lay open and unenclosed. If there were two fields half of the land was left uncultivated (fallow) each year; if there were three, two-thirds of the land was used annually to grow crops. Livestock grazed on the fallow field, and deposited manure which improved the fertility of the soil. Historians impressed by the regularity

of these arrangements called them field systems, and thought of the cultivators as bound into disciplined routines. But this exaggerates the rigidity of the arrangements: such open fields were confined to a belt of midland villages running across the country from Dorset to Northumberland. In Wales, Scotland and most of England, where the majority of people lived, there were all kinds of variations of field, some of them enclosed, or combining patches of open fields with unenclosed strips cultivated sometimes more often than every second or third year.

Even in the region with large open fields the cultivators might change the system. If they wanted more crops, they could fence off part of the fallow and plant it (with peas for example). They could make the system more intensive also by splitting two fields into four. After 1350, when the population was reduced by plague and other factors, and grain prices declined, some of the land was converted to pasture to enable animal numbers to increase, and part of the once-open field was enclosed. In the long run the methods of cultivation changed and incomes from the land stabilised and even increased.

Social inequality

The other great generalisation that historians have used to explain society and social change in the Middle Ages is the 'feudal system', and in particular the institution of serfdom. Lords themselves formed a hierarchy, with the handful of earls and dukes around the king, served by barons, knights and gentry. They were matched in the clerical world by the wealthy bishops and large monasteries, with clergy such as rectors and vicars providing services in the parishes at local level. The lay aristocrats and wealthier clergy all held landed estates, divided into manors, on which they cultivated their own large farms, often ten times larger than the largest peasant holdings, and collected rents in cash and labour from peasant tenants.

In the eleventh century a sizeable minority of the rural population were slaves, who staffed the lords' ploughs and looked after the lords' animals, but slavery died out around 1100, partly because of the inconvenience of providing the slaves' food and the other necessities. Instead of slaves, the twelfth century saw the emergence of a sizeable category of serfs. A half of the tenants of manors enjoyed freedom, paying rents in money and being able to sell their land and move about without restriction. By an initiative of lords, aided by lawyers, the other half were classified between about 1160 and 1220 as unfree, often being called villeins, bondmen, neifs (meaning born servile) or serfs. This coincided with moves to define freemen as those who had access to the royal courts, leaving the unfree under the justice of their lord's court. The unfree villeins were burdened with high rents and requirements to do labour service, and were unable to move, marry, sell their oxen and horses or transfer land without the lord's permission. These restrictions were designed to secure a high rent income and a guaranteed labour supply on the lord's demesne. Unlike slaves, the villeins were holding land, sometimes as much as 30 acres, and provided for the needs of their families. So the paradox of their position was that they were degraded by their unfree status and burdened with labour service and cash payments, but often enjoyed some material prosperity, and in their daily lives made many decisions, over such matters as buying and selling. They might hire labour, for example, to work on their holding or provide domestic service. They needed permission, such as for buying and selling land, but this was given as long as they paid for the privilege. Lords desired power over men, and money, and realism meant that they often preferred the money. Lords benefited from the possessions of their villeins – for example they expected them to own ploughs, oxen and carts that could be used in cultivating the lords' land, so it was not in the lords' interest to reduce them to poverty. A prosperous serf

would be able to pay rents and other dues on time and in full. They did not spend all of their money on the lord's demands: a stranger stepping into a villein's house would not be aware of the legal status of its owner from its construction, rooms, furnishings or utensils.

The villeins did not just have the ability to run their own lives, but many of them supervised others, as the lord insisted that they had an obligation to serve as reeve, that is the official in charge of the manor, who collected rents and managed the lord's farming. Many of the financial accounts recording the reeves' administrative achievements (and some errors) have survived. By attending the lord's court (as they were obliged to do) serfs acquired legal knowledge. They were gaining in self-confidence, and though they resented their servile status they were far from demoralised. That meant that when the lord's exploitation of his serfs reached its maximum level around 1250-80 they were in a strong position to offer resistance. They could negotiate with the lord for modifications in their obligations, and sometimes offer a lump sum of money to reduce future payments. If the lord would not negotiate, the tenants could make life difficult for him by failing to do labour services, or they might not attend the manor court. A further stage in their resistance might result in them clubbing together to hire a lawyer and sue the lord in the king's courts, claiming to be free and entitled to the king's protection. The legal actions were rarely successful, as the lord could argue that as serfs they had no right to plead in the king's courts, but they put the lord to a great deal of trouble and expense, and after a dispute some lords would hold back from further annoying their tenants.

In the long run the serfs achieved their freedom because of the economic realities of the period after 1350. The population was halved, and the lords feared the loss of tenants and income from rents. If they had been entirely realistic they would have given up their rights over serfs soon after the plague epidemic, and some did, but many clung to the old ways, and had to be reminded by their serfs of the injustice of their condition. This continued with agitations at village level of the kind that had been going since 1250 and before, and emerged most forcibly in the revolt of 1381 when a demand for universal freedom was central to the rebels' programme. After the rising collapsed the campaign continued in many local rent strikes, confrontations and negotiations. Serfs could still be found in 1500, but they were a very small minority, who were being humiliated rather than suffering practical disabilities.

The pressures behind change

Once it was believed that the driving force behind the long-term changes in the countryside originated in the excessive expansion in the thirteenth century. By about 1300 it is said there was a problem of overpopulation, with too many cottagers and too much inferior land under cultivation. The excess of people contributed to the severity of the famine of 1315-17, and that event initiated a long period of falling population, greatly hastened by the plagues.

It is now believed, modifying the view of the inevitability of disaster, that agriculture was efficient enough to sustain a large number of people, and some of the least fertile territories, such as the upland moors of Durham, were quite productive if used largely for pasture for which they were well suited. Commercial growth around 1300 was also promoting social development, by creating new jobs, notably for the men and women engaged in rural industry. Once the population had fallen to 2.5 million at the end of the fourteenth century, at which level it remained until well after 1500, the threat of famine receded, and people produced more efficiently to satisfy the demands of the market, for example for meat. Welsh farmers reared cattle which were then driven to the midlands to be fattened, and then sold to butchers in Coventry and London. Cloth-making flourished in

A fifteenth-century timber framed building, a corner shop, at the junction of King Street and Broad Street in Ludlow Shropshire.
Peter Brown / Alamy Stock Photo

the countryside, for example in Wiltshire and Somerset, and the products were often sold in London for export to the continent. The profits of those trades and smaller scale enterprises were stimulated by the aim of wide sections of society to improve their material conditions, and one consequence of their ambitions can be seen in still-standing well-built timber framed houses.

Beyond material things

Throughout the five centuries examined here country people were concerned with the routines of farming, industry and trade, but these practical activities did not fill their lives completely. Villagers interacted to form lively communities, coming together to worship in their parish churches, and in the fellowship of religious fraternities which flourished in eastern England. At the end of the period parishioners were taking on responsibility for building and embellishing their parish churches. They raised money for the building work by brewing and selling ale, and these festive occasions, known as church ales and held in purpose-built church houses, drew people together. When the church ale was not being held, people could gather in ale houses for drinking and the games that the authorities tried to discourage, such as dice and cards. The atmosphere was enlivened by the women brewing and pouring the ale, and offering other pleasures. Archaeological finds tell us about the entertainments at home, including musical instruments and boards scratched on slabs of stone for playing 'nine men's morris'. For most country people, as for their social superiors, their main source of entertainment came from story-telling and singing. The tales of Robin Hood were imaginative fantasies about a hero with whom everyone could identify.

The medieval countryside was a scene of much day-to-day hardship, and occasional episodes of tragedy, but it was out of

the practical skills and modest ambitions of the inhabitants that efficient commercial agriculture and productive rural industry emerged long before they came to dominate in the eighteenth century.

Further reading

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R.H. Britnell, *Britain and Ireland 1050-1530: economy and society* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004). A thorough and systematic account, dividing the Middle Ages into two periods, and showing the interactions between rural and urban economies.

C. Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: the people of Britain 850-1520* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2003). This seeks to understand the perceptions of the different actors in the period, with chapters presenting the experience of lords, peasants and townspeople. It uses archaeological as well as documentary evidence.

Christopher Dyer has taught at the universities of Edinburgh and Birmingham, and is an emeritus professor of the University of Leicester. His research includes agrarian history, rural settlement, urban history (with a specialism in small towns), medieval archaeology and themes in social history such as rebellions and social mobility. His books include works on standards of living, everyday life and the transition from the medieval to the modern worlds.

How did ideas about gender influence people's lives?

Louise J. Wilkinson

The roles open to men and women in the Middle Ages (c. 1000-1530) were shaped by a variety of considerations, including a person's age, wealth, social status, location, access to education and the time at which they lived. Gender, in the sense of what it meant to be a man or a woman in medieval society, was another important influence in determining daily lives and occupations. The relationship between men and women was based on a clearly-defined sexual hierarchy, which elevated men firmly above women. Being male automatically bestowed privileges. English inheritance customs advantaged sons over daughters. By the mid-1200s, among the aristocracy, the eldest son was usually the primary heir; daughters only inherited family lands as co-heiresses in the absence of sons in the same generation. In adulthood, it was usual for a man to be the head of a household and the head of a family, exercising mastery over his wife, his children and his servants. When a woman married, all her property passed into her husband's control and she was not even permitted to make a will without her husband's permission.[1]

The superior rights of men influenced later perceptions of medieval society. The studies written by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historians focused heavily on the political and military activities of men that dominated the monastic chronicles, our main narrative sources for medieval life. It was only with researchers such as Eileen Power and Doris Stenton that the balance began to be redressed in favour of women. During the last 50 years or so, thanks to the influence of the feminist movement, other authors have followed in their footsteps by making extensive use of the wealth of documents that survive from the Middle Ages, including charters, court records, estate surveys, household accounts, letters and wills, to reconstruct a more sophisticated picture of medieval culture. Academic scholarship has also begun to acknowledge more readily the role of female patrons in informing the works of male chroniclers, while archaeologists have adopted gender as a useful category of analysis. In doing so, their collective efforts have created a fuller, more nuanced understanding of gender roles at all social levels, and of the ideas and interactions between men and women that shaped them.[2]

Government in a patriarchal world

The legal subordination of women ensured their exclusion from the formal machinery of medieval government. All English rulers (kings) were men. Just one woman inherited a claim to the English throne in this period, and she was ultimately unable to secure her own coronation. Before his death in 1135, King Henry I had recognised his daughter, the Empress Matilda, as his successor, and the great men of his kingdom had sworn oaths to accept Matilda as their queen. Many barons were not only horrified by the prospect of being ruled by a woman, but also deeply concerned that her unpopular husband, Count Geoffrey of Anjou, would dominate English affairs. They supported Henry I's nephew, Stephen, when he seized the throne, a situation that led to 19 years of civil war and unrest in England (1135-54).

Medieval English queens were queens consort, that is women whose positions were based on their status as kings' wives. Although a queen consort's role in government was poorly defined – she did not, like her husband, swear an oath at her coronation that outlined her responsibilities – individual queens informally advised their husbands on policies. Queens consort, unlike women at lower social levels, often controlled significant resources in the form of lands and/or money during marriage. They also exercised patronage, acted as intermediaries between the king and his subjects, sometimes formed their own court factions and occasionally fulfilled vice-regal roles. A disaffected queen consort could be a formidable political opponent: in 1326 Isabella of France, the wife of King Edward II, launched a successful invasion of England that led to the abdication of her husband and his replacement with her son King Edward III.[3]

In medieval England, the officials, who staffed the royal chancery, exchequer and law courts, were usually men. Only a handful of ladies, like Nicola de la Haye, Matilda de Caux and Isabella of Everingham, served as castellans, sheriffs (the king's chief local agent) or foresters, usually because they were mature and capable widows who possessed hereditary claims to the offices in question. The attendance of women was not usually expected at medieval parliaments, although they could present petitions on matters that touched their own interests. Like most government officers, the vast majority of local lords (barons, earls and later viscounts and dukes), who held great estates from the king, were men. Yet the centrality of the family to structures of lordship ensured that wives were routinely called upon to act as their husbands' deputies by governing great households and estates, and by defending dynastic interests when their husbands were away on business or at war. Eleanor, the wife of Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester, was involved in defending Dover castle in the months immediately before and after her husband was killed at the Battle of Evesham on 4 August 1265. In widowhood, women moved out from under male tutelage, and some ladies controlled vast lands. This was, in part, thanks to the provision that was made for them in the form of dower (the widow's share of her dead husband's lands, usually a third, which a widow held for her lifetime) and, from around 1250 onward, jointure (property which had been settled jointly on a husband and wife at marriage).[4]

Where did medieval ideas about gender come from?

Medieval perceptions of male superiority and female inferiority were informed by ideas about men's and women's bodies that had been inherited from the ancient world. Men were believed to be physically strong, rational thinkers, while women were

Christine de Pizan (d. c. 1430), a famous widow and author, presents her book to Isabeau of Bavaria, the French queen. Christine's works also circulated in England. This picture is from The Book of the Queen (c.1410-14).
British Library, Harley MS 4431, fo. 3

physically weak and irrational. The ideas of Aristotle, a Greek philosopher who died in around 322 BC, and of Galen, a Greek physician born in around AD 129, still held currency in the Middle Ages. In the *Generation of Animals*, Aristotle had argued that the male of each species was superior to the female, since males were physically larger, stronger and more agile; females, on the other hand, were weaker, passive creatures. For Galen, a woman's body was colder and more phlegmatic than a man's body; this made women weaker, more fickle, and 'less perfect' than men. In medieval scientific thought, women were therefore naturally inferior to men.[5] These ideas proved to be so influential that they continued into the nineteenth century and beyond.

Christian teachings, based upon the Bible, shaped attitudes towards gender difference too. In the account of the Creation in the Book of Genesis, Eve, the first woman, was created from the rib of Adam, the first man, as his subordinate companion in the Garden of Eden. Eve was tempted by the Serpent to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and then tempted Adam to eat the fruit, even though God had expressly forbidden this. God punished the couple by expelling them from Eden, so that henceforth Adam would live by his own labour and Eve would suffer pain in childbirth. Medieval churchmen blamed Eve for bringing about the fall of mankind, and medieval women were regarded as heiresses of Eve – foolish and tempting. Drawing on the teachings of St Paul (Eph. 5:22-23), one of Jesus's disciples, medieval churchmen advised husbands to govern their wives. The thirteenth-century friar John of Wales instructed women to be subservient to

men, subdued rather than talkative, and above all humble and modest.

Fortunately, there were some female role models within the Bible and medieval Christian teaching who offered women a more positive social role. The Virgin Mary, the mother of Christ, became an extremely popular figure for religious veneration. She was often portrayed in religious art from the twelfth century onward as queen of heaven. Mary possessed the key Christian virtues for women: humility, obedience, purity and motherhood. She was also an authority figure who offered her son wise advice. Some churchmen encouraged women to imitate particular qualities associated with the Virgin Mary. Medieval wives, for example, were advised to counsel their husbands, soothe their husbands' anger and direct their husbands' attentions to moral pursuits. The *Manual for Confessors* (*c.* 1215), written by Thomas of Chobham, set out that wives should persuade their husbands to be better Christians by encouraging them to be charitable, generous and merciful towards the poor.[6]

Gender, education and work

These gender ideologies pervaded all aspects of medieval life, including children's upbringing. Education – interpreted here in its broadest sense as preparation for adult life – played an important role in socialising children in gender from an early age. Most children received moral and spiritual instruction from their mothers in infancy. Aristocratic boys and girls usually left the nursery at around the age of seven, when they might be sent away from home – to another great household

The expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden from The Huth Psalter (late thirteenth century).
British Library, Add. MS. 38116, fo. 9

'secondary') schools seldom admitted girls as pupils, and the universities and Inns of Court were closed to young women.

Only a small proportion of children received any formal schooling. For most children in rural and urban households, work was an economic necessity. Barbara Hanawalt employed coroners' records – in the form of 3,118 accidental death inquests from six English counties – to examine how gender influenced the division of labour in peasant households. Hanawalt's analysis of the causes of death for children and adults who died by misadventure found that children's occupations mimicked or mirrored those of their parents, along gendered lines. Peasant women performed a wide range of tasks: they prepared and cooked meals, brewed ale (a staple of the medieval diet) for household consumption, made or purchased clothing, fetched water or fuel for cooking, did the laundry, cared for children, looked after poultry and dairy animals, made butter and cheese, worked wool into cloth and maintained the family's home. Women also sold surplus items, such as ale, eggs and milk, at local markets, and assisted in the fields on a seasonal basis, helping with planting, weeding and hay-making. Men, on the other hand, tended to work in the fields more regularly and perform heavy labour: they were involved in ploughing, building work and planting, tending, harvesting, carting and storing crops. Although it is difficult to be certain just how far records of accidental deaths, which were in themselves unusual events, can be used as evidence for daily life, Hanawalt's picture of men's and women's occupations remains persuasive. The varying and multi-faceted contribution of women to the home economy may well have mitigated some elements of gender inequality in marriage by placing rural wives on a more equal footing with their husbands, in practical terms at least. After all, the everyday duties performed by peasant women could be essential not only for a household's functioning, but also for its members' wellbeing and survival.[7]

Gender-based divisions of labour also existed in medieval towns. Adolescents of both sexes left home to work for wages, especially in the decades after the Black Death (1348-49). Boys were far more likely than girls to be apprenticed for several years to learn skilled crafts, such as tailoring, cloth production, masonry and wood- and metal-working. Many girls entered domestic service, and were employed on shorter contracts in urban households. Lacking access to training, wealth and trading rights – the latter being regulated by male-controlled borough authorities and, increasingly, by male-governed craft guilds – women tended to work in low status, poorly paid occupations that required little initial investment and/or drew on existing household skills.[8] Admittedly, in towns like Lincoln and London, married women were permitted to trade separately from their husbands, as sole women with responsibility for their own business affairs. Even so, women were typically employed as spinners, carders and combers of wool; as seamstresses and specialists in silk work; as laundresses and nurses; as brewers and sellers of ale; and as retailers of foodstuffs and hucksters (general petty retailers). It was unusual, but not unheard of, for women to work as bell-founders, blacksmiths, carpenters, coopers, ironmongers, joiners, masons, tanners and wrights, especially as widows, who continued their dead husbands' businesses.[9]

A late medieval 'Golden Age'?

Many men and women took advantage of the rise in wages that came about through the downturn in population caused by the Great Famine of 1315-22 (when perhaps 15% of England's population died), and by the Black Death of 1348-49 (when perhaps a third to a half of England's population died). Labour shortages encouraged migration to towns and led to the widespread employment of women in the fields at harvest time. On some manors, women harvest-workers were paid at

or a religious house – to receive the more formal aspects of their education. Boys were usually placed in the charge of male tutors (knights and clerics) and girls in the charge of mistresses (pious and well-born women). Unless they were destined for the Church, boys were trained over the following years in how to hunt, ride and fight – in preparation for their future careers as knights. They also received instruction in courtly manners and in the skills necessary for running estates. From the twelfth century onwards, it was usual for boys to be taught reading and, perhaps, writing.

The education of aristocratic girls focused, instead, on the world of the home, in preparation for their future lives as wives and mothers. In medieval canon law, girls were permitted to marry at the age of 12, and boys at the age of 14. Conduct literature reveals that young women were educated in how to behave in accordance with Christian feminine ideals. They were also trained in practical, domestic skills, such as the arts of sewing, spinning and weaving. Although some young aristocratic women were taught to read and, by the later Middle Ages, to write, or at least to sign their own names, their levels of literacy trailed behind those of boys. The same was true for young women from other backgrounds. Although elementary schools (for children aged seven to ten or 12) were open to children of both sexes upon the payment of fees, grammar (or

Medieval peasant women help the men in the fields at harvest time. From The Luttrell Psalter (c. 1325-35).
British Library, Add. MS 42130, fo. 172v

similar rates to men, as they were at Pocklington in Yorkshire for autumnal work there in the 1360s. Before the Black Death, women's work was usually far more poorly remunerated than that of men. Even so, it is questionable whether the change in economic conditions ushered in a 'Golden Age' for women's work and women's rights. True, the labour shortages of the late fourteenth century brought women more economic opportunities than they had formerly enjoyed, and delayed the ages at which they married until their early to mid twenties, but these gains were temporary in nature, and did not continue beyond the recession of the late fifteenth century.[10] At no point in the Middle Ages was there anything like the level of economic, legal or social partnership between the sexes that we know today.

Further reading

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Ruth M. Karras, *From Boys to Men: formations of masculinity in late medieval Europe* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2003) – a study of medieval perceptions of masculinity.

Kim M. Phillips, *Medieval Maidens: young women and gender in England, 1270-1540* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2003) – a survey of how young women were 'socialised' in gender.

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Figure 1: The Battle of Agincourt, 25 October 1415. Miniature from the manuscript
'Vigils of King Charles VII' by Martial d'Auvergne, 1484. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

How well organised was the invasion of France in 1415?

Anne Curry

If one word answers to exam questions were allowed, all we would need to say was 'very'! The campaign of 1415, which led to the successful siege of Harfleur and culminated in Henry V's victory at Agincourt on 25 October, is the best known invasion of France by the English in the Middle Ages – largely thanks to Shakespeare's play *Henry V* of 1599, believed to have been the first play to have been performed at what was then the new Globe theatre. But it was by no means the only invasion. English kings had sent armies to France for centuries, initially to defend the territories they held as dukes within France, and from the late 1330s in support of their claims to the French throne. The high level of organisation in 1415 therefore stemmed largely from well-established practices and from previous experience of launching campaigns. Only three years earlier, for instance, Henry IV had despatched an army of 4,000

men under his second son, Thomas, Duke of Clarence. Behind this and every campaign, including that of 1415, lay a myriad of royal officials of all ranks, sailors, craftsmen, victuallers, even before we come to the recruitment of the soldiers themselves.

Indeed war was a national effort touching everyone. There was no other activity which brought together so many men from so many different parts of the kingdom as did raising an army. Nor was there any activity which was so costly, since all of the soldiers had to be paid by the Crown for their services. The demands of war had been the major stimulus to the development of Parliament from the reign of Edward I onwards, and to the development of taxation. While Henry V had no doubt been considering an invasion for some time, we could take the beginning of the organisation of the 1415 campaign as the calling of a Parliament to meet in November

1414. It was there that the chancellor announced the king's intention 'to strive for the recovery of the inheritance and rights of his crown outside the realm, which have for too long been withheld and wrongfully retained', adding that Henry now understood 'that a suitable time has come for him to establish his purpose'. But he needed help from his people in his endeavours, including a generous subsidy of money from his subjects. Enthusiasm and support were forthcoming: the Commons in Parliament voted the king a double tax grant to be collected in two instalments, February 1415 and February 1416. On the back of that, as was common practice then and remains essentially the way government finance operates today, the Exchequer could raise loans, including 10,000 marks from the city of London.

Raising an army

While the first instalment was being collected negotiations began on raising an army. There was no standing army although the king could expect his household to accompany him (as it did, administrators, cooks, chapel royal and all). He could also expect troops from the areas of the country with which he had a special link: hence we find archer companies from South Wales (not North since memories of the Glyndŵr rebellion were still sore), Cheshire and Lancashire (the last group serving as Henry's personal bodyguard), all led by local officials. Such areas had already provided troops to his predecessors. The bulk of the army, however, had to be raised by encouraging the nobility and gentry to enter into agreements to provide them.

These agreements were produced in the form of indentures. The text, which included the terms and conditions such as pay and rules on booty, was written out twice with a jagged cut then being made through the middle. The king kept one half and the captain the other. This was but one example of many efforts to avoid fraud, but perhaps the most explicit was the government's desire to check that the captains actually raised the numbers and types of troops they had promised: hence the musters taken by Exchequer officials of the troops at the assembly points in the Southampton region. Musters were taken during the campaign too (as the sole surviving example for the Duke of York shows, adding in the number of horses each soldier had), and lists were made of those who fell ill during the siege and who had to return home. The post-campaign accounting went on for years after 1415, with captains also submitting retinue lists detailing what had happened to their soldiers during the campaign. After all, the king did not want to pay for men who died during the siege, but he did want to take the Crown's customary share of any ransoms of prisoners captured by soldiers during the campaign, as had been laid down in the indentures.

The surviving documentation for the campaign is largely financial. This was war fought as much by accountants as by soldiers, with the high level of scrutiny appropriate for public expenditure. The organisation was impressive, as also the ingenuity with which a lack of ready cash was solved. The king wanted to conduct a campaign of conquest, revealed by the fact the indentures were to be for twelve-months' service. But the nobility and gentry demanded six months' pay in advance, rather than the customary three months (or quarter) for overseas campaigns. The king did not have enough cash in hand so he offered several of those who indented jewels and plate from the royal treasury as security for future payment of the second quarter. Despite the success of the campaign in military terms it took many years for the Crown to have enough funds to redeem the jewels: in 1437 any remaining debts were simply written off.

Overall, around 12,000 men were raised of whom about 80% were archers. Sizes of companies were dictated by social status, as were daily pay rates: archers were paid 6d, men-at-

Figure 2: The muster of the retinue of Sir Thomas Erpingham on Southampton Heath (now Common)on 13 July 1415. Erpingham had indented to provide 20 men-at-arms (esquires) and 60 archers. Dots beside the names were entered by the musterers to indicate the troops were 'present and correct'. In the middle of the list we find four further men-at-arms (here called lances) recruited by Erpingham beyond the number he had indented to provide. At the end there is a note indicating that he had also recruited 12 additional archers but these are not named. For a transcript of this document see the on-line edition of this publication.
TNA E 101/44/30 piece 3.

Figure 3: All captains on the 1415 campaign were required to file a financial account with the Exchequer after the campaign but this might take several years, as was the case for Sir Thomas Erpingham, whose account was not submitted until after his death in 1428. After the account was finalised all of the relevant documents concerning the service of Erpingham and his retinue were placed in a bag made of alum tawed animal skin (calf, goat or sheep), on which his name was written. The drawstring allowed the bag to be hung on a peg in a form of filing system.

TNA E 101/47/20.

arms 12d, knights 2s, barons 4s, earls 6s 8d, dukes 13s 4d. The biggest retinues were provided by the king's eldest and youngest brothers, the dukes of Clarence (960 men) and of Gloucester (800). The 26 peers on the campaign contributed in total 5,222 men. But they did not raise these numbers themselves. In reality their retinues were made of up of many smaller companies raised by others. Some sub-company leaders had existing links with the dukes, others did not but simply ended up within the larger company, much as in First World War recruitment. The majority of the 500 indentures struck for the campaign were for small retinues, some even for the service of an individual archer.

At the core of the retinues of the nobility was his household and servants. Thanks to the survival of the account of the receiver-general of the Earl Marshal for 1414-15, we can see that the earl had his minstrel and his valet with him as archers, the latter also seeing to the provision of a new bed for his master's use during the campaign. Present too was the master of his horses, serving as a man-at-arms accompanied by two archers.

From the muster evidence as a whole we can spot soldiers from the same family as well as from the same locality. Three of the archers in the retinue of the king's cousin, Edward, Duke of York, had the surname Messager. Another archer, Robert Milner, and one of the duke's men-at-arms John Grenham, were the duke's tenants in Oakham and Langham (Rutland). Thanks to the researches of Gary Baker, we know

the geographical origins of about 25% of York's retinue. The majority came from the midlands where the duke's lands were concentrated, but there were men from every other part of England as well as from the marches of Wales. Shortly before the campaign the duke made his will, wisely as it happens since he was killed at the battle. Bequests included armour to some of the men who had accompanied him on the campaign. The duke requested that his saddles and harness should be divided equally among his household men, but that one servant, Rokell, who had served as an archer on the campaign, was to have the best.

Soldiers were expected to be equipped according to their military rank. Based on later evidence from 1434 an English archer was expected to have a brigandine (reinforced jacket), helmet, bow, arrows (research by Thom Richardson suggests 24 was a common sheaf), a sword and a dagger. The remaining troops, from king to ordinary man-at-arms, had plate armour and a range of weapons, including swords, maces, lances, pole arms. The Earl Marshal bought himself a fine new cote armour for the campaign as well as a new latrine.

Muster and transportation

Large numbers of soldiers were always a hazard for local populations, especially if a campaign was late commencing and soldiers were left hanging around. We know from the records of the city of Salisbury that a group of Lancashire men had caused havoc just outside the city at Fisherton on their march south, getting into a brawl which led to the deaths of four locals. To mitigate problems the retinues were ordered to assemble in different places around Southampton, such as Christchurch, Over and Middle Wallop, Romsey, and Swanwick Heath. The king himself was sometimes based at the castles of Southampton and Portchester, but seems to have preferred the more comfortable palace of the Bishop of Winchester at Bishops Waltham.

In late May, the sheriff of Hampshire proclaimed that in Winchester, Southampton and other towns and villages, bakers and brewers were to work under the direction of his under-sheriff to prepare for the coming of the king and his army. On 24 July, with the expedition due to depart soon, captains were ordered to ensure that their men had enough supplies for three months. Imagine the large number of barrels of salted meat and fish, and of ship's biscuit, which had to be transported to France, along with live animals for food supply (which were sold to the captains), in addition to thousands of horses. The Earl Marshal had with him at least 24 horses and his knightly sub captains six each.

There were also cannons to be transported, testimony to Henry's intention to conduct a war of sieges. From late 1414 we can find in the Exchequer records evidence of increased production of large artillery pieces. From the indentures we know that 87 gunners were recruited, almost all of them German or Dutch but apparently recruited in England. In addition 119 miners were recruited from the Forest of Dean (their work in undermining the walls of Harfleur to the north-east of the town was not filled in until 1419), and 100 stonecutters, 120 carpenters and turners, 40 blacksmiths and 60 waggoners. Along with the tent-makers, tailors and cobblers, and no doubt grooms, pages and other ancillaries, it was a veritable medium-sized town that departed for France.

That it could be transported is testimony to the strength of English merchant shipping. There were only a handful of noble or royal-owned ships. (The king had only ten ships of his own in 1415 but invested heavily in construction later, generating a total of 36 royal ships by 1422.) Therefore the Crown had to

rely on the requisitioning of merchant shipping, as is revealed by royal orders. As Craig Lambert has shown, full evidence has not survived but we know that several English vessels were kept in service from 1 August for six weeks, meaning they not only transported the troops but also supported the siege of Harfleur. Some reinforcements were transported across the Channel in early October: the retinue list of the Earl of Arundel gives the names of the new arrivals. English ships were also used to transport home the sick: the Earl Marshal returned on the *Nicolas* of Hull. However, Henry had anticipated as early as February that English ships would not be sufficient to transport all the men and equipment for the large-scale expedition he intended, and so had sent officials to Holland and Zeeland with funds to hire vessels. The amount spent would have covered around 250 vessels.

Discipline, medical care and death

Food was certainly brought by ship from England during and after the siege, including peas, salt fish and barrels of eels. As the army marched northwards towns and villages were also forced to provide foodstuffs in order to buy themselves out of attack. It is likely that there was also some pillaging although on the whole Henry was keen to avoid uncontrolled actions. After all, he also wanted his army to move quickly: too much freedom to his soldiers to carry out pillaging would slow down progress. The disciplinary rules therefore included clauses which designated officials to gather supplies rather than allowing a free-for-all. They also included a ban on attacking churches and raping women: even French chronicles praised Henry for his high standards of military discipline, and the famous scene in Shakespeare's play of the king hanging a soldier who stole a pyx from a church reflects an incident noted in all the early English narratives of the campaign. The disciplinary rules, an expanded version of the first known set issued for Richard II's Scottish campaign of 1385, also created a sense of unity: all members of the army should wear the cross of St George on their front and back.

Discipline, unity and resilience were essential features for success for an army operating in enemy territory especially one which suffered considerably from the harsh conditions of the siege camp. The Earl Marshal had purchased medicines to take with him on the campaign, including one 'against the bloody flux'. But he was one of the 1,500 or so who contracted dysentery and had to be invalided home. The king took his personal surgeons and doctors but even their efforts could not prevent the death at Harfleur of one of the king's closest friends, Richard Courtenay Bishop of Norwich. Organisation was good enough for the bishop's body to be brought back and buried at Westminster Abbey close to where the king had already planned his tomb. The night of Agincourt the bodies of the Earl of Suffolk (who had only enjoyed the title from his father's death at the siege) and the Duke of York were excarnated (the flesh removed by boiling) so that their bones could be repatriated for burial in their family vaults.

As for the common soldier, we know nothing of how they were cared for when ill or wounded. A petition by one veteran Thomas Hostell speaks of how he had his cheek broken and lost an eye at the siege thanks to a crossbow bolt, yet managed to continue on the campaign and to serve at the battle. Present on the 1416 naval campaign he had his coat of plates (essentially a brigandine) torn through by shot, yet again survived, but found himself unable to work and forced to rely on charity. At least one archer was killed by a French gun at the battle. For the rank and file there was no repatriation: their bodies were piled up in a barn and burned, with their ashes scattered or buried.

The majority of Henry V's army survived to return to England, after a campaign of around 11 weeks and a march of over 400 km. That a speed of around 23 km per marching day was possible is again testimony to the level of organisation. That a victory was achieved at the battle also underlines the disciplined and co-ordinated deployment of the English army as well as the strong bonds of trust which had been generated between the soldiers by shared experience on campaign. Such organisation continued in the return home, with shipping arranged from Calais, although by the time the army arrived there, some soldiers were so short of food they had to give away the prisoners they had taken at the battle in order to eat and drink. For others, however, such as the archer Robert Sadler, the ransom he gained from his prisoner, even after the Crown and his captain had taken their shares as laid down in the indenture, was equivalent to an archer's wages for four years.

Further reading

Anne Curry, *The Battle of Agincourt. Sources and Interpretations* (Boydell, Woodbridge, 2000, 2009, available as an e-book). A comprehensive guide to all types of sources for both the English and the French with many documents transcribed.

Julie Barker, *Agincourt: the king, the campaign and the battle* (Little, Brown 2005) Although based largely on printed materials a very lively, well-written account with much on life in the period.

Anne Curry, *Agincourt: a new history* (Tempus, 2005; rev. The History Press, 2015).

Ian Mortimer, *1415: Henry V's year of glory* (Bodley Head, 2009) A day-by-day approach which highlights in a fascinating way the build up to the campaign across the preceding months.

Anne Curry and Malcolm Mercer, *The Battle of Agincourt* (Yale, 2015). Produced to accompany an exhibition in the Tower of London. Includes the work of Thom Richardson and others on weapons and armour.

www.Agincourt600.com The site originally created for the 600th anniversary. Includes a week-by-week account of preparations from the Parliament of November 1414 to the king's entry to London on 23 November 1415.

www.medievalsoldier.org Includes all names found on the muster and retinue rolls and sick lists for the campaign, in a database of English armies from 1369 to 1453, as well as details on all of the indentees of 1415 and information on the French army in an Agincourt 600 section.

Craig Lambert, 'Henry V and the crossing to France: reconstructing naval operations for the Agincourt campaign, 1415', *Journal of Medieval History, 43* (2017). Open access on the Taylor and Francis website. Gary Baker's article in the same journal, 'To Agincourt and beyond: the martial affinity of Edward of Langley, second duke of York (c. 1373-1415)' is only available to subscribers. These articles and others are to be published in R. Ambuhl and C. Lambert (eds.) Agincourt in Context (Routledge, 2018).

The University of Southampton has a Future Learn course on Agincourt. Many of the sections are available freely on-line. See www.futurelearn.com/courses/agincourt/0/steps

Anne Curry is Professor of Medieval History and Dean of Humanities at the University of Southampton, and a past president of the Historical Association. She has published many books on the battle: her latest, *Great Battles: Agincourt* (2015), considers the cultural legacy of the battle between 1415 and 2015. She is historical adviser at the *Centre historique médiéval* at Azincourt as well as for the Royal Armouries exhibition on the battle at the Tower of London between October 2015 and January 2016. She was also Chair of Trustees of Agincourt 600.

What were people reading in the later Middle Ages?

Catherine Nall

When I ask students coming to the medieval period for the first time what kinds of texts they expect to find being written and read, they typically respond with some or all of the following: the literature (and the culture from which it emerged) was all about religion, heavily moralistic, repressed and repressive, full of superstition and ignorance, misogynistic, racist and with nothing in it that could speak to them in the twenty-first century. What they find in the literature of the period is in fact far more complicated, interesting and challenging. They find, for example, women who choose and actively pursue the men they want for their husbands or who defy the expectations of their gender altogether and refuse marriage; texts which debate the ethics and legitimacy of war and violence and its targets, both Christian and non-Christian; and genres which explore things which they can and do relate to – what it is to love and desire, to grieve, to be, in effect, human. When you encounter medieval literature, prepare to be surprised!

Writing at the end of the period in 1533, Sir Thomas More commented that 60% of the population could read English. More's statement is generally regarded as fairly close to the mark, with perhaps 50% of the population able to read by the 1530s, allowing for variations across society (and the percentage who could write English was lower). Literacy had increased in the later Middle Ages due to a number of factors – it became increasingly essential that members of the merchant classes could read and write in order to conduct their business; there was greater demand for lower-level clergy; and there was also growth in the provision of elementary education, particularly for those of lower social status. This was partly in response to the stipulation of many guilds that apprentices should have basic literacy skills, and it was aided by the increasing popularity among wealthier men and women of making financial provision for the education of those lower down the social scale as a form of charity. Those literate individuals wishing to read for recreational, devotional, or educational purposes were helped by changes in book production. The increasing use of paper rather than parchment in the fifteenth century, for example, meant that books were cheaper and, with the introduction of printing towards the end of the period, books became both cheaper and more readily available.

There would, of course, have been huge variety in levels of literacy – across social status, gender and geographical location. Neither was English the only language operational in England during this period: Latin and French were used alongside it in a variety of contexts – from the law court to parliament to the university. Thus to address what people were reading in this period is to recognise that the 'people' we are talking about were generally of high status, educated, and predominantly, but by no means exclusively, male and that the texts that were available to them might have been written in any of the three languages of England.

People's experience of reading would also have been very different from our own. Before the introduction of printing to England, with the establishment of William Caxton's printing press at Westminster in 1476, books were produced by hand, in manuscript (literally 'written by hand') form. This means that individual copies of texts were to a degree unique – they were not standardised. Moreover, while we are used to reading single-authored books, usually containing one single text, for medieval readers their books would often contain multiple texts, sometimes in different languages, of different genres and by different authors (who may or may not have been named).

In addition, books were generally bespoke, produced for a specific buyer, rather than produced on speculation, in anticipation of a market, and this has a number of implications. Potential book owners would not browse a bookshelf in a bookshop and pick a volume, but would pay for particular texts to be copied for them. This means that they would already have some idea of what they wanted to own. And this suggests that the acquisition of books was much more dependent on personal connections and relationships, as it was through such networks that a reader might learn about a particular text, desire to own it, and perhaps even borrow a copy of it which could then be copied for their own use.

The conditions in which people encountered their texts were also different. While 'silent reading' was on the rise in this period, texts were also read aloud to a listening audience. Even at the end of the period, this was still the case. An account of the daily routine of Cecily Neville (1415-95), duchess of York and mother of Edward IV and Richard III, for example, tells us that she apparently listened to devotional works over dinner.

What people read

Our knowledge of what people read is based primarily on the surviving manuscripts and on testamentary evidence (wills). There are problems with both sources, of course: many manuscripts must have been lost and testamentary evidence tends to favour high value items or books of a devotional, religious nature, and tells us only about those readers who were of sufficient status to make a will.

We can also consider the different kinds of texts that a writer produced as an indication of what was popular in the period. One of the most prolific and fashionable writers in late medieval England was John Lydgate (*c*. 1370-1449-50), a monk at Bury St Edmunds. He produced over 145,000 lines of verse, and received commissions from some of the most important figures of his time: Henry V while he was Prince of Wales; Henry's brother, Humphrey, duke of Gloucester; Thomas Montagu, earl of Salisbury and his wife Alice Chaucer, granddaughter of the poet. As well as these aristocratic patrons, Lydgate also received civic patronage: from the London Guild of Armourers, the mercers, goldsmiths, and the sheriffs of London (a record of a payment for Lydgate from 1439 is the

Figure 1: Chaucer reading aloud his work to a courtly group which includes Richard II.
This image is the frontispiece to a manuscript copy of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, dating from the early fifteenth century.
Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 61, fol. 1v

Figure 2: A woman reading while cooking. This illustration is from a book owned by Edward IV, dating from 1470-c 1479.

literary production and reception in the period.

The example of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, written in the 1390s, further illustrates the generic diversity of late medieval writing. The *Canterbury Tales* feature examples of fabliaux (short, bawdy tales), romance (long narratives, often in verse, recounting the adventures of a usually high-born male or female protagonist), saints' lives, religious and ethical prose, tragedy, moral tales and beast fables. And even in the case of romance – perhaps the most important, and prolific, genre of secular literature in the Middle Ages - there are several different *types* of romance in the *Canterbury Tales*: one set in the classical past, another in the Arthurian world, another an example of a Breton lay, a type of romance which prioritises romantic love (unlike many romances where love is not, in fact, the main theme).

One further genre merits attention, that of the chronicle. The same figures that populate romance texts appear in chronicle-writing. Thus King Arthur appears in chronicles, as the most famous of the king of the Britons, and in romances, as the king to whom the best knights of the world are drawn. Other figures of England's legendary past have a presence in both romance and history, many of whom are not so well known to us now: Havelok the Dane, whose foster father Grim founded Grimsby; Guy of Warwick, whose travels took him across Europe and to the Holy Land. The most popular chronicle text in the period is known as the *Brut*, after the supposed founder of Britain, Brutus, great grandson of Aeneas. The *Brut* narratives traced the foundation of Britain through to the present day and proliferated in England throughout the Middle Ages in Latin, Anglo-Norman, French, and English. They were based originally on a Latin chronicle by Geoffrey of Monmouth (*c.* 1095-*c.* 1155), the writer who effectively invented Arthur in textual form.

Readers and their books

We are fortunate to know quite a lot about one gentry family and its book collection. The Paston family is famous primarily because of the large collection of their letters which has survived. Originally not of gentry status, the legal career of William Paston I (1378-1444) and the advantageous marriages he negotiated for himself and his son led to the family joining the ranks of the gentry. References in their letters, their surviving books, and an inventory of books written by Sir John Paston II (d. 1479), give us an indication of the kinds of materials read by a family of this status. They clearly had an interest in material related to knighthood and chivalry – they owned accounts of the deeds of arms and of the tournaments that had recently taken place, copies of military ordinances, a translation of a late Roman military manual which was of particular interest to members of the gentry during this period, and texts relating to another popular late medieval genre – that of the 'mirror for princes' – advisory texts which taught the practice and theory of good kingship, which were addressed to princes but were read by those lower down the social scale too. They also owned texts relating to King Arthur, romances, and some of Lydgate's works. The inventory and their letters also point to the exchange of books between them and their friends and associates.

If we compare this to the known books owned by Sir Edmund Rede (d. 1489), a prominent Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire landowner, shared themes and concerns emerge. Rede commissioned a copy of a military and heraldic text written by Nicholas Upton in *c.* 1446, which still survives. According to his will, he also owned a varied collection of books including two works by the late fourteenth-century writer John Gower, a copy of John Hardyng's *Chronicle*, volumes relating to Troy, as well as other chronicles, romances, treatises on law and estate management, a bestiary (a text

first clear record of direct payment for writing). The diversity of his output is startling: he wrote long narrative poems on the fall of Troy and of Thebes (the latter presented as a continuation of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*), religious poems, a prose text on the life of Caesar, saint's lives, semi-dramatic works, didactic verse, debate poetry, dream vision (a framed narrative in which the narrator falls asleep, has a vision, then wakes up), and occasional poems celebrating particular events – for example, Henry VI's coronation in 1422 and his entry into London in 1432. His longest work is the *Fall of Princes*, which, as the title suggests, catalogues the rise and fall of famous figures across history. This work was based on a French translation of an Italian original, and several of Lydgate's works were translations from the French, a reminder of the multilingual context for

on different types of animal, often moralised), and a Latin grammar.

During this period, we also have substantial evidence of women commissioning, owning and reading a range of texts. The writings of John Lydgate are again popular in this context, as were the didactic writings of the French writer, Christine de Pizan (1364-*c.*1430). Women seem to have been particularly interested in religious and devotional writings: the treatises of the fourteenth-century mystics, Richard Rolle and Walter Hilton, books of Psalms (psalters), Books of Hours (collections of prayers and devotional texts) and Bibles can all be identified with both religious and lay women. Even in the medieval period, women were particularly associated with the reading of romance. In one of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales,* the talking cockerel Chauntecleer refers to women's particular attachment to tales about Sir Lancelot, tales which they apparently 'hold in very great reverence'. Romances of all kinds – those relating to the world of Arthur and his knights, but also those concerning the exploits of other heroes or the ancient cities of Troy and Thebes – were read by women. In a famous scene from Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, written in the mid-1380s, and which was itself owned by women, the female protagonist Criseyde is depicted seated in a paved parlour with two other ladies listening to another lady reading aloud the 'geste [story] / Of the Sege [Siege] of Thebes' (II. 83-4), and indeed narratives recounting the fall of these ancient civilisations did circulate among women.

Perhaps more surprisingly, we find female owners of military manuals and of texts relating to governance and knighthood. The female members of the Heydon family in Norfolk signed their names in a manuscript containing Middle English translations of French political and advisory texts; one Emelina Bremschet wrote a Latin prayer at the end of her family's copy of a translation of a work by Christine de Pizan, which addressed the virtues of knighthood. Another such owner was Anne Colvylle, a nun at Syon Abbey in the early sixteenth century, whose copy of a military manual appears alongside a mirror for princes, an advisory text, the enormous, encyclopedic *Cursor Mundi*, Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes*, and a fragment of one of Chaucer's dream vision texts, the *Parliament of Fowls*.

Anne Colvylle is also associated with a 'common profit' book. 'Common profit' books contained religious and devotional texts which were paid for from the goods and estates of a donor, with the expectation that the recipient would pray for the soul of the deceased. Several 'common profit' books which were produced and circulated in London survive from the fifteenth century. London, indeed, was a centre of book production in the later Middle Ages. For those living in London, there was also some public access to books – as the fifteenth century went on, public libraries began to appear – in parish churches and schools, for example. From *c.* 1425 there was a public library of chained books in the Guildhall though how many books were available is unknown. This latter development is associated with John Carpenter (d. 1442), citizen and the city's common clerk. His will lists an extraordinary collection of books in Latin and French, which range from religious and theological works through to works attributed to classical writers, such as Ovid and Seneca.

The reading habits of urban readers were not so dissimilar from those of gentry readers, although, as is perhaps to be expected, we find that urban readers were more interested in owning materials which related to their town or city. Manuscripts associated with London readers, for example, often include lists of the mayors, sheriffs, keepers, and bailiffs who had held office, and the names of parishes, bridges and gates across the city. There is evidence of the circulation of books among a range of urban readers in this period, including grocers, masons, glovers, armourers and merchants. The London mercer Roger Thorney (*c.* 1440-1515) was an avid book collector who financially supported the publishing ventures of the printer Wynkyn de Worde (d. 1534/5). He owned several early printed books, including English translations of a long Latin chronicle known as the *Polychronicon* and of a thirteenth-century encyclopedia called *On the Properties of Things*. The titles of other books owned by this member of the mercantile elite are familiar: a manuscript copy of Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes,* and copies of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, which had recently been printed by England's first printer, William Caxton.

Looking at this literature and at the kinds of texts and books people read gives us an insight into the priorities, expectations and ideals of late medieval people. It helps make sense of how and why things mattered in the Middle Ages. This literature reflects and shapes contemporary ideas around everything from romantic and erotic love to kingship to the practice of warfare, and those ideas in turn influenced, in complex ways, the way medieval people thought and acted in the real world. What I have learned about the period from reading its literature is to appreciate both the literary achievements of its writers and the diversity of people's attitudes and responses. Far from being overwhelmingly dull, prudish and naive, the literature of this period reveals a world that was intellectually ambitious and questioning, in which things of real importance to medieval people – like salvation, love, the proper workings of society, the proper behaviour of knights – were debated, questioned and renegotiated in sometimes unexpected ways.

Further reading

J. Boffey, *Manuscript and Print in London, c. 1475-1530* (British Library, London, 2012) considers the relationship between manuscript book production and early printing in relation to London.

J. Griffiths and D. Pearsall, eds., *Book Production and Publishing in Britain, 1375-1475* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989). Chapters consider how books were made, as well as the ownership and circulation of books in England and Scotland, and the circulation of Middle English texts, vernacular theology and scientific and medical books.

L. Hellinga and J. B. Trapp, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain. Volume III: 1400-1557* (Cambridge University Press,Cambridge, 1999). Chapters consider literacy rates, printing, the London book trade, the development of royal libraries, monastic libraries, female readers, and the circulation of literary texts.

http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/ – website which provides excellent introductions to the major genres of late medieval writing, and some of its main themes.

http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/digitisedmanuscripts/ – blog which discusses both individual manuscripts and types of books available to medieval readers and now in the possession of the British Library, always with beautiful accompanying images.

Catherine Nall is Senior Lecturer in Medieval Literature at Royal Holloway, University of London. She is the author of *Reading and War in Fifteenth-Century England: from Lydgate to Malory* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012), and a forthcoming biography of Henry IV for the Penguin Monarchs Series.

Member journeys

Simon Harrison joined the HA in 1994. He is now the head teacher of Crofton School in Hampshire. Here, Simon shares his HA member journey, from new teacher to head teacher.

As a trainee and early career history teacher, my HA membership was invaluable to me. Not only was I learning my craft, but I was also in at the deep end – a feeling that trainees and new teachers will know and understand very well. *Teaching History* journal provided an invaluable support to help to develop both my subject knowledge and my understanding of history pedagogy. As an early career teacher, the journal consistently hooked into debates about approaches to history teaching that I was interested in developing in my classroom, and it still supports me now as a head teacher. As a senior leader, I teach history far less often now than in the past, and I find membership of the HA the best way of keeping both my knowledge and my skills up to date. It also helps me to ensure that my history department are the best they can be. In fact, one of my first acts as head teacher was to buy them a corporate membership! I know that my school's membership of the HA helps my history department to be hooked into the same mix of practical guidance and pedagogical thinking, which, in a landscape where the importance of subject seems to be gathering renewed emphasis in terms of accountability, means that I know that my team are well supported.

As a head of department, the journal continued to support my team and me with the latest thinking and cutting-edge debate, ensuring that we were always at the forefront of things. Both the HA website's range of helpful guides to developing my department and online CPD units helped me to focus departmental time effectively. It was also of vital support to me as a mentor of new trainees and, later on, working with other history departments in the area. Membership provided me not only with access to the same support that I had found in my HA membership in my early career, but also with support as a mentor too. For this, the 'Move Me On' section of *Teaching History* and the online access to guidance for mentors were both invaluable.

The HA has been there to support me at every stage of my career, keeping me at the heart of the subject community whatever my role. I have enjoyed and felt empowered by the professional development that the HA provides. I have regularly attended the HA annual conference – two great days of history-focused CPD with likeminded people. I have also enjoyed the opportunities that the HA has afforded me, such as writing for *Teaching History* and becoming a member of the HA's secondary committee, who help to drive HA secondary provision, like this copy of *Teaching Medieval History*. I hope you've enjoyed it.

Simon Harrison

HA Top Picks:
Medieval History resources

Hope you enjoy reading this edition of Teaching Medieval History. On the HA website you'll find a selection of resources to continue your journey and support you in the teaching of Medieval History. To get you started here are our top picks of resources:

- *The Historian* themed edition on Magna Carta. Featuring John Maddicott on Magna Carta and the Origins of Parliament and Robert Blackburn on Magna Carta and the development of the British constitution
- **Magna Carta Scheme of work** by Rachel Foster
- **Special edition of The Historian on Agincourt** with articles from Anne Curry, Adam Chapman and Mark Hinsley

You can find all these resources and more at history.org.uk/go/medieval

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EXPLORING AND TEACHING MEDIEVAL HISTORY in schools

A secondary educationpublication of the Historical Association

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Section 3 is only available in the online version of this publication, to view this visit the HA website: www.history.org.uk/go/TeachingMedievalHistory

Section 2 – Introduction
Teaching about the Middle Ages

This may not be a good time to float ideas and suggest novel ways forward but there has not been an ideal time to do this since the mid-1980s, when the advent of GCSE heralded three decades of curriculum and assessment initiatives which have left teachers little or no time to stand back and ask 'is this really what we most want to teach about the Middle Ages?'

This is an important question because, while teaching of the Middle Ages (usually in Year 7) hasn't been the victim of the volcanic eruptions that have affected GCSE and A-level, it has been significantly affected since the 1970s by a range of developments, some good, some bad. On the good side have been teaching about the process of studying history, teaching about events since 1914 (rarely covered in the 1960s), study of some topics in greater depth and the use of effective but time-consuming strategies such as decision-making activities. However even those worthwhile and important developments have had their negative side as they have all taken up lesson time, eroding the amount of time available for teaching any period. Recently that erosion has speeded up dramatically with three-year GCSE courses significantly reducing teaching time at Key Stage 3. One result is a huge variation in the teaching time spent on the Middle Ages at Key Stage 3, with as few as ten hours at one end of the range and 50 at the other, according to a recent informal survey of teachers. The problem for many is no longer how to fit the proverbial quart into a pint pot but how to fit several gallons into a pint pot.

Despite these developments, the core medieval content studied at Key Stage 3 has not changed, at least on the surface. Most students study the same major topics as in the 1960s: The Norman Conquest, village life, Becket, Richard I on Crusade, Magna Carta and Parliaments, The Black Death, the revolt of 1381. However, with teaching time reduced, these events often stand more and more isolated, lacking the context provided by learning about other and wider developments. It is far from unknown for schemes of work to leap from 1381 to Henry VIII. Such episodic coverage means that students not only miss out on what might be termed 'historical general knowledge' but also that they do not develop an overview of the period and its major themes and also struggle to develop a sense of period – essential understandings, especially given the introduction of medieval history at GCSE.

This section is therefore an attempt to think afresh about the teaching of medieval history in schools, particularly about issues at Key Stage 3 which is important in itself but should also provide the basis for success at GCSE and A-level. The spirit of this section is very much about floating ideas and suggesting ways forward. All the articles (whether in this paper publication or in the extended on-line open access version) are short introductions to the issues, many of which can be explored further in the pages of *Teaching History* which can be explored most easily online if you are a member of the Historical Association. We have identified some of the relevant articles in *Teaching History* but limitations of space have reduced what we can include.

In terms of content, the articles are almost entirely about *what* we teach about the Middle Ages rather than how we teach or assess it. Running throughout are the themes identified on pages 4-5, the importance of recognising the *sophistication* of many aspects of medieval life and thought, helping students *respect* the people they are studying and providing a broader and fairer *representation* of the period and its people. These themes explain why I have written so many of the articles myself, aiming to bring consistency of argument to this section.

The articles are grouped into four sections – those dealing with broad issues linked to planning, a set of articles which explore how work on the Middle Ages can help students understand more about the process of studying history, a third group considering ways of developing a more representative coverage of the period and finally a set of discussions of teaching medieval history at A-level. These latter articles may seem irrelevant if you do not teach these topics but they have much that's practical to offer anyone in the early years of A-level teaching, whatever period and topic they are teaching.

One final introductory comment – the focus in this section on the content of the period is not an argument in favour of turning the clock back to the 1960s when students did not learn anything about the process of studying history. I remain as convinced today as when I started teaching in 1974 that it is essential that students learn about that process. At the same time, there are important questions to ask here too (see pages 109-112

of the on-line edition) about whether, largely thanks to assessment, students do far too much work on the minutiae of that process but never see the bigger picture that those individual elements contribute to.

I very much hope this section proves useful to you, if not in the immediate future then in the long-term. I am most grateful to Becky Sullivan and The Historical Association for entrusting me with the planning and editing of this publication. I am also grateful to the contributors, who delivered their articles at a time of the year when all were much in need of doing anything other than think about teaching, and to my advisory group, Ruth, Sally, Helen, Richard and Dale, who patiently absorbed a barrage of emails and never once said (though they may well have thought) 'you cannot be serious!'

Ian Dawson

The teaching articles in the on-line edition of this publication

There are a further eight articles on teaching the Middle Ages in the online edition to be found at www.history.org.uk.

Planning In addition to the two articles provided in this publication there is a six-page discussion of a range of issues relevant to planning teaching of the Middle Ages at Key Stage 3. The major issues addressed are planning around the period rather than events, possibilities for 'overview' enquiry questions, planning the 'takeaways' from work on the Middle Ages, enquiries on individual topics, issues about selection of content, the structure of schemes of work on the Middle Ages and the place of the Middle Ages within Key Stage 3 as a whole.

The process of 'doing history' This publication contains two articles in this section (on knowledge of medieval sources and on developing sense of period) and the online edition provides two more. We begin with one article which is not specifically linked to the Middle Ages but addresses the wider issue of what we want students to understand about the process of studying history. Can students see the bigger picture of that process or is that hidden by the quantity of detailed work on evidence, causation etc? The second article, by Elizabeth Carr, discusses a range of ways in which teachers have successfully used the work of historians with their students – to develop use of language and argument, to model the use of sources, to develop a 'sense of period' and to explore how history differs from fiction.

Creating a more representative picture of the Middle Ages In addition to the article here on teaching about emotions and attitudes the on-line edition contains three articles. Helen Snelson describes methods of expanding coverage of the Middle Ages beyond Britain (or, indeed, England) and explains how this can achieve impact without taking a great deal of lesson time. Martin Spafford discusses ways in which a study of migration (both immigration and emigration) can add to students' understanding of the period as well as offering an exemplar Key Stage 3 thematic study which can help prepare students for GCSE. Finally we look at the lives of Nichola de la Haye and Margery Kempe as a way in to discussing approaches which give more prominence to women in Key Stage 3 coverage.

A-level teaching The online edition provides two further descriptions of the experience of teaching medieval history at A-level. None of the teachers who have written these articles had a deep knowledge of the period when they began this teaching but all felt that they should offer their students a varied range of periods to study at A-level. Their descriptions of getting to grips with new topics has much to offer everyone new to teaching A-level.

Identifying students' preconceptions about the Middle Ages

Ian Dawson

Soon after the discovery of Richard III's skeleton in Leicester I was chatting to a teacher about the Princes in the Tower when he commented that the murders weren't surprising because 'that's what people did in those days.' That comment sums up many assumptions about the Middle Ages – that violence was acceptable, ideals and principles were rare, if not non-existent, and actions were motivated solely by the drive for power and wealth. The problem is that such assumptions are deeply misleading. In this case, if the disappearance of Edward V and his brother was so ordinary an event, why did many gentry rebel against Richard III in the autumn of 1483? We cannot fully understand that rebellion without appreciating that some contemporaries saw Richard's actions as morally unacceptable. It's also true that many individuals supported Richard. Choices were determined by a range of factors, some political, some personal, some selfish, some idealistic and moral. The fun is in the detail, not in generalisations!

The dangers of negative preconceptions

Near the start of Year 7 (and now at GCSE too) sits another example of how negative assumptions lead to inadequate explanations. How are students likely to explain why Harold and William fought for the English crown in 1066? It is likely their answers will be influenced, perhaps determined, by their assumptions about what motivated people in the eleventh century (and perhaps by learned cynicism about the motives of modern politicians being limited to power and self-enrichment). Therefore explanations are likely to focus on the desire for power and wealth. Now we cannot know with certainty what the balance of motives was and it would be wrong to discount those motives from playing a part, perhaps a dominant part, in explanations. However, as Stephen Baxter (pages 33 to 37) has explained, both men may well have believed that they had a legitimate right to the English crown and, as regards William, Professor David Bates has recently written (*William the Conqueror*, Yale UP, 2016, page 118) 'Whatever offer was actually made to William [by Edward the Confessor], he is likely not only to have

taken it seriously, but to have seen it as irrevocable.' Effective explanations need to move beyond issues of self-interest to show awareness that principles and ideas could affect individuals' actions.

This example is one of many demonstrating the need to identify students' preconceptions about the people of the Middle Ages, before beginning any teaching on the period, whether it be at Key Stage 3, GCSE or A-level. At each level, the ideas in students' minds may well continue to dominate their thinking if they are not made explicit, discussed and, when necessary, challenged. The very practical danger is that negative assumptions lead to over-simplified examination answers and lower grades.

How do students think about the people of the Middle Ages?

What research has been undertaken into students' perceptions of the Middle Ages shows the importance of (a) not assuming that students start with an open mind and (b) finding out what they do think. Peter Lee has written about some students believing that people in the past were not as clever as 'us', pointing for example to the failure to develop electricity or other technologies. A study by Paul B. Sturtevant, carried out during PhD research at the University of Leeds (2010) reached the bleak conclusion that:

… many participants felt they were living in a time that was superior to the Middle Ages. A model of inevitable and successful progress was reflected in their derision towards the period for its perceived barbarity, lack of scientific advancement, and popular adherence to outmoded religious practices. There was consistent focus on the period as bloody, disease-ridden, poverty-stricken and backward, and that it was a time marked by oppressive rulership. …

…no-one seemed to identify the Middle Ages as a past inhabited by their own ancestors. In many ways, the Middle Ages were seen as a past, but not their past.

It is easy to assume that students' ideas about the Middle Ages come predominantly from lessons in school but this may well not be the case. If other experiences create powerful, negative perceptions of the period, then identifying those perceptions is even more important and teaching has to work harder to challenge them. Fieldwork may have a particular value for this, reflected in this picture of a Year 7 group about to take part at Fountains Abbey in a scripted drama written by Kate Brennan. This told the story of the abbey across time, the changes to buildings and abbey life and created respect for those who lived there. See also Richard Kerridge's excellent, practical article 'Learning without limits: how not to leave some learners with a thin gruel of a curriculum' in *Teaching History 168*, September 2017.

While this was a very small-scale survey, involving only 19 individuals (undergraduates aged 18 to 26 who had not studied history beyond the age of 14) the fact that these students held such views may not be surprising when many portrayals of the Middle Ages they have met present a negative picture, reinforced at Key Stage 3 if the focus was largely on war, rebellion and the Black Death. Such views contrast greatly with this extract from Dr David Crouch's introduction to his book *Medieval Britain c1000-1500* (Cambridge 2017):

Reading these chapters will take you back amongst the medieval people of Great Britain, and, if you've not met them before, I think you'll find that they were not at all what you might expect from the use of that adjective. … [they] had a high idea of the rights of the political community of their various realms and an ability to articulate it from which we still benefit. They despised and resisted political corruption; sought true justice; hoped the best for their own lives and for their children, whom they loved; met the horrors of pandemic and disease with a fortitude that humbles us, their descendants; and pursued their own prosperity with enterprise, doggedness and originality … For all our differences, medieval people were our ancestors in thought, aspirations and manners, as much as in our genes.

Where do ideas about the Middle Ages come from?

That such a difference in understanding exists between historians and public suggests another strand that's important to explore in relation to students'

preconceptions – where their ideas come from. The potential range includes cartoons, films, holiday outings to 'dungeons', castles and re-enactments, books that stress the 'horrible' to attract readers, stories (some we would not see as medieval such as Cinderella whose characters students may think of as wearing medieval-style clothes), computer games, advertisements and politicians' statements which use 'medieval' as a synonym for all things awful. Of course not every mental image of the period is dark and gruesome. Another, feasibly held at the same time and not seen as in conflict with the dark image, is that of King Arthur and 'knights in shining armour' and damsels in distress, of Robin Hood and heroism in noble causes.

It's hard to challenge stereotypes if we don't know where they come from and what sense students are making of them. We may regard interpretations in popular culture as misleading or simply wrong but we can't ignore them if they have a significant impact on students' perceptions. In a research trial I'll return to in a moment a group of students became 'hugely animated about places they have visited, sitting in stocks at Oxford castle and visiting Warwick castle and castles at Legoland' which suggests the potential power of such experiences.

A colleague who became interested in these ideas after discussing them at the SHP Conference tried a brief questionnaire out on his Year 7 class at the year end using surveymonkey. Interestingly in the light of the discussion above, his class ranked television programmes and the internet as having a slightly greater influence on their view of the Middle Ages than lessons in

school. Second, asked to choose the three words that best describe the Middle Ages from a list of 19 words, the class's top five choices were, in descending order, poverty-stricken, religious, violent, war-like and crime-ridden. In contrast, loving, caring, sophisticated and idealistic came bottom of the list.

If the overall picture thus created is of a crude rather than a sophisticated society this will enhance students' perceptions that this was a violent, crude, simple society where people had no sense of community or idealism and were incapable of reaching intelligent, subtle and complex solutions to problems. If we don't help students begin to think of the people of the Middle Ages in a more positive light we will be continually fighting a rearguard action at GCSE and A-level to counter such negative expectations. This raises the question 'can you afford not to find out about students' preconceptions and where they come from before beginning teaching?'

Looking ahead

One element of our wider *Exploring and Teaching Medieval History* project is undertaking a limited range of research into students' ideas about the Middle Ages. This is led by Dr Jason Todd of the University of Oxford Department of Education. Having trialled a questionnaire in the summer of 2017, Jason is undertaking a two-stage project in the school year 2017-18, collecting responses to the questionnaire through schools who have agreed to take part and then interviewing a small sample of students to explore further their ideas on the period and where those ideas come from.

We anticipate the interviews will provide a greater depth of understanding of students' perceptions. After the trial, Jason reported that 'when you start to talk to students about why they think the Middle Ages is brutal, for example, with some you find a complex line of reasoning suggesting that a lot more is going on in the process of labelling.' Jason has also pointed out the importance of not generalising about the impact of any one item of popular culture: 'we shouldn't assume that all personal meaning-making occurs in the same way even if public knowledge exists in a broader way. So two children may read Terry Deary's books in very different ways given their different social contexts and personal meaning-making.'

It's also within a department's scope to carry out their own investigation into their students' perceptions of the Middle Ages as students begin Key Stage 3 and, just as importantly, as they commence GCSE work on the period and at A-level. We have made available the questionnaire that Jason is using for others to use or adapt – it only takes 10 to 15 minutes to complete – and you can follow this up with discussions with students, individually or as a class. For the link to this material see the foot of column 2.

A menu to explore

The following menu lists some of the areas that could be worth exploring with students to help unravel their preconceptions. They are not in order of significance. Some may be more appropriate with Year 7, others with Year 10 or Year 12.

a) what dominates perceptions of the Middle Ages? Castles? War? Other ideas?

b) what impact have visits and history 'experiences' had, whether on holiday or in school time?

c) how big a part does Henry VIII play in their perceptions of the Middle Ages, especially about the power of the monarchy? (this brings into play the legacy of Key Stage 2)

d) do they think people in the Middle Ages could be good at problem-solving, perceptive, as intelligent as people today, as kind and generous or as selfish and brutal?

e) do they think of people as a mass without diversity of views?

f) concerned to improve their lives e.g. safeguarding health or improving houses?

g) able to and interested in travelling, having links overseas and eager to explore new ideas?

h) do they see religious belief as having depth and importance to individuals or as superstition, a sign of credulousness and lack of logic?

i) how do they think of monarchs and politics – e.g. that kings were all powerful? Was the king expected to consult others before taking decisions? What motivated kings and their nobles? Were nobles eager to depose kings and start civil wars?

j) How concerned were the commons about political events and did they expect justice should be fair and worry about violence?

k) do they see medieval people as having some things in common with themselves or more as 'aliens'?

Resources linked to this article

Further details on the research being conducted by Jason Todd can be found in the section titled Teaching Medieval History on www.thinkinghistory.co.uk This includes a copy of the questionnaire and a linked PowerPoint.

M. Bull, *Thinking Medieval, an introduction to the study of the Middle Ages* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2005) contains a discussion of 'Popular Images of the Middle Ages' in chapter 1 and much else of value.

How can Key Stage 3 support teaching about the Middle Ages at GCSE and A-level?

Ian Dawson and Dale Banham

This article is about developing students' knowledge of the Middle Ages at Key Stage 3 so that it supports work at GCSE, rather than them having to start from scratch or, worse, having to unlearn what they think they already know about the period. This also applies to those studying the Middle Ages at A-level for, although there's a long gap between Years 7 and 12, the longer erroneous understandings last the harder it is to challenge them.

1. Identifying students' potential misconceptions about GCSE topics

We all become good at identifying the misunderstandings students have with particular topics and dealing with them in the courses where they occur. This section suggests making those misunderstandings of medieval history at GCSE integral to Key Stage 3 planning. What kinds of misconceptions may exist?

a) Ideas related to individual topics.

These may not be expressed explicitly but lurk unrecognised in students' minds. When studying the Norman Conquest, for example, the following may be assumed and, if not brought into the open and challenged, will undermine understanding. You may not be able to tackle all of them at Key Stage 3 but avoid tasks that cement them! Students may think that:

- Succession crises such as that in 1066 were unusual in England so could not be anticipated
- It was easy to identify the 'rightful' heir to the crown because he was bound to be the last king's closest male relative
- Nationalities were entirely distinct with few, if any, connections between countries
- The only motives driving the actions of rulers and leaders were power and wealth

Another example comes from ideas about the development of castles, abbeys and other sites, for example:

- These buildings or sites did not change over many centuries

- Each had only one function e.g. castles had only a military function
- They were cold and miserable to live in because that's how they look today.

b) Ideas related to the thinking, principles and aspirations of medieval people

These issues are relevant to all medieval history at GCSE and A-level but particularly to the medieval element of Thematic units at GCSE where you may only have two or three weeks to cover the required material. Similar misconceptions hinder students' understanding of all Thematic topics but here are some linked to medieval medicine and public health:

- People had no desire to improve the quality of their lives or homes. This misunderstanding makes it much harder for students to take in and use knowledge about the efforts made in late medieval towns to maintain clean streets and water supplies.

- People did not think logically. If students believe this then they attribute attempts to prevent the spread of plague by prayer or pilgrimage to 'superstition' and cannot see such actions as the logical consequence of the contemporary world-view.

- Hardly anyone could read or was interested in acquiring new knowledge. With these ideas, it becomes impossible to take in the spread of texts advising people on how to safeguard their health and avoid disease.

c) Ideas about the quality of decision-making and about motives

This overlaps with the point (a) above about motives but is worth restating, particularly in relation to topics involving war and politics, at A-level as well as GCSE.

Students who emerge from Key Stage 3 assuming that decisions about whether to go to war or challenge a king were taken quickly and eagerly with no thought for consequences for individuals or for the community of the realm will find it much harder to develop effective explanations for such decisions at GCSE and A-level.

To take the example of the Wars of the Roses, many individuals were greatly influenced by expectations of loyalty to the crown and by awareness of the common good. Even decisions most easily condemned as simple treachery and lust for power, such as Warwick's alliance with Margaret of Anjou against his former ally, Edward IV, are partly explained by developing events which meant Warwick had to select the least worst option facing him, having exhausted other options. Medieval individuals were no better than ourselves at predicting the outcomes of actions and so found themselves on paths they would not initially have chosen. This is not to deny the existence of ruthlessness, violence, lust for power etc. but such 'qualities' are found as often in other periods.

To conclude this section, the only thing worse than not identifying and combating misconceptions is reinforcing them through tasks and choices of content which focus on the 'horrible' and violent or which underestimate the complexity of medieval thinking and decision-taking.

2. Identifying the necessary contexts for GCSE topics which can be covered at Key Stage 3

This is not about covering detail at Key Stage 3 that will reappear at GCSE but about providing students with the broader contextual knowledge which prepares them for the detail of GCSE topics. For example, those studying Edward I at GCSE will have a head start if they can suggest answers to at least *some* of these contextual questions:

- Why were some kings more powerful and successful than others?
- What roles did barons, parliament and people play in government?
- How interested were English kings in events overseas and in the rest of Britain?
- How effectively did governments deal with crimes?
- How sophisticated was the government's administration?
- Why did people build castles?

It would be naïve to assume that students who tackle these questions at Key Stage 3 will always remember the answers when they begin GCSE but even recognising the questions and the ideas behind them as familiar is itself helpful, providing a base to build on, enhancing confidence and making the task of developing answers easier. The alternative is for everything to feel new which makes learning feel harder.

Taking this further, it is helpful to move on to identify the understandings you want students to take away from Key Stage 3 as context for GCSE work. The following understandings will help anyone studying

the reigns of Richard and John or Edward I at GCSE or medieval topics at A-level:

- Monarchs were seen as God's representatives and remained central to government throughout this period
- Monarchs were expected to defend their people from disorder at home and enemies abroad
- Monarchs were expected to consult their barons about important decisions before taking the decisions themselves.
- Barons were deeply reluctant to rebel but felt forced to do so sometimes when kings did not consult them and endangered their lives and property
- Magna Carta and parliaments were initiated to ensure kings did consult barons and others.
- The commons expected kings and barons to provide defence, peace and prosperity. They were increasingly well-informed about political events and prepared to make their voices heard.

If studying 'castles' at GCSE then plan takeaways from Key Stage 3 such as:

- Castles had a variety of functions – as homes, fortresses, administrative centres, to display power and as major employers and the people who lived there had as much concern for comfort as people in any era.

Inherent in this discussion are many 'first-order concepts' i.e. government, administration, monarchy, parliament, the commons, kingship etc. It is important to identify those central to GCSE success and plan for them to receive a first outing at Key Stage 3.

3. How can we make material more memorable?

It is a long time from Year 7 to Year 10, both in months and years and the tumult of adolescence. How do we help students remember those 'takeaways' from Key Stage 3 that provide such a useful context for their GCSE and A-level studies? First, we must look at our long-term planning. Schemes of work need to provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to revisit the Middle Ages and return to those crucial 'takeaways'. To make learning 'stick' we need to regularly revisit what has been learnt. This does not have to take a lot of time away from teaching subsequent topics. For example, the following questions can be used as 'Review Challenges':

- Give me two similarities between X (new topic) and the Middle Ages
- Give me two differences between X and the Middle Ages. This can be 'theme' specific – e.g. beliefs, warfare, political systems
- What would someone (vary the social group to add

extra challenge) from the Middle Ages be surprised/ shocked by in X (the new period)? Why?

- You have just identified X in the new period being studied. Find me two examples of this from the Middle Ages.

Regular 'low-stakes' tests or quizzes can also be built into the 'gap' between the pupils' Key Stage 3 study of the Middle Ages and their GCSE course. Students need to practise recalling the key takeaways that have been taught. This means that teachers need to:

- identify the key takeaways from the Middle Ages

- generate questions that test the students' understanding of these takeaways

- slot them into tests/quizzes while teaching future units

Retrieval practice – recalling facts, concepts or events from memory – is a more effective learning strategy than review by rereading. Testing should be used as a learning tool. This does not have to be 'formal' testing. Pupils can be set recall tasks such as 'Just a minute' style challenges where they have to speak without pause or repetition about a key aspect of the Middle Ages. Key first-order concepts, individuals, events and developments can be given to pupils to learn/revise for homework and followed by keyword games (such as Taboo, odd one out, Pictionary, charades and dominoes) in lessons. Recalling what you have learnt causes your brain to reconsolidate the memory, which strengthens its connections to what you already know and makes it easier to recall in the future. In addition, because testing helps us to identify whether we have learned and understood the key information, it provides a useful meta-cognitive insight and students become more aware of their own learning.

In the short term, while teaching the Middle Ages in Key Stage 3, the main takeaways need to be taught in a memorable way. Elaborative encoding (putting the information into a new form e.g. as an acronym) is very important and new information needs to be presented to students in an engaging and meaningful way. Carefully structured role-plays and active demonstrations can help students build a clear understanding of 'difficult' areas of a course. A role-play should not be a bolted-on extra or 'treat'. It needs to be a central learning activity, with very clear objectives that helps students understand the takeaway concepts and ideas. Follow-up work benefits from both the excitement and the clarity of the thinking generated by the activity. Moreover, students tend to remember anything with a strong emotion attached to it.

Visual hooks are very important for memory, particularly if pupils have been involved in creating them. Using props and visuals, pupils can create freeze-frame visuals (captured with a camera) showing the key features

of a period or the power relationships that existed at particular points in history. These can be displayed and used to provide a recall hook for comparisons with subsequent periods. Using the classroom or an outdoor space as a living map can also be an effective way of showing key features such as migration patterns, changes in population distribution or land ownership.

Pupils can also be encouraged to come up with creative ways of remembering the key takeaways from the Middle Ages. Model effective revision strategies by displaying good examples that students have produced. Talk through how *you* would remember the key takeaway points and model how to construct a good concept map, mind map or memory palace. A gallery of memory aids helps them see what good revision notes look like. History students must have a deep foundation of subject knowledge but also need to learn to take control of their own learning – their metacognitive ability to employ effective and flexible strategies that help them memorise and recall the key features of the past is crucial in achieving success in history.

This means we need to be explicit about *what* they need to remember and we need to explicitly teach them *how* to remember. In lesson planning, we therefore need to think about the following:

- Why are we doing this? (Relevance)
- What do you want the pupils to take away from the lesson? (Building the big picture)
- Where will we help pupils with how to remember these key takeaways?
- How will we check understanding? (Retrieval practice and low-stakes testing)
- When will we return to this? (Interleaving and revisiting)

Dale Banham is Deputy Headteacher at Northgate High School, Ipswich and was formerly Humanities adviser for Suffolk LEA. He has written and edited numerous Key Stage 3 and GCSE books, is a regular contributor to both the SHP and HA annual conferences and has run CPD courses throughout the country.

Resources linked to this article

For further discussion of the ideas described in point 3 of this article see the Raising Attainment section of www.thinkinghistory.co.uk.

In *Teaching History*, for example, see the articles by Nick Dennis in number 164 and by Michael Fordham in edition 166 (and the references therein) on cognitive psychology and allied issues.

What do we want students to learn about medieval sources?

Ian Dawson

Letter written by Agnes Paston to William Paston, April 1440.
For a transcript of this document see the on-line edition of this publication page 131.
British Library Additional MS 43488, f. 4r
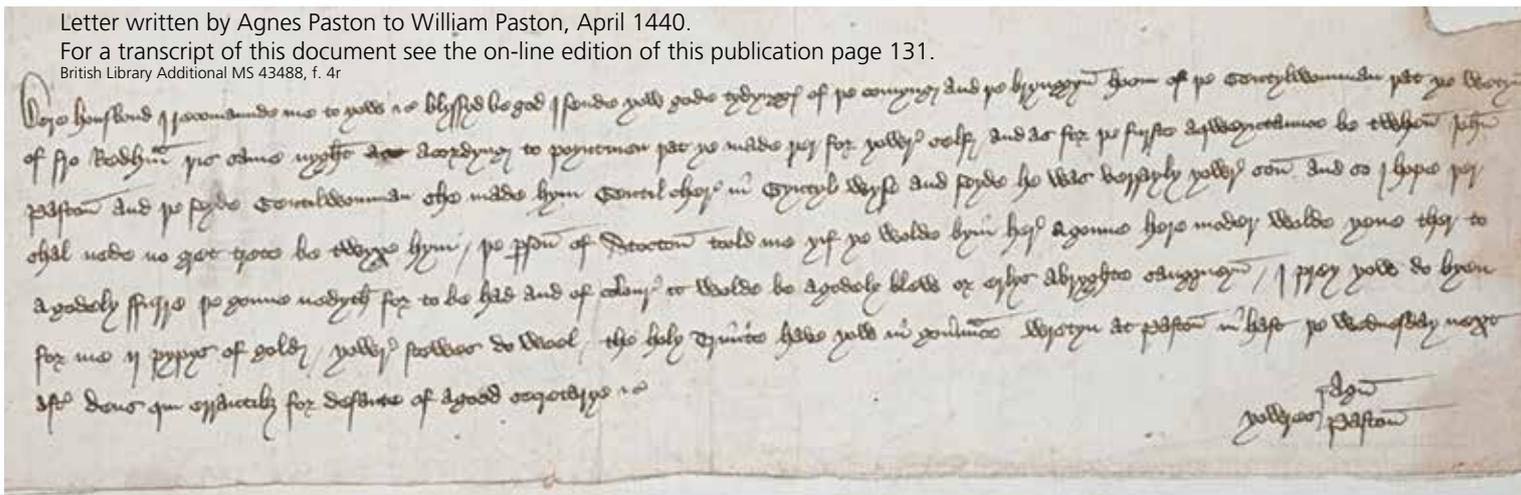
How would you describe the handwriting in the letter above? Neat? Scruffy? Better or worse than yours? Can you read it? Let's have a closer look – who's going to be the first to decipher a word?

Those are some of the questions you might ask about this letter, sent by Agnes Paston to her husband, William, almost certainly in 1440. Historians are divided about whether Agnes wrote the letter herself or dictated it, although the final words *'Wretyn at Paston in hast … for defaute of a good secretarye'* suggest she did write it herself. Agnes sounds eager to pass on news of the first meeting between their eldest son and the unnamed 'gentilwoman' they hope he will marry. She, Margaret Mautby, had made their son John, *'gentil chere in gyntyl wise and seyde he was verrayly yowre son.'*

This was an important moment for the Paston family – John and Margaret did marry – but what has it to do with students studying the Middle Ages in school?

What such documents and other kinds of evidence can do is help students develop specific knowledge about the nature and use of medieval sources. Such work may be easier to consider with the disappearance of the National Curriculum Attainment Target. One of the weaknesses of the Attainment Target levels was that they had to be applied to work on all periods of history and so there were no period-specific references. This genericism may have discouraged departments from thinking about what they want students to learn about sources from individual periods of history. Students do a deal of work analysing sources but has the balance between source analysis and gaining knowledge of the sources themselves become too skewed in favour of the former?

This article therefore discusses what knowledge of medieval sources could be introduced. What follows focuses on Key Stage 3 but links to work at GCSE and A-level. I'll begin with a set of objectives for work at Key Stage 3, then discuss each item in more detail.

Possible objectives for work on medieval sources at Key Stage 3

By the end of Key Stage 3 students should:

- be able to identify some major types of sources for medieval history and what kinds of sources are not available for this period

- know that historians need skills such as knowledge of languages and the ability to read medieval writing

- appreciate that medieval sources are often detailed and complex, providing us with a great deal of information. Nevertheless there is a great deal they do not tell us which means we are often unable to answer questions with certainty.

The objectives listed opposite clearly link to developing students' understanding of how historians work, what 'doing history' involves for historians and for themselves. Having an understanding of the variety of sources for a period also helps build a sense of period and links to understanding what we can find out about and what gaps there may be in our knowledge. For example, the absence of photographs and also painted portraits for much of the Middle Ages means we do not know what even the most eminent political figures looked like. By the fifteenth century, however, we have the first collections of personal letters and begin to hear women's voices in the words of individuals such as Christine de Pisan and Margery Kempe and in wills and in court records.

What kinds of sources tell us about the Middle Ages – and how do they differ from later periods?

The first step is to find out what kinds of sources students THINK survive to tell us about the Middle Ages. Diagnosing misunderstandings provides an essential base, whether at Key Stage 3, GCSE or A-level. This diagnostic stage need not take long but you could:

a) ask students to look at a list of sources and pick out those which can be used to find out about the Middle Ages and identify those which do not exist e.g. photographs taken at the time.

b) provide open questions e.g. what kinds of sources tell us about the people and events of the Middle Ages? Who created these sources? What languages do you think documents were written in? What kinds of objects might be found by archaeologists?

How well informed or detailed or accurate or complete do you think medieval sources are?

Or use approach (a) first to see what answers you get, then move on to approach (b).

The second step, using what's been learned from the diagnosis, is to devote a lesson or two to teaching students about the kinds of sources that we use to study the Middle Ages – creating a framework which can be referred to when working on individual sources such as the Bayeux Tapestry, accounts by chroniclers or the evidence of castles or other buildings. One method is to use an activity which asks students to decide which categories of sources (chronicles, government records, letters, archaeology, wills , objects etc.) a series of individual items belong to. This can be extended to link in the strengths and weakness of the sources and which groups of people they provide most information about. Such work will be enhanced if students build up diagrams showing changes in sources over time and also create a display showing 'sources across time'.

A further point that could be included is the considerable increase in the quantity of evidence that survives for the period after around 1200. As Marc Morris explains in his article '1066: The Limits of our Knowledge' in *The Historian,* Spring 2013:

By the thirteenth century royal government was producing vast amounts of written material every day; the royal chancery had more than a hundred clerks producing thousands of documents … Thus the itinerary of Edward I (1272-1307) compiled and published in the 1970s, fills three large printed volumes.

But by way of sad contrast, the itinerary of William the Conqueror (1066-87) fills only three printed pages, because government archive from the eleventh century is virtually non-existent.

What skills do historians of the Middle Ages need?

'Skills' is an over-used word in history teaching but does apply to the skills of understanding languages (Latin, French, Middle English, perhaps Arabic and others) and to palaeography. I am not suggesting turning Year 7 into linguists or experts in reading Pipe Rolls but making them aware of the skills that historians need. This can be done briefly by:

a) showing students two documents, one in Latin, one in Middle English (such as Agnes Paston's Letter) and asking students what skills historians need to use them.

b) take students through a sequence of versions of a document – the original, a transcript and a version in modernised English. How does this help them understand what historians do?

The aim is to help students gain further insights into the process of studying history. The obvious objections are 'they won't be able to read it' or 'they won't be interested' but it's far more likely that students will be intrigued, at A-level as much as at Key Stage 3. To create a sense of 'puzzle' – who will be the first to identify a word?' 'Can you find these words?' 'What do you think this squiggle might mean?' (medieval documents often contain abbreviations – Agnes's letter what looks like a 'p' is actually a 'þ'. It is called a 'thorn' and pronounced 'th' as in 'think'. In addition,'ð' is an 'eth', pronounced 'th' as in 'then').

Understanding the depth and sophistication of sources

Both activities above need undertaking at the beginning of work on the Middle Ages as this underpins further work on the sources of the period. Just because you are using a Paston Letter as an example doesn't mean waiting until studying the fifteenth century! However, once those core items are covered, how do you extend understanding of medieval sources?

We use sources in the classroom in a variety of ways, for example as hooks to create curiosity or to provide a good story as the basis for further investigation. There is however a danger that sources are used too cursorily and too often about e.g. their reliability and utility, not enabling students to really understand how to work with them. If we want students to deepen their understanding of how to analyse and use them effectively then undertaking one, maybe two, detailed tasks each year, focusing closely on using sources as evidence, is more valuable than undertaking multiple low-level 'source exercises'.

One additional benefit of greater depth is helping students become more comfortable with uncertainty and the task of presenting tentative judgments through hypothetical language. This however needs the 'right kind' of question, not questions which seem to assume a definite answer can be achieved. Such enquiry questions could begin 'How certain can we be that …?' or 'Why is it hard to be certain about …? Or 'Are we more certain about … than …?'

At the same time, depth and time allow students to see the strengths of a source for answering historians' questions. Brief tasks may solely emphasise a source's limitations as evidence – gaps in the information it provides or the subjectivity of the author, for example. Identifying limitations is important but, taken too far (and especially if students think of the people of this period as unsophisticated and unintelligent), this may lead to the nature and value of sources being underestimated. Therefore, look for opportunities to emphasise that, for all that we are often left with uncertainties, many sources contain rich quantities of detail and are the result of thoughtful research or complex administrative processes as shown in the articles by Christopher Given-Wilson and Sean Cunningham.

Conclusions

These ideas are ambitious but offer ways of enhancing students' understanding of how history is studied and of the Middle Ages itself. These understandings are equally important at Key Stage 3, GCSE and A-level – in the latter it's important that students have a strong sense of how we know what we know and the strengths and limits of sources even if there are no 'source questions' in their examinations. Without understanding of the nature of the evidence it's harder to appreciate why such words as 'probably' play an important part in what they read and in their own writing.

Resources linked to this article

Resources for the activities described above will be available during the school year 2017-18 at: www.thinkinghistory.co.uk

Images of the Paston Letters can be found on the British Library website at: http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/digitisedmanuscripts/2015/04/the-paston-letters-go-live.html

The British Library Medieval Manuscripts blog provides a fascinating range of discussions and images.

The National Archives website provides detailed information on government records which can be explored through the Research Guides A-Z section. See: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

Developing a sense of period in Key Stage 3

Elisabeth Pickles and Rachel Richardson

To have a sense of the medieval period, students need some understanding of its key features and its relationship to preceding and succeeding periods. This may include an awareness of the following:

- The broad assumptions, convictions and beliefs of medieval people, such as the near-universal belief in divine intervention in human affairs and in the miraculous, but also their common humanity and the complexity of their motives (as suggested in the chapters above by Susan Edgington, Chris Given-Wilson and Catherine Nall).

- The nature of political, social and religious institutions, what was expected of them and how they operated; for example, evolving expectations of kings and the limits on their power, the nature of lordship and serfdom (see chapter by Chris Dyer) and the nature and practices of the medieval Roman Catholic church.

- The influence of events people experienced and the information they had about wider developments (suggested in the chapter by Chris Given-Wilson).

- What technology was available, e.g., means of communication, types of weapons or household goods. (See Catherine Nall's observations on the impact of means of production on the nature of books.)

- An awareness that perspectives were not static but were part of a gradual unfolding of mind in English culture, as shown on pages 8-11 on 1000-1348 and 1348-1500.

Why is a sense of period important?

Sound historical assessments of the actions of people in the past depend on period understanding. Without these, students may wrongly blame medieval rulers for failing to solve, or at least tackle, problems for which governments today would be held responsible, or fail to recognise the extent to which the power of medieval monarchs was limited by the expectations placed upon them and the resources they possessed.

Period understanding is also necessary for sound historical explanations, whether of particular events or long-term developments. As is clear from the articles above by Leonie Hicks and Stephen Baxter, without an understanding of eleventh-century kingship and the interrelationships between Anglo-Saxon, Viking and Norman polities, students are likely to have misleading views of the motivations of key actors in 1066 and the Norman Conquest will be fundamentally misunderstood.

A sense of period is key to drawing sound inferences from historical sources. If students only apply everyday understandings in their evaluation of the weight that can be attached to inferences from historical sources, they are likely to draw superficial conclusions such as that any source relating to the Battle of Hastings is unreliable because of bias to the Saxon or Norman side or that any source by a monk is written by someone cut off from everyday events and writing from a religious perspective. Richer contextual knowledge in the form of the nature of contacts individual monks had with the outside world and their role in gathering and recording details of key events is essential to unpicking this misconception as the examples of chroniclers explored by Chris Given-Wilson (pages 15-17) make clear. Furthermore, interpretation of key details in sources is dependent upon a wider sense of period.

Research findings relating to students' understandings of period perspectives

Students from an early age can show an understanding that people's perspectives were different in past societies from in the present and that within a society, people had different perspectives.[1] However, when asked to draw inferences from sources, evaluate interpretations or explain past events, there seems to be a tendency to lapse into presentism, with students perhaps unconsciously applying everyday understandings rather than historical understandings.[2] Similarly, they may distort past actions to make them fit with their

everyday understandings of human behaviour.[3] On the other hand, a superficial understanding of period perspectives may lead to students having a stereotypical and deterministic view, imagining people were bound to behave or think in a certain way because of the society in which they were brought up.

Therefore, there seems to be a need to encourage students to think consciously about period perspectives, whatever disciplinary concept and period they are dealing with and, as they progress, to promote reflection on an increasingly wide range of features.

Developing a scheme of work to encourage the development of period perspectives

How to do this with our new Year 7 students coming to us with a range of abilities and experiences of history at primary level, and with only 21 hours of lesson time to address the medieval period posed a significant challenge.[4] What follows is an outline of tentative moves both in planning and teaching, which we hope will help our students to achieve a wider sense of the medieval period. This is an ongoing process. This scheme of work was taught for the first time from September 2017 so we do not yet have evidence for its impact; however, it is based on preliminary explorations into provoking deeper period awareness over the past year.

It is not so much the content of the course which has changed but the focus. Our enquiry question for our entire medieval unit is 'Why did the peasants revolt in 1381?' We plan to begin by using the first lesson to outline the story, with students mapping the events and tracking the spread of Revolt, telling the story across a double-page spread in their exercise books which can be referred to throughout the course. Using the image of Richard II meeting the rebels at Smithfield offers a way in; students can be encouraged to suggest what might be happening and their attention drawn to details in the image – such as clothing – to emphasise the unusual nature of these events, and to begin to explore the hierarchical structure of medieval society. Beginning with a narrative of the events of the Peasants' Revolt may prove more accessible, as well as more engaging for students, and provides a structure to build upon, to be revised and complicated as each subsequent study reveals more about the nature of medieval society. These studies are designed to explore different aspects of period perspectives that are needed to answer the overall enquiry question. They deal with the following:

- the nature of medieval kingship – over three hour-long lessons, assessing the reactions of a series of monarchs to precise situations or crises in their reigns – to begin to unpick the widely-held misconception that kings had few effective restraints upon their power and to explain the attacks on the King's advisers in 1381;

- a four-lesson study of Henry II and Becket focused not on the reasons for Becket's murder, but Henry's reaction to this event, and the reasons for this – to understand what people believed and their expectations of the church, and thus to understand the burning of abbeys and murder of Archbishop Sudbury in 1381;

- attitudes towards taxation, spending three lessons examining the circumstances surrounding the issuing of the Magna Carta and the subsequent development of Parliament – to explain the anger caused by the third poll tax and the local attacks on administrators and officials;

- the breakdown of feudal ties following the Black Death and the impact this had upon all classes to consider the socio-economic context of the Peasants' Revolt and to explain the diversity of those involved in the Revolt. This will take four lessons, two focused on the Black Death and its spread and the second two dealing directly with its impact.

After each study, we plan a lesson linking it back to the overall enquiry question on the causes of the Peasants' Revolt. We feel that this 'linking' lesson will be essential to give students a sense of direction in their learning, enabling them to see their work on the Middle Ages as a single, coherent study, rather than as a series of unconnected events. It also gives opportunity for the students to develop their chronological understanding using a timeline which gradually becomes more detailed. Moreover, we hope that some students will make connections between the studies, such as between the poll tax and 'evil advisors' and that they will appreciate the purpose of studying royal power, religious beliefs and socio-economic conditions in that these are all necessary to explain one key event.

As time is very limited in a two-year Key Stage 3, we have decided that content had to be reduced for deeper understandings to be developed. One key topic has been removed: we felt that to consider the causes of the Norman Conquest properly would require much more time devoted to the eleventh-century context. As this time is not available we have decided to jettison this topic but to retain some consideration of William I when looking at the nature of medieval kingship.

We have also re-written assessments to encourage students to draw on their wider understanding of the period. While not assessing period perspectives directly, the assessment questions are framed in such a way that they cannot be answered effectively without a clear sense of period. Using 'Why was Henry II whipped in 1174?' instead of 'Why was Becket murdered in 1170?', for example, gives students greater scope to discuss the power of the Church while still being accessible for all students on some level.

Why did the peasants revolt in 1381? → Enquiry 1 The nature of medieval kingship → Why did the peasants revolt in 1381?

Enquiry 4 The Black Death and its impact

Enquiry 2 The role of the Church

Why did the peasants revolt in 1381? ← Enquiry 3 The development of Parliament ← Why did the peasants revolt in 1381?
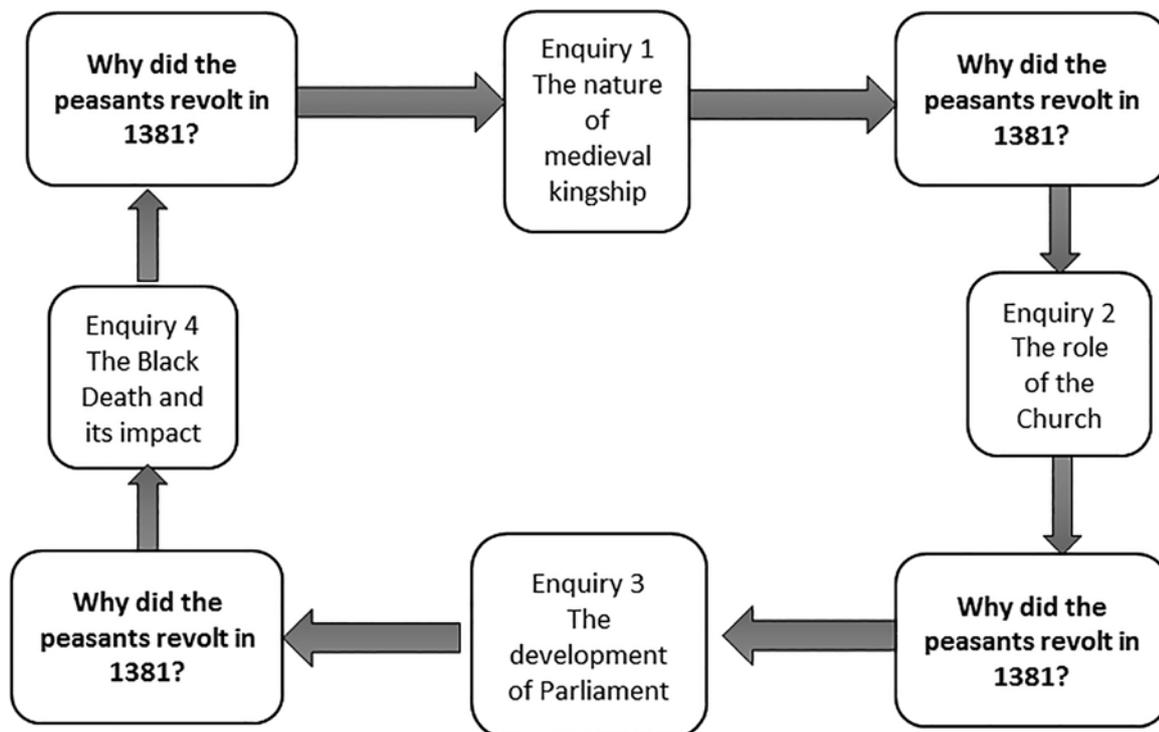
Some of the more practical teaching ideas which we think will help to us to measure the development of students' sense of period follow. Again, these are not 'new' ideas, but we have changed the focus.

- An initial activity to assess students' understanding of period perspectives, and to support the development of chronological understanding is to create a timeline.[5] The essence of this task is to give students a timeline, asking them to place images on the parts of the timeline they think they represent. The images could be key developments linked to a particular point on the timeline (for example, the printing press to represent the fifteenth century), or an everyday object or scene. This can act as a stand-alone introduction, but also be revisited and edited as students gather more information and reassess their initial ideas.

- Giving students a source and asking them to suggest the provenance based on the content of the source gives an insight into students' wider awareness of methods of communication, and the beliefs and perspectives of people viewing the event in question. In the longer term, confidence with this type of activity may help students to develop a more nuanced approach to sources and help to support more valuable judgements about reliability and utility of source material.

- At the end of the medieval unit and then of units dealing with subsequent periods, students can be asked to draw a picture illustrating the period. This encourages reflection on the period as a whole and can provide valuable insights into the nature of students' period understanding: for example, it can show the relative importance attached to different aspects of the period as well as revealing misunderstandings that still need to be addressed.

Concluding thoughts

Developing and applying period understanding to historical tasks relating to the Middle Ages in Key Stage 3 involves considerable cognitive challenge as there are so many aspects to be considered and, while students need to be aware of what is distinctive about the period, they also need to recognise that it was not static. Starting simply – with the Peasants' Revolt as a gripping story setting out a series of events – but gradually adding further complications to the narrative should allow students to begin to revise initial misconceptions. By introducing the complications gradually through the subsequent studies, we hope to avoid intimidating students with too much detail at once, while allowing them to recognise for themselves the complexity of events as their understanding of wider period awareness and key elements of change develops. We also hope that by linking many aspects of the Middle Ages to an overall enquiry question we can go some way to overcoming the episodic coverage of topics which can hinder the development of a sense of period.

REFERENCES
1   K. C. Barton and L.S. Levstik (2004) *Teaching History for the Common Good,* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
2   P. Seixas (1993) 'Popular Film and Young People's Understanding of the History of Native-White Relations' in *The History Teacher, 26* (3), pp.351-70. S.S. Wineburg (2001) *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: charting the future of the teaching of the past,* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
3   R. Ashby and P.J. Lee (1987) 'Children's Concepts of Empathy and Understanding in History' in C. Portal, ed., *History in the Curriculum,* Lewes: Falmer Press, pp. 62-88.
4   In addition to the two terms focused directly on the Middle Ages, we return to them later in a comparative study of challenges to authority in the reigns of Richard II and Charles I.
5   For this topic, the timeline could cover the period c.500–1500, emphasising that 1381 was not the end of the period, and, hopefully, providing the link to the next period to be studied.

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Were medieval people ever kind? Why teach about attitudes and emotions?

Ian Dawson

In September 1465 John Paston III was worried about his hose. He wrote from the family home in Norwich to his mother, Margaret, who was in London, asking her to send him two new pairs of hose, one black and one red 'which be ready-made for me at the hosier with the crooked back next to Blackfriars gate within Ludgate … together they shall cost 8 shillings'.

In *Endings*, the third volume of his study of the Paston family, Professor Colin Richmond muses on John's purchase:

> Was four shillings a pair expensive? Or exorbitant? It seems extraordinary that John should have a London stocking-maker, rather than, say, a Norwich one. How extraordinary was it? How many other younger sons of the gentry had their stockings made in London? If Margaret did as she was asked, what a sight: John striding about Norwich in red stockings. Did people stare and, nudging one another, say: there he goes in his London hose? Or were they used to John in 1465, only enquiring of one another: how much did that pair cost?

And it wasn't only his approach to hose that reveals that John was fashion-conscious. He was just as concerned about his hats. In 1469 he asked his brother to send him two hats, requesting that the messenger bringing them should wear one of the hats to avoid it getting out of shape!

These and other letters tell us that John was fussy about what he wore. He wanted to look good, just like the young woman pictured opposite – but why spend valuable classroom time on such an apparently frivolous topic as John's interest in his appearance when there are so many apparently more important topics to cram into too few lessons?

One reason for teaching about attitudes and emotions and whether, for example, people were ever kind to each other, is that this may make it easier for students to feel they have things in common with people so distant in time, the more so as much of what they study has little overlap with their own lives – they are unlikely to meet kings, queen and nobles, haven't fought in wars, may not be deeply religious, and don't work in fields or fear the next outbreak of the pestilence. The people of the Middle Ages must seem to students to be utterly different from themselves yet in terms of feelings and other human reactions there may be more similarities than students expect, as Professor Miri Rubin explains in her book *The Middle Ages, A Very Short Introduction:*

> It is often assumed that people of this period were vastly different from us. This is not a helpful assumption. Then, as now, individuals aimed to live the best lives possible while struggling to make ends meet, fulfilling the expectations of institutions, and trying to satisfy some of their desires …. Our sources – ranging from wills to poetry, from visual imagery to testimonies in courts of law – show individuals from across the social spectrum displaying emotions familiar to us: loyalty, jealousy, greed, hope, and passionate love.

Activities for teaching

So if we want students to explore emotions and attitudes in order to appreciate what they do have in common with medieval people, when is the best time to do it? Maximum benefit will come from doing this in one or two lessons at the very beginning of work on the Middle Ages. Placed there, it's a natural follow-on from time spent diagnosing pupils' perceptions of the Middle Ages (see pages 72-74) and it also creates a base to which you can refer back. A core activity is to give students a set of cards, each containing a story or evidence showing one or more examples of emotions, feelings, attitudes – Richard III's grief at the death of his son, the valentine sent by Margery Brews to John Paston III (the red hose working their magic?), wills showing generosity and charity, Thomas Hoccleve worrying about getting old, the Paston brothers reassuring their mother that the younger of them had not been badly wounded in battle, Edward II enjoying the most unkingly pastimes of swimming and fishing, Plutarch lamenting the deaths of friends from the Black Death.

A young woman and her maid, portrayed in the Luttrell Psalter which dates from around the 1330s. Other images show people playing music and games which give a sense of enjoyment and relaxation, contrasting with the tiredness and boredom in illustrations of farmworkers breaking up clods of earth in the fields in preparation for ploughing.
The Luttrell Psalter, British Library folio 63

The task is for students is to identify the emotions or attitudes, then test a statement about the strangeness or familiarity of medieval feelings or compare their findings with their preconceptions about medieval people. Not everything would be familiar but far more will be recognisable than students might assume. If you think students need prompts you can provide a word box or Emotional Word Wheel (also known as an Emotion Wheel – there are plenty of examples via the internet).

This focus on similarities as well as differences may seem a simple point but it's one easily missed if not made explicit with students. Such early coverage of feelings and emotions is equally important at GCSE and A-level. This links back to the quotation from Professor Carpenter on page 4 where she makes clear the importance of respecting the people we study in order to explain their actions more effectively. The practical benefit for students is that if they do respect those they are studying as potentially subtle, intelligent and thoughtful human beings, with complex ideas and reactions, then they are less likely to explain actions solely in terms of ambition and self-interest and more likely to seek deeper understandings for those actions. A strategy that combines with the activity above is the simple but effective one of story-telling. What does the story in the box below reveal about the feelings of medieval people – what here is strange and what is familiar?

A different view of Agincourt

Around 1416 or 1417, a French poet, Alain Chartier (*c.* 1385-1430), wrote his poem *Le Livre de Quatre Dames* which tells the stories of four ladies in the aftermath of Agincourt. He doesn't mention Agincourt by name, instead referring to '*maudicte journee*', that 'damned day'.

Chartier's poem tells of a young man, taking a stroll one fine summer morning, when he meets a distraught young woman who is mourning her husband killed in the battle. He died honourably but she is devastated at losing the only man she could ever love. Her only hope is that, after her own death, they will be reunited in Paradise.

Then the young man meets a second woman. Her husband is alive but a captive in England. She has no news, fears he may die in prison and believes the uncertainty makes her suffering greater than that of the first lady. While they are debating whose loss is the greater, along comes a third lady whose husband is simply missing – is he dead, alive, a prisoner? Her uncertainty is such that she feels she is suffering the most. And finally comes the fourth lady whose husband, in stark contrast, is alive but only because he fled the battle. She believes that her suffering is greatest of all because he has brought shame on them both, their families and descendants and she envies the other ladies' untarnished honour.

(left) The remains of the Eleanor cross in the grounds of Lincoln Castle.
(below) The Eleanor cross in Geddington is the best-preserved of the three survivoring crosses.

Chartier's poem, discussing the tragedy of war and its innocent victims, could clearly have been written after any battle or war in any century, and shows the commonality of human experiences across the centuries. A comparable British example comes from poems written by Welsh praise-poets to honour those who died at the battle of Edgecote in 1469. In his elegy for Thomas ap Roger Vaughan, Lewys Glyn Cothi writes that Thomas's wife:

Elen Gethin was weeping
Drops of dew, as drops of rain.

Another poem records how Margaret, the wife of Rhys ap Dafydd Llwyd of Mathafarn is still waiting for his return, having no definite news of him:

Margaret doesn't believe, Rhys,
That you are not alive and well – come to Powys!

Such work, if done early in Key Stage 3 (even before coverage of 1066!) creates a base for reference back later. 'Do you remember when …?' is one of the most powerful and important questions that can be asked, showing students the value of what they learned earlier. As work on the Middle Ages continues you can then pick out supporting examples of emotions and attitudes. Edward I waged wars and built castles but also ordered the building of the 12 Eleanor Crosses to mark the places where Queen Eleanor's body rested en route to her funeral at Westminster. What does this suggest about Edward's feelings about his wife?

Conclusions

War, ambition and disease are only parts of the story of life in the Middle Ages. Inclusion of the material described here helps create a more representative picture of the Middle Ages, enabling students to identify generosity, love, sorrow, affection and many other qualities in a period they may otherwise only associate with negative aspects of human behaviour. Secondly, and in relation to students' own lives, examples of human kindness and charity, no matter how distant in time, model the best of human behaviour, just as good teachers model for their students how to treat other people with respect. It must be part of the role of history teaching to help students appreciate the good that individuals can do for others.

Resources linked to this article

Resources for the activities described above including a collection of modernised versions of the Paston Letters will be available during the school year 2017-18 at: www.thinkinghistory.co.uk

Christopher Allmand, 'After Agincourt: Women and Pain' *History Today*, February 2012.

A summary of *Le Livre de Quatre Dames* can be found on pages 344-348 of Anne Curry, *The Battle of Agincourt: Sources and Interpretations*, Boydell and Brewer, 2000.

The Luttrell Psalter film brings to life scenes from the Psalter and exemplifies a wide range of feelings and attitudes. The feeling of seeing the Psalter brought to life is enhanced by the fact that it has music but no voices as the soundtrack. See: www.luttrellpsalter.org.uk/

The most accessible modernised collections of the Paston Letters are:

Diane Watt (ed.), *The Paston Women: selected letters*, 2004.
Roger Virgoe, *Illustrated Letters of the Paston Family*, 1989.

The history of emotions is now a flourishing field of study with Queen Mary, University of London, for example, hosting a now well-established Centre for the History of the Emotions. See: https://projects.history.qmul.ac.uk/emotions/

Teaching medieval history at A-level:
Lancastrians, Yorkists and Henry VII

Louisa Dunn

Why are you teaching medieval history at A-level?

Teaching a medieval unit at A-level marked a drastic change for my department. For many years we had taught a very modern A-level course. The arrival of the new specifications in 2015 provided the opportunity to do something new. We felt we weren't necessarily turning out well-rounded historians or preparing our students that well for undergraduate studies in history. We also felt that with the new GCSE requiring some medieval study, students beginning A-level might be more engaged with the period and keen to take their medieval studies further. Having completed the first year of teaching our medieval unit the feedback from students has been very positive. They have enjoyed the variety it provided, as have the staff.

Where does your knowledge of the topic come from?

Deciding to teach a medieval unit at A-level was a bold or, perhaps, rash move. Nobody in the department really had any prior knowledge but this doesn't have to be a problem. I had started reading about the fifteenth century, beginning with historical fiction from Philippa Gregory and Conn Iggulden and then followed this up with some popular history, such as Dan Jones's *The Hollow Crown* and with documentary series, such as Professor Robert Bartlett's *The Plantagenets* as well as re-watching parts of David Starkey's *Monarchy*. I had previously read Helen Castor's *She Wolves* and seen the accompanying BBC series. This provided a decent basis of understanding; I at least understood the general narrative. I was extremely fortunate that as I was starting to think about planning the new unit The Historical Association advertised its Teacher Fellowship course on the later Middle Ages. The residential and online courses provided very welcome in-depth information and prompted me to get on with more academic reading. This began with A.J. Pollard's *Late Medieval England, 1399-1509* and was followed up with more specific works by Charles Ross, Michael Hicks and Anne Curry. The online element of the Fellowship

course also included the University of Southampton's Future Learn course on Agincourt, which is available free to anyone, and the articles and videos were invaluable for understanding this part of the Hundred Years War and the reign of Henry V. Once I had completed this reading and research, I felt much more confident in planning the unit – this all took place in the space of about six months, with a starting point of practically nothing. If I can do it, anyone can!

What problems have you faced, particularly in terms of resources?

We were lucky that our school agreed to fund the textbook published by Pearson for the Edexcel course. This has provided a good basis for our students, which we have supplemented with some of the excellent role play ideas and resources available on the thinkinghistory website (e.g. those on the Burgundian/Armagnac dispute and the 1450-85 overview) as well as some parts of Ian Dawson's A-level textbook on the Wars of the Roses. We also created our own resources, including a 'Who's Who?' document and associated activities and a family tree activity (available on The Historical Association website). The problem of resources was not nearly as great as it could have been. We also used contemporary source material which is widely available, such as the Paston letters and extracts from chronicles.

What problems have students faced in terms of understanding the topic?

One key issue was that our students had not studied any medieval history since Year 7. This not only meant that some of them were daunted by the topic at first, but that they had a very insecure knowledge base. We therefore had to go back to basics, creating introductory lessons to reintroduce the period, covering government, society and religion in the Middle Ages. Another hurdle was overcoming their very modern mindsets but, by offering them some wider reading and overview lessons on the Middle Ages, we went some way to overcoming this. It should be said that these issues of background knowledge and understanding of contemporary

A family tree on the bedroom wall of a Year 13 student.
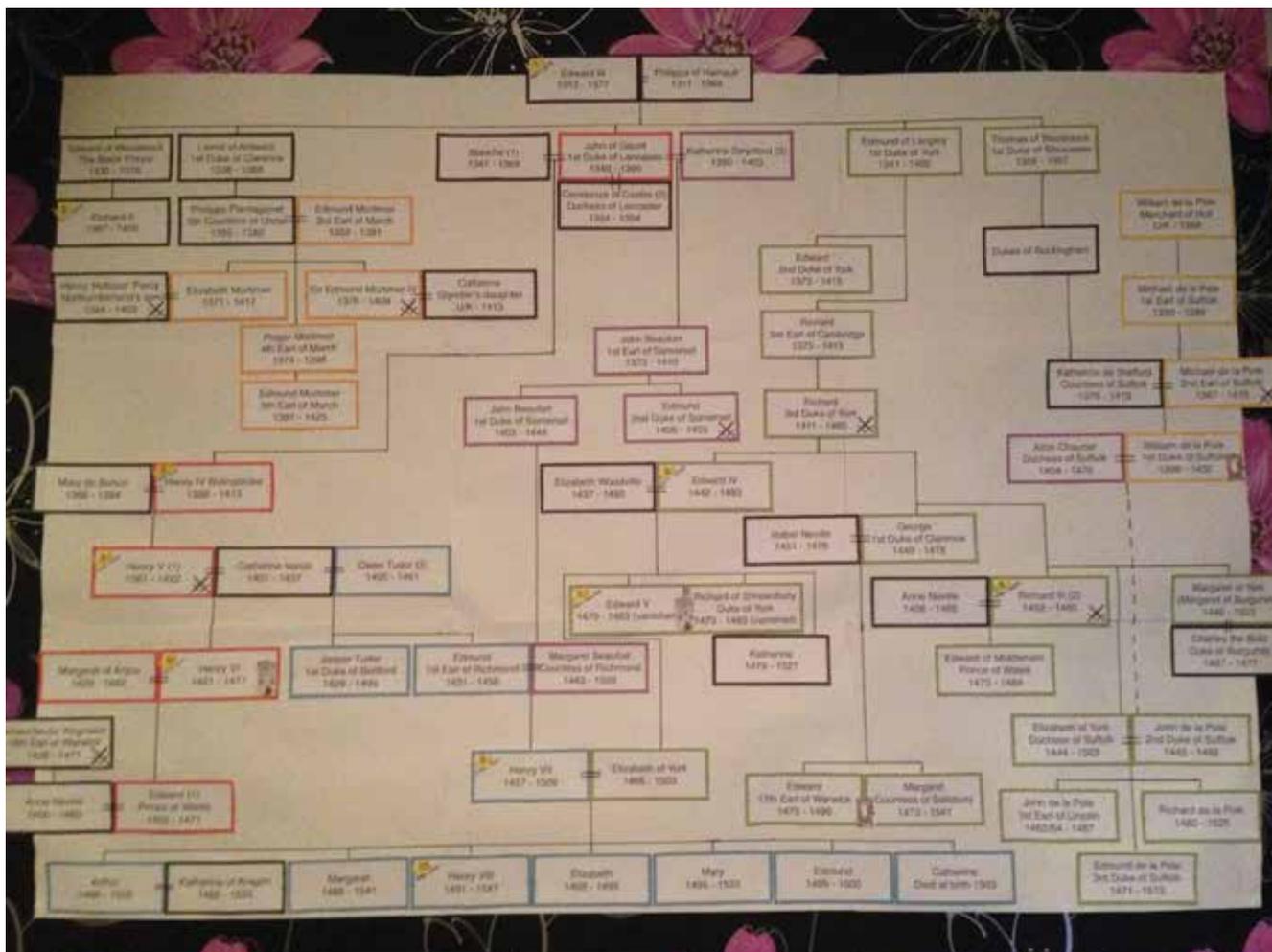
mindsets are common to many other A-level courses, not just the medieval options.

There is also a vast cast of characters whom students need to be aware of in this period and so the Who's Who and family tree activities we devised were crucial to create a basis for their understanding. It did take some time for them to get to grips with the different names, different generations with the same names, the different family and titular names for one individual, but through regular repetition and revisiting we got there in the end. It also helped that we encouraged students to create their own master versions of family trees, rather than giving them a pre-prepared copy as this made them engage with the characters. I was reliably informed that many a Year 13 bedroom wall was adorned with the names of fifteenth-century nobles. I am sure that the hard work we put in helped their overall understanding and their comments on a questionnaire indicated that this was the case. The role-play activities also helped them place people in the context of the stories, and in lessons students regularly said 'Oh that was me' or 'That was your dad' when coming across a character they had previously encountered in a role-play activity.

To make this a positive learning experience for all, we have tried to make our lessons as active as possible, not only with the role-play activities but with activities that encourage students to take risks and make links across periods, to help with the breadth element of the course.

By using post-its, mini whiteboards and dry wipe pens students felt the confidence to have a go at things.

Our library has been invaluable in helping us deepen students' understanding, by purchasing a number of academic works. Many of these are available second-hand online for very reasonable prices, and I know a number of our students bought their own second-hand copies. We also regularly shared relevant articles with our students to add depth to their understanding on different aspects of the topic. A handful of students also took up the opportunity to participate in the University of Southampton FutureLearn course on Agincourt. Finally, we were lucky to be given permission to take our students to a 'Wars of the Roses' A-level study day where they heard lectures from Professor John Watts among others. In the next academic year, we have permission to take our students to the Tower of London for a workshop and tour on the 'Wars of the Roses and Henry VII'.

I have also encouraged students to read fiction but with a big health warning! I do strongly impress on them that these are novels and that they should not take the events as gospel, but I do think it really helps to give them a sense of period. I have not recommended anything I haven't already read, so I know which bits to highlight as particularly misleading. We don't seem to have run into any major difficulties: the general rule of thumb has been that they can trust the date of a battle,

Active learning: students making links between national political changes and local unrest.
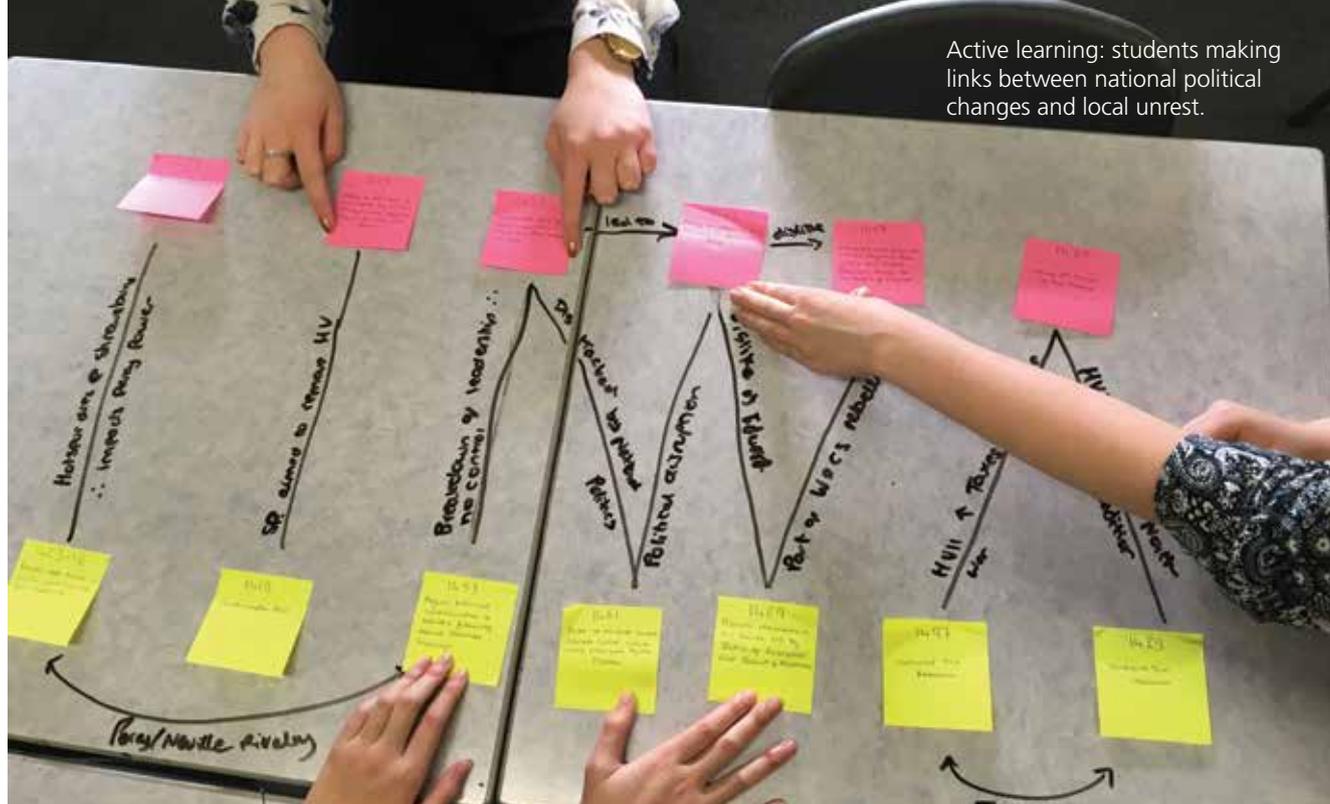
for example, or the existence of a major character. Just don't trust minor events or anything the characters say. I've also pointed them to the author's notes at the end.

Has it been a success?

The outcome of all of this has been an enjoyable teaching experience for staff and I think we won our students round. Some have thanked us for taking the risk with a new course and told us how much they have enjoyed it. My gift from one group of students when they left was four foam swords for use in future role-plays! This enthusiasm does seem to have translated into examination success; we were certainly very pleased with the results for this unit in the first examinations in June 2017. In a broader sense, I do think we have a cohort of students with a broader understanding of the past and perhaps a greater interest in medieval history or at least the fifteenth century.

Looking forward: what still needs to be done?

Looking forward to our second year of teaching, we have made slight alterations to the organisation of our 'Who's Who?' document and the timing of some of the role-plays. We could also make more use of contemporary sources in lessons and I would like to spend a bit more time on the different types of source available on this period. For example, looking at the differences between different chronicles, giving students a better introduction to official documents, such as the Parliamentary rolls. The main challenge here will be finding appropriate sources, quite a time-consuming activity, but I think it will help to make our students' analysis of contemporary sources less generic.

It is difficult to say at this point what the impact on our GCSE and Key Stage 3 courses will be. Having said that, we do have plans to re-design Key Stage 3 once the new GCSE and A-level courses are embedded and the

new GCSE will help with some basic understanding of the medieval period and the structure of society and government, so in a few years our starting point may be slightly less basic.

Louisa Dunn has taught History at Westcliff High School for Girls in Southend-on- Sea, Essex for 13 years and has recently become Head of History. She has regularly delivered INSET on teaching and learning and is an experienced mentor of trainee history teachers. She was part of the inaugural Teacher Fellowship Programme on the fifteenth century run by the Historical Association and gained the Distinction Award for the resources she produced on 'Who's Who in the Wars of the Roses?'. She is also chair of the Secondary History Network Group for South Essex Teaching School Alliance (SETSA).

Resources linked to this article

The Historical Association website offers a variety of resources including podcasts by Michael Hicks on The Wars of the Roses, by Anne Curry on Henry VI and by Sean Cunningham on Henry VII, articles from *The Historian* by Carole Rawcliffe on 'The Insanity of Henry VI' and Ian Arthurson on '1497, Cornwall and The Wars of the Roses' and an article by John Watts in *Teaching History* edition 148.

In addition, teaching resources developed as part of the Teacher Fellowship course on the later Middle Ages are available on the HA site. These include the 'Who's Who' activity mentioned above. See: www.history.org.uk

A range of resources can be found in the Wars of the Roses section of www.thinkinghistory.co.uk

Reflections

Ian Dawson

> ...if students can respect people of a time as different from our own as the Middle Ages, then perhaps there is more chance of them respecting people from different cultures today rather than instinctively interpreting difference as being inferior or a threat.

Walk into Durham cathedral and first impressions, thanks to those immense pillars, are of solidity and power. 'We are here to stay,' the cathedral seems to be saying on behalf of the Normans who built it. But walk towards the east end, into the choir, and look at the reredos, known as the Neville Screen, and you get a more rounded, complex picture of the Middle Ages – of religion and war, of consummate planning, demanding physical labour and exquisite craftsmanship, of vision, beauty, colour.

The story begins in 1346 with war, as a large Scottish army came raiding across the border, threatening Durham until beaten at Neville's Cross by a local army in which the troops raised by the Bishop of Durham and the Neville family played a major part. But to contemporaries, victory in battle was inseparable from belief in God and so it was God and St Cuthbert, the greatest of English saints, whose shrine lay in Durham cathedral, who were believed to have given the English victory and so saved the north.

That success led John Neville to commission the great screen we still admire in the cathedral though it was the 1370s before the planning and the work took place. The whole process tells us a good deal about the fourteenth-century's vision, craftsmanship and ability to carry through a years-long complex project. The screen was created in London, probably in the workshop of the royal mason, Henry Yevele, using stone specially shipped from Caen. The craftsmanship was of the highest quality and included the carving and painting of 107 highly coloured alabaster figures of saints and angels, of the Virgin Mary, of St Oswald and, of course, of St Cuthbert. And then all was packed into boxes and shipped by sea to Newcastle, whence it was moved in wagons to Durham and hauled up that steep – very steep – hill to the cathedral. Once safely into the cathedral, the surviving accounts tell us it took seven masons a year to reassemble the screen, a task completed in 1379.

And much later came a mystery. Fast forward to 1539 and the news of the pending arrival of Henry VIII's commissioners. The monks removed those 107 figures and hid them, so saving them from grasping royal hands – and they have never been seen since.

The story of the Neville Screen tells us a great deal about the Middle Ages. It is not one of a medieval idyll – none of us would want to swap places with those who lived in the fourteenth century in particular – but there is much in that story to be admired, even if we may not understand every aspect of belief and motivation.

Changing perceptions of the Middle Ages

'The Middle Ages' is, of course, a construct of later ages. In the splendid words of Professor Chris Wickham, the medieval period can 'be seen as a random invention, a confidence trick perpetrated on the future by a few scholars'.[1] Such scholars first began to decry the centuries we think of as the Middle Ages in the late fourteenth century but it was in the seventeenth century and, particularly, during the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century that the idea of the 'medium aevum' was consolidated. To change the tone of my language, the Middle Ages has been given a good kicking by every succeeding age and never more so than by the Victorians. To take one example, the doubly eminent William Stubbs (Bishop of Chester and Regius Professor of History at the University of Oxford) wrote of the later Middle Ages:

> The most enthusiastic admirer of medieval life must grant that all that was good and great in it was languishing even to death – and the firmest believer in progress must admit that as yet there were few signs of returning health. The sun of the Plantagenets went down in clouds and darkness; the coming of the Tudors gave as yet no promise of light; it was 'as the morning spread upon the mountains', darkest before the dawn.[2]

Contrast that with the view of another Professor of History at Oxford, Chris Wickham, writing in 2016 of the same period:

> … the extension of literate practices to ever-widening social groups, plus a continuing high-equilibrium economic system, plus a newly intrusive state, made possibly by taxation, communications and, once again, literacy, helped to create political systems across Europe which allowed [wider popular] *engagement*, nearly everywhere. *This* marks the

Durham Cathedral the Neville Screen, 1380 from Caen stone. Looking north east
Angelo Hornak / Alamy Stock Photo

last century of the middle ages, not the supposedly late medieval features which mark so many textbooks: crisis, or anxiety, or the Renaissance, or a sense that the continent was, somehow, waiting for the Reformation and European global conquest.[3]

Or compare this from Dr David Crouch in 2017:

It is difficult for the post-Enlightenment, postmodern mind to appreciate quite how saturated in faith and its practice the medieval mind was. On the other hand, it is also not the case – as eighteenth-century humanists sneered – that this was something that stifled intellectual curiosity and promoted credulosity in medieval Europe. It may be Purgatory to read and follow their tracts and glosses on Scripture, but you can only be impressed by the sheer energy and meticulous argumentativeness of multilingual medieval intellectuals.[4]

Such re-thinking applies to each period within the Middle Ages as this passage from Richard Huscroft's *Tales from the Long Twelfth Century: the rise and fall of the Angevin Empire,* indicates:

...[historians in the nineteenth century characterised] Stephen's reign as 'the Anarchy' – a period when the king had lost control and his barons were able to do as they pleased at the expense of the innocent and the weak. More recent assessments have been less dramatic and more cautious about taking the chroniclers' lurid opinions at face value. The consensus now is along the lines that, whilst there was violence in England during this period, there was no consistent pattern to it. It was patchy and intermittent. Some people suffered, to be sure, but the fighting was concentrated in certain areas, whilst others were largely unaffected. Views of the English aristocracy have developed and evolved too. The stereotypical image is of the turbulent, self-seeking nobleman with a passion for violence taking advantage of the power vacuum at the centre of politics and law to seize whatever he could get his hands on. Of course there were unscrupulous chancers amongst them, but, as a group, such men are likely to be seen now as pragmatic and necessarily self-reliant, doing whatever they could to protect their own lands and rights and pass them on intact to their successors. For them the disappearance of a single, dominant, kingdom-wide authority presented many more problems than opportunities, and they simply had to make the best of things until normality was restored.[5]

Historians, while remaining aware of the brutal, the ambitious and the thoughtless, are painting a much more nuanced picture of medieval life. Thus Professor Carole Rawcliffe ends her book *Urban Bodies: communal health in late medieval English towns and cities* with a warning against the condescension of Victorian and other later writers towards the people of the Middle Ages who 'although their beliefs and strategies can often seem alien to our own, … are no less deserving of study and respect'.[6]

Moving forward

Hopefully this publication will stimulate much more discussion about the teaching of this period. There is much to be gained from discussing what is most valuable for students to learn about even the most familiar topics. Opening up historians' research on less familiar subjects gives teachers more options as well as

a broader understanding of the period. In time, too, there may be value in opening up wider discussion of what best constitutes the content and approaches of medieval options at GCSE and A-level, if only we can be freed from the ludicrously short timetables required by government-inspired changes.

Identifying the human in the Middle Ages

There are many reasons why it is worth teaching about the Middle Ages. The one I will pick out in conclusion returns to the theme of respecting the people of the Middle Ages. In studying events it is vital to look closely at the people who took part in them and so not underestimate the complexity of the decisions individuals had to take, balancing their own and their families' best interests with wider principles, ideals and the common good. Those dilemmas and the thoughtful decisions taken are central to building students' respect for the people of the past. Perhaps it's more an ideal than a reason but, if students can respect people of a time as different from our own as the Middle Ages, then perhaps there is more chance of them respecting people from different cultures today rather than instinctively interpreting difference as being inferior or a threat.

This is not, of course, to argue that all medieval people were worthy of our respect. We don't have to like and admire the people we study! It's valuable to bear in mind Professor Miri Rubin's words in her book *The Hollow Crown* that 'the historian's craft is most importantly realized in guiding the reader through the recognition of the familiar and the shock of the different.' This applies as much to teachers in schools as to historians because students may well assume difference and find the idea of similarity unlikely. In this context it is worth dwelling on Dr David Crouch's words:

> ...medieval people had a high idea of the rights of the political community of various realms and an ability to articulate it from which we still benefit. They despised and resisted political corruption; sought true justice; hoped the best for their own lives and for their children, whom they loved; met the horrors of pandemic and disease with a fortitude that humbles us.[7]

Each of these points challenges disparaging uses of 'medieval' but it's that last phrase 'met … disease with a fortitude that humbles us' that I find so striking, the idea that we, today, might feel *humbled* by the behaviour of people in the Middle Ages – how can we help students appreciate such qualities in the people they study?

One way is to give such qualities space in our courses, qualities that allow us to acknowledge kinship with these people from the past – not kinship in nationality, race or religion but kinship as human beings. Here to finish are just a handful of examples:

The thirteenth century writer Philip de Novara complaining 'There are many young people who are so arrogant that they think they know everything, can do anything and are infallible. But they very often get in a complete mess.'

Edward II messing about in boats, enjoying fishing, swimming; Henry VII making payments to jesters, actors, singers and dancers whose performances he'd enjoyed.

Margaret Paston writing to her husband, John, in 1441 that he has left her 'such a remembrance [the baby she is carrying] that makes me think upon you both day and night when I would sleep'.

That same baby, John Paston II, by then 30 years old, writing to Margaret in 1471 to reassure her that he and his brother have survived the battle of Barnet and that his brother 'fares well and is in no peril of death' despite his arrow wound.

Richard III and his wife, Anne, 'out of their minds for a long time because of the sudden grief' at the death of their son Edward; Henry VII 'of true, gentle and faithful love' comforting his distraught wife, Elizabeth, after the death of their son, Arthur.

And Margery Paston in 1481 sending her husband John a declaration of love that transcends the centuries:

> I pray you if you tarry long at London that it will please you to send for me for I think [it] long since I lay in your arms.

And those words bring us back to where we began, with Richard and Eleanor Fitzalan, another loving couple, forever holding hands. The joy of studying history is that it's the study of people. Some were politicians, monarchs or soldiers, others were tellers of tales and singers of songs, the boys and maybe the girls in the band whose gitterns and shawms, crumhorns and sackbuts helped people dance and skip with pleasure. And whoever they were, all were individuals with fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, children, friends.

In the words of the late, great playwright, Alan Plater in *Close the Coalhouse Door*, 'It might be history to some people but to us it's family, pet'.

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7   Crouch, *op.cit.* p.2.

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Moat Community College

Celebrating Success: A Journey of Improvement

Almost all students at Moat Community College are from minority ethnic backgrounds; Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Somali are the largest ethnic groups in the school and almost all students speak English as an additional language. The school is larger than most secondary schools and also has an above average number of students eligible for pupil premium and with special educational needs. It is hugely rewarding to find a Quality Mark (QM) school that uses their participation as a framework for improvement and success. Congratulations to Moat Community College on achieving a silver Quality Award. This is a department that is very clearly on an improvement journey.

Annabelle Dobson, who led the QM award for Moat Community College in Leicester, says:

The process of applying and being assessed for the QM was completely developmental. I am confident that our department has improved as a result of our participation, and we were delighted to receive it. I would recommend other inner-city schools to participate; we very much felt the QM process recognised quality History teaching, learning and enrichment, not just student outcomes.

Curriculum, enrichment and teaching and learning are real strengths at the school and the history department works hard and creatively to engage pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds and literacy levels with studying history.

Pupils at the school really value the subject and had a range of views as to why studying history is important but almost always included developing a good knowledge of their own heritage and culture, as well as understanding the past to make sense of the world around them.

The department is very clear that for many pupils such as the new arrivals, they have a limited understanding of the broad sweep of British history and heritage and British values is an element that is worked on to help pupils understand where they now live, but this is also closely matched with helping pupils to understand their own heritage and identity through history.

The history staff at Moat Community College.

Pupils of Moat Community College.

The Quality Mark (QM) is all about recognition of the excellent history provision you, your department or colleagues and your school offer young people. The Quality Mark provides a framework for success whether want to gain the recognition you deserve, or whether you are looking to improve your provision.

In 2018 the Royal Historical Society will be sponsoring up to 10 secondary schools to apply for the Quality Mark. Further details are on the HA website in the quality mark section.

To read the full case study of Moat Community College visit history.org.uk/qualitymark
Find out more about become a quality mark school at www.history.org.uk/go/become-a-QM-school

Why become a HA Quality Mark school?

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This is what our secondary school participants tell us about the impact of QM:

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Exploring and Teaching Medieval History in schools

A secondary education publication of the Historical Association

Contents

Section 3

What time does the tune start?

Planning at Key Stage 3: Helping students see the bigger pictures of the Middle Ages

Ian Dawson

One of my favourite passages of dialogue in one of my favourite books goes like this:

'What sort of music are you going to make me listen to tonight?'
'Jazz.'
'Obviously. But what kind of jazz?'
'What kinds do you know about?'
'I know three kinds. Hot. Cool. And what time does the tune start?'

And thus, Trevor, crumpled Geordie woodwork teacher and jazz freak, and Jill, radical, feminist English teacher, head off to the singing room of the Limping Whippet in rainswept outer Leeds in search of the music of the Frank Ricotti All Stars, due reward for spiriting the mysterious Ivan over one of the most dangerous frontiers known to mankind – the Lancashire border.

For more, read Alan Plater's *The Beiderbecke Connection* but, before you click on the search engine of your choice, I'll try to explain what that has to do with teaching about the Middle Ages. I suspect that many Key Stage 3 students hear and enjoy the individual notes – the events – of the Middle Ages and some of those notes are memorable, being loud and exciting, but those same students may struggle to hear the tune i.e. an overall sense of the period and its bigger pictures, the patterns of continuity and change and the ideas and attitudes that lie behind the events. This is not a new problem but recent changes have made it much worse in many schools – the

reductions in teaching time, the massive distractions of curriculum change at GCSE and A-level and the mania of management for ill-conceived assessment practices.

But whether you have ten, 30 or 50 hours to teach about the Middle Ages at Key Stage 3 (and the variety of time available is probably even wider than that) it is important to plan effectively to give courses coherence and create a more sophisticated, representative and respectful picture of the period. Much of this will not be new to experienced teachers but I have in mind particularly those new to teaching and those teaching at Key Stage 3 with little background in medieval history.

[As an aside for new teachers, planning (and teaching) is, fundamentally, a problem-solving task, whether students are seven, 17 or 87. You know the parameters of how many lessons, what you want students to learn, what resources you have, what students may struggle with and often misunderstand, and then you spend loads of fascinating time working out how to juggle all those things into a coherent course.]

There are, inevitably, overlaps with discussions in the other articles in this teaching section, such as linking Key Stage 3 to GCSE, the importance of diagnosing students' preconceptions and ensuring that courses don't leave out over half of the population. Omitting those

issues from this article on planning doesn't mean they are irrelevant in planning – it's just that they're tackled separately for the sake of clarity

Finally, by way of introduction, I'd like to emphasise that these ideas are all 'works in progress'. It's also worth warning you (you may have realised already!) that I have not written this in a measured, academic, fully-footnoted and evidenced way. This is a kite-flying, conjectural, probably breathless, 'revelling in thinking afresh after years of having to do what's necessary' kind of article, written with a great sense of excitement and passion for teaching this period. There's a vast range of possibilities to be explored – and hopefully you'll hear the tune amidst all the improvisations.

This lengthy article is split into these sections:

1. Planning around the period rather than events
2. Possibilities for 'overview' enquiry questions
3. Planning the 'takeaways' from Key Stage 3 work on the Middle Ages
4. Enquiries on individual 'topics'
5. Some questions about selection of content
6. The structure of schemes of work on the Middle Ages
7. The Middle Ages within Key Stage 3 as a whole

1. Planning around the period rather than events

Key Stage 3 students learn about a range of events and people *within* the Middle Ages but this is not the same as gaining an understanding of the characteristics of the period or of their similarities and differences with the characteristics of other periods. It is also very different from understanding the broad rhythms of changes and continuities that lie behind the events. In the historians' summaries on pages 8-11 you can read about some of these broader patterns – population trends, the growth of towns, of freedom, education and literacy, ideas about beliefs, the involvement of the wider populace in politics etc. etc. If students don't gain explicit knowledge of some of these developments then any amount of knowledge of individual events ends up being much less than the sum of its parts.

The core idea in this section is to build planning around understanding of the Middle Ages as a period (as shown in the diagram below), choosing and utilising events and second-order concepts as the means to develop understanding of the period itself. This approach then underpins the discussions in the rest of this article.

Diagram 1
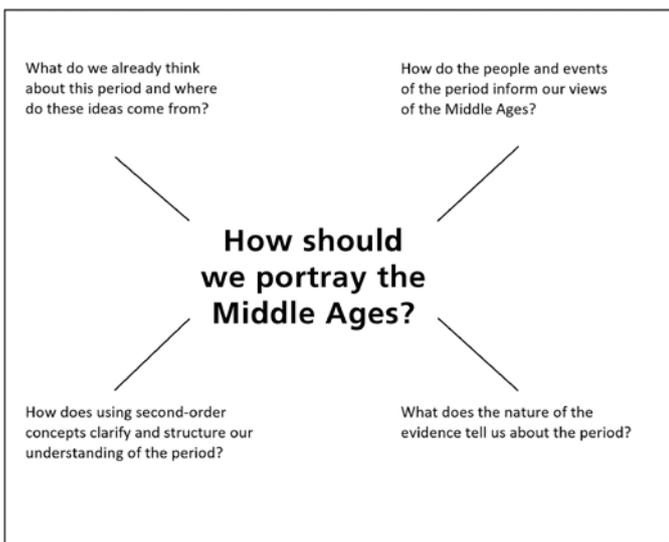
This approach has several potential advantages:

a) it provides coherence and can be used over ten, 30 or 50 hours without reducing coherence
b) it can be rooted in students' preconceptions of the period, thus enabling them to identify how their understandings develop and change during the course, making their learning visible and hence far more effective.
c) it reduces the danger of studying only those events that seem to be foreshadowing events and developments of importance today.
d) it provides a better-informed context for studying medieval options at GCSE and A-level (see pages 75-77)

e) it has the potential to create stronger links with other periods and enable the planning of a Key Stage 3 history course as a whole.

While much of the emphasis is on supporting departments whose Key Stage 3 teaching time has been cut back, this approach can also help those who still have plenty of teaching time and continue to cover a wide range of events. Herein may lie a different issue – do students, simply because of the greater number of events studied, struggle to obtain a strong sense of the changes and continuities across the period as a whole and can they see similarities and differences between the preoccupations of this period and later ones?

2. Possibilities for 'overview' enquiry questions

Every history course from Key Stage 2 to A-level needs one, maybe two, enquiry questions at its heart to link topics together, create coherence and give a sense of overall direction – to go back to my musical analogy, it enables students to hear the overall tune which links the notes – the individual events, people and shorter enquiries. Having such a question also helps students gain a sense of achievement because at the end, they can provide a fuller and better answer than at the beginning.

To make the period and its characteristics the centre of study here are three types of overview question that could each act as a central thread:

a) a question based upon students' preconceptions of the Middle Ages – these aren't necessarily student-friendly wordings but approaches along the lines of 'We described the Middle Ages as '–'. Are we right?' or 'Was the way we first described the Middle Ages fair? or 'How do you think the Middle Ages should be portrayed?'

A note on 'knowledge' and 'understanding'

I have been puzzling over when to use the word 'knowledge' and when to use 'understanding' in this article. Not everyone interprets these words in the same way which can lead to confusions. For some 'knowledge' means remembering individual details and 'understand' means the capacity to explain broader issues such as the impact of the Norman Conquest or the pattern of royal power across a period or make links across longer spans of time. Michael Fordham (in his stimulating blog clioetcetera.com) and others have discussed whether distinguishing between these words is misleading – how can you understand without knowledge and vice-versa? This is the approach I have taken here, using 'knowledge' where some might prefer 'understanding', essentially using them as synonyms.

This ties into the importance of diagnosing students' initial thoughts about the Middle Ages and its people (see pages 72-74). That diagnostic stage loses a great deal of its value if not then built into the fabric of the course and revisited at intervals. That rethinking, re-evaluating of ideas is not only important in the context of an individual period or topic but models what we do when learning most effectively – we keep reflecting back on how our understandings are changing and the evidence that our revised understanding is based on. If the study of history as a whole can be described as a conversation between historians then we all learn most effectively when we hold conversations with ourselves, mentally identifying how our understanding of a topic is developing and, critically, identifying what we are still puzzled or unsure about.

Focusing initially on students' own preconceptions rather than on other interpretations, such as those of historians, a description in a children's book or 'dungeon'-type holiday experience seems important as it gives students an immediate sense of direct involvement – it's their ideas they're working to develop, not someone else's – time later to move on to analysing other interpretations, particularly those of historians and compare them with students' own growing understandings.

b) a question such as 'Did anything ever change in the Middle Ages?' which focuses on degrees of change and continuity and links into the general belief that this was a period of history when little or nothing changed. I used a similar question in a book for the first National Curriculum in 1991; it was, at best, worthy but very dull. It worked as a vehicle for assessing degrees of change in various themes and linked to the assessment of understanding of change and continuity but it never hooked or intrigued anybody!

Dullness doesn't make it a pointless question – it's an important one and an answer helps develop that overall sense of the period. Having said that, an answer can be reached as part of a course conclusion without this question being your central enquiry.

c) The third approach is suggested by Elisabeth Pickles and Rachel Richardson on pages 81-83. They start with a question from near the end of the course: 'Why did the peasants revolt in 1381?' and use their whole course (a short one) to build an answer – to do this you do need to understand about continuities and changes in the nature of kingship and attitudes to monarchy, the role of religion, the changes in population, the prosperity and freedom of the commons. You could also draw on the changing fortunes of the French war, popular involvement in politics etc. It's not just a study of the period since the onset of the Black Death.

This is a really intriguing approach, well suited to having a relatively small amount of teaching time and needing to make an even more rigorous selection of content. It's

a genuine historical question and answering it shows the value of knowledge of both short-term events and long-term patterns of history.

Could a question on Cade's rebellion in 1450 serve the same function? Another possibility is a question along the lines of 'How close did the Pilgrimage of Grace come to deposing Henry VIII?' – another 'good story' to begin and answers draw on changing patterns of royal power (including the perceived impact of the Wars of the Roses), expectations of monarchs, the centrality of religion including the link between religious festivals and risings, the importance of harvests, threats from abroad, the quality of communications and the commons' interest in politics.

Would such a question, used as a central thread, reveal more about the nature of medieval thinking and attitudes, changes and continuities than a course built around or restricted to half a dozen bedrock events? It might – though it raises the question of how you tackle those old favourites in such a context. Is it unthinkable to whizz past the Norman Conquest – or is there another way of structuring a course? For this see point 6 below.

3. Planning the 'takeaways' from Key Stage 3 work on the Middle Ages

A little over 800 years ago, the chronicler Gervase of Canterbury wrote:

I have no desire to note down all those things which are memorable but only those things which ought to be remembered that is, those things which are clearly worthy of remembrance.

Gervase may not have been thinking about writing a scheme of work but he clearly understood the problems of selection, as did many other medieval chroniclers who spent time choosing between the 'worthy of remembrance' and the merely 'memorable'. Similarly, the most important aspect of planning at Key Stage 3 is identifying what we want students to take away from the course. What do we believe it is important for them to know and so be able to use again? In terms of the Middle Ages, such re-use may be in the context of:

- the history they cover later in Key Stage 3
- GCSE and, perhaps, A-level history
- their overall cultural knowledge and sense of historical perspective
- their ability to question public interpretations of this period of history

This discussion of planning is therefore firmly focused on the history, not on the needs of assessing students against a set of generic levels, one of the most retrograde developments in education, now being taken to new heights of absurdity by the application of GCSE

levels to Key Stage 3 and the insistence that students answer formulaic GCSE questions from the age of 11. History has got more to offer than simply being a means of data collection.

In identifying students' 'takeaways' we can think about three categories. The first two overlap a good deal but I've separated them so the first doesn't get lost, as it can do on occasion:

A. long-term developments and issues that underpin much Key Stage 3 History but may not always get the time and focus that's needed to help students see their importance – these include population changes, urbanisation, climate, harvest-dependence.

B. long-term 'stories' that students can follow across Key Stage 3 and which are usually represented in schemes of work, though not always in every period – social conditions, royal power, the development of popular involvement in politics, beliefs and religion, England's relationship with the rest of Britain, Britain's relationship with the rest of the world, migration, the development of empires, changes in gender roles.

C. individual events – the Norman Conquest etc. etc. etc.

Although a good deal of planning may focus on category C, the first two are more important in terms of re-useable knowledge in the context of the four bullet points on page 100. It's those wider themes in A and B that provide the context for understanding the significance of individual events and give meaning to their inclusion in schemes of work. All too often rapid overviews of such themes are seen as the second-class citizens, left out when a depth enquiry over-runs, but maybe this order of priorities needs re-thinking with overviews having a much stronger place in schemes of work, especially when there is a limited time available – you do cover a lot more history that way! Is there a case for planning depth around a core of overviews (usually very brief) rather than squeezing overview themes into gaps between depth enquiries? There is a myth that themes are less interesting because there are no good stories to tell and no people to talk about. This is pure myth – stories about individual people are the very things that illuminate broad patterns.

Page 102 provides ideas for discussion relating to categories A and B above – what might constitute a set of 'takeaways' from work on the Middle Ages that students will re-use in the future? A couple of further points first:

- this is not a list of the only things they should learn! It's a set of takeaways that relate to the tune behind this whole article – a broader knowledge of the period than may be gained through the individual events in category C above.
- these are not written in 'pupil-speak' as no single version is suitable for all students.

You may not want or have time to cover all these points or, in other cases, many of these points will be present in schemes of work. If they are not, does a list such as this (maybe necessarily a shorter one) help plan a course that provides a fairer, more representative view of the age? And does it provide a good focus for assessment?

4. Enquiries on individual 'topics'

This section sets out questions which may reveal deeper understandings of the Middle Ages than those that focus on a single event or individual. They also link back to the overview enquiry questions above in section 2. I haven't tried to tease out precise wordings for the 'ultimate enquiry question'. There's a lot to be gained, e.g. in terms of departmental co-operation, in 'wrestling' your way to the ideal question. It may be, however, as much time needs to be spent working out how to develop students' ability to formulate their own questions – one of the hallmarks of high-quality students. So here are some possible enquiries:

a) How good were medieval people at problem-solving? To take one example, how effectively did they organise military expeditions? Anne Curry's article (pages 60-63) shows that military campaigns could be very well organised, though not all were. The starting point is to ask students what they think would be needed for an expedition and if they can suggest how they would do it – what could go wrong and what would be the worst mistakes? Then reveal how Henry V tackled this in 1415 – how does this compare with students' plans and what have they learned from this? This takes us into understanding that government was an increasingly complex and sophisticated process. William of Normandy's preparations in 1066 provide another example. Another topic under this heading would be how people dealt with growing and supplying more food as the population grew or how to best plan a castle for defence *and* comfort. There are plenty more possibilities (see page 90 for the example of the Neville Screen in Durham cathedral).

b) What is the most valuable evidence for understanding beliefs about religion? A question about the nature of evidence, doubling up to reveal ideas about religion. One attraction is the range of evidence – the Luttrell Psalter and other religious books, wills, chronicles, buildings and their contents, which means not only churches but the placement of chapels in castles, for example.

c) What really mattered to Geoffrey and Agnes Luttrell and their villagers? The Psalter is such an enticing starter because its images tell us a lot – but so does Geoffrey's will and so do the careers and marriages of the family. These take us into issues of religion, charity, community and the future of souls, to war and honour, the importance of the family and land and to the labour of the villagers, their roles as household servants and to the centrality of farming and the harvest. There is also

Possible 'takeaway' knowledge about the Middle Ages

- People's quality of life was greatly affected by the quality of the harvest, which in turn depended on changes both in climate and in the weather. Successive harvest failures could lead to great hardship and the danger of starvation for some.

- The population grew quickly until the early 1300s, then fell by up to 50% with the onset of the Black Death. These changes in population affected prosperity and freedom. In the fifteenth century living standards for many were higher than over the next three centuries.

- Life-expectancy and health were similar in this period to other periods apart from that since the late nineteenth century. People tried to safeguard their health, especially trying to improve public health in periods of plague.

- Ideas about science and medicine were very different from ours but were detailed, carefully-studied and logical in terms of the world-view of the period. Scholars sought new ideas and universities developed.

- Christianity was the official religion in Britain though its ideas were sometimes questioned. Ideas of heaven, hell and purgatory had a great influence on many people's actions. The Church's holy days determined working patterns and created many opportunities for rest and community activities.

- The Church in England was part of wider Christendom, under the authority of the Pope, and was very wealthy. Abbeys played a significant part in trade and in providing care for the poor.

- The vast majority of people lived in villages and were agricultural workers, hard physical work shared by women and children. Many towns grew or were founded in the early part of this period.

- Women were regarded as under the command of their menfolk though in practice individual women ran businesses or their husbands' estates and gave their husbands advice on many issues.

- Britain was closely connected to the rest of Europe through trade. England's strong links with Scandinavia were ended by the Norman Conquest. After this, French culture and language had a major influence in England and politics was strongly affected by disputes and wars with France.

- England was the richest and most powerful part of Britain and English lords gradually took over Wales but had little impact in Ireland. Scotland fought successfully to remain independent.

- Wars were chiefly fought for the king's glory and to defend his lands and power. Crusades against non-Christians in the Middle East and Europe continued unevenly throughout this period.

- Monarchs were seen as God's representatives and remained central to government, being expected to defend their people from enemies and disorder at home and from abroad.

- Monarchs were expected to consult their nobles about important decisions before taking the decisions themselves. Magna Carta and parliaments began as attempts to ensure kings did consult nobles and others.

- Nobles were very reluctant to rebel but sometimes did when their own positions were threatened by the uncontrolled actions of kings. Kings were usually only deposed in the last resort.

- Government was increasingly complex, well-organised and efficient with detailed records.

- The commons were increasingly well informed about political events and expected kings and nobles to provide defence, peace and prosperity. They became confident and well organised enough to protest when feeling threatened by poor government.

- People were just as intelligent (or not!) as in later centuries and shared many emotions and ideals with people today. By the 1400s literacy levels were rising and printing developed.

the sense of uncertainty – we cannot know but only suggest, which must be a continuing thread in all work on medieval topics particularly.

d) 'Medieval lords were always eager to depose kings.' To what extent do you agree with this statement? A mature formulation but easily made concrete with an Agree-Disagree continuum line identifying initial thoughts. This question saves us from getting bogged down in John and Magna Carta. It may be a starting point but after that groups could explore other events with depositions almost always a prolonged and reluctant process (throwing the events of 1483 into high relief). A companion question 'Did ordinary people care about politics?' provides a broader understanding, more than just a study of the events of 1381.

e) Was everyday life in the medieval countryside just about survival? Another 'challenge a generalisation' question – you can find answers in Chris Dyer's article on pages 52-55. Many topics on 'village life' struggle to build in a sense of change across time whereas this enables variations to appear naturally and to embrace the impact of the Black Death as well as looking at the fundamental role of religion in people's lives.

f) What were the three most important moments in the history of, for example, the Crusades or England's relationships with the rest of Britain or England's relationship with Europe? These are big significance questions, setting out wider stories and providing context for individual events. They need not take anything like as long to cover as may appear at first glance and have very clear outcomes which can take us into significance and interpretations.

One concern about the above questions is that the second-order concepts that have so dominated assessment at Key Stage 3 are not as immediately apparent as they often are (nor do these questions echo GCSE assessment questions). One reason is that cause and consequence questions are often about individual events or developments – why did x happen? – which gives primacy to studying individual events and loses the bigger understandings of the period. Having said that, there is a great deal in these questions of broader value for assessment at Key Stage 3 and GCSE – making judgements supported by evidence, knowledge and understanding of key features and characteristics of the period (saving time at GCSE?) as well as issues about change and continuity and the nature of evidence. Another important element is ensuring that there are opportunities to challenge generalisations, gaining practice in identifying e.g. that motives or experiences varied among an apparently similar group of people. This helps move away from the feeling that the only good answer is a definite answer, whereas so often the best answers are the 'definitely uncertain' ones (with supporting evidence, of course!).

5. Some questions about selection of content

a) Does the choice of content distort students' understanding of the period? Let's take Richard III, a popular 'mystery' puzzle, usually studied to prompt thinking about the nature of sources. But if all you study about Richard III is the disappearance of the Princes in the Tower the implication is that royal children were fair game for any would-be crown-seeker, that this sort of thing was accepted in the constantly murderous fifteenth century. This is not an accurate view of this period – if it was, then there would not have been a widespread rebellion later in 1483, prompted to a large extent by the violence of Richard's seizure of power and by some element of moral outrage. To understand the range of motives and actions we need to look at the aftermath of the disappearance, not just the 'mystery' itself. The same argument applies to other topics – are students gaining a fair sense of the period or a very one-sided, negative view that builds up a sense of our superiority (especially moral superiority?) over the people of the past?

b) Are topics being studied to reveal the most significant features of medieval life? There are attractions to turning a lesson into an episode of Midsomer Murders – why was Becket murdered? how did Wat Tyler die? These questions help students understand something of the process of analysing sources but are they the most worthwhile approaches to these events? With Becket there's far more to be learned about twelfth-century society if we ask 'Why did Henry II agree to be whipped?' – which takes us into the importance of religion and the limits of royal power. For 1381 we learn far more about the period by concentrating on the personnel and organisation of the rising, their aims (why didn't they attack the king?) and so their knowledge and interest in the quality of government. Drama, good stories, an element of mystery are not excluded by changing the focus – it's where you go after attention has been grabbed that's different.

c) The really 'big' themes – climate, population patterns, the growth of towns etc. do not actually need much teaching time and this simplifies revisiting them in later periods of history, though always in overview, looking e.g. at the impact of changes in the pattern of population. It only takes a few minutes of excitingly didactic explanation (that's not sarcasm – the most riveting and engaging teaching often simply involves the teacher talking) to get the pattern across. Then you can have as much or little discussion time as you want – but the patterns of these background topics reveal a great deal about the period (and are very good for studying the concept of consequences). A similar topic is the nature of the religious year – all those holy days when communities had time off. Just how many were there and when did they fall? What we need is a simple calendar marking off the days when labour was required, when meat could not be eaten etc. – it's something that

really only works when students get the chance to see and think through what that calendar means.

6. The structure of schemes of work on the Middle Ages

We start at the beginning – usually in 1066 – and go through to the end. That's how we've always organised schemes of work though gaps of varying sizes have opened up in many schemes because of lack of time. This section asks whether this framework can effectively accommodate the multiple objectives we have – a sense of chronology, knowledge of individual events and overviews, enhanced understanding of how we study history and use second-order concepts, the opportunity to study in depth etc. etc. Is starting at the beginning and going through to the end the best structure for achieving such a varied set of objectives? Perhaps it is worth considering other structures within whatever teaching time is available. Such alternatives may not turn out to be better but the unorthodox can be worth exploring. Here's an alternative structure in four parts:

A) Necessary beginnings – find out how students think of the period and where their ideas come from. Then set up an overall enquiry about whether students' perceptions present a fair picture – plus lessons on the nature of sources and on 'attitudes and emotions' – see the articles on pages 72-74, 78-80 and 84-86.

B) Spend 25% (maybe 33%, probably no more) of the course providing an overview outline – what were the key events in each century? How do they reflect on our perceptions of the period? This would involve lots of story-telling with students thinking in terms of headlines, sequence and overall patterns and not going into depth. The SHP textbook *Contrasts and Connections* (1992) had a single page activity (page 152) listing key developments in each century and asking 'which century would you most like to live in if you were …?'. Now I don't think that's a good question as without anaesthetics, antibiotics, electricity, test cricket etc. we don't want to live in any of them but amending and reversing the question ('when would you least like to live?') and arguing for and against ('depends who you were?') provides a potential overview activity for this section of the course and it links into the even bigger question about perceptions of the period. This is also much more easily studied and answered over a limited number of lessons than many. Among the many valuable ideas on Russell Tarr's website are approaches that can contribute effectively to this strategy:
www.classtools.net/blog/timeline-jigsaw/

C) Spend the bulk of the medieval unit on other kinds of enquiries – one or two in real depth so students can look closely at the decisions that people had to take and the care they took over them. As the 'highlights' in part B above may emphasise wars and disasters, one criterion on choosing such depth studies might be to balance up that perspective with questions which help

to create more positive images of the period. This is also the place where you might do very rapid overviews of fundamental issues which underpin medieval society such as population and climate change, the importance of the harvest and the centrality of religion. Important topics don't necessarily need the longest time if the teaching is clear, powerful and interesting.

D) Round off the overall enquiry into students' views of the Middle Ages – have they changed and why? How would they now describe the Middle Ages? Also an opportunity to look at overall changes and continuity in the period.

And now for the really big question – what about the Norman Conquest?! The Conquest probably gets more lesson time than any Key Stage 3 topic other than The Great War– it's a dramatic story with identifiable characters, enables interesting 'source work' with the seemingly very accessible Bayeux Tapestry, everyone looks forward to teaching it and it gets Year 7 off to a great start. But it can get very tangled, with story and analysis sitting uneasily together – one minute it's the beginning of term and Edward the Confessor's dying and suddenly it's half-term and you've only reached Domesday Book. And there's now the complication for a lot of departments of teaching it at GCSE. Perhaps the alternative structure above can help, separating the bones of the story (and nobody wants to lose that) in part B from a depth enquiry into the causes of the Conquest or its effects in part C. This allows the Conquest to be placed more effectively in a longer span of time in part B than is often the case when it sits in dominating isolation at the beginning of a course.

7. The Middle Ages within Key Stage 3 as a whole

After the above, it is equally important to say that work on the Middle Ages should not be planned in isolation but in the context of the whole Key Stage 3 course, which itself needs planning as one coherent unit so students see its logic and make connections and contrasts across time. You'll be relieved to know I am not going to add another five pages on this, partly because a great deal was written about these issues when the 2008 National Curriculum was introduced – see links to that material below. So some brief thoughts: It is important for retaining knowledge for students to revisit the medieval period in a meaningful way. One method is to ensure that key themes appear in each year of Key Stage 3 (royal power, popular politics and democracy, standards of living etc.) so that students can identify these continuing stories and create their own narratives of them. This requires revisiting – 'Where did we get to with this story?' 'What were the key points up to 1530?' 'How does what's happening in the period compare with developments in the Middle Ages?' In planning it's therefore vital to identify these 'stories across time' and when they will continue to appear.

Three other strategies can be used to revisit the Middle Ages later in Key Stage 3 (and begin visiting the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Year 7).

a) Revisit in one lesson when most relevant as context the 'biggest' themes such as population, urbanisation and climate.

b) Build in '1,000 years or longer' overviews of topics in two, maybe three lessons across the Key Stage. Possible topics include Britain and Europe, England and Britain, the changing status of women, migration. In Year 7 this can be described as moving 'Fast Forward through time', later on it's more 'Fast rewind across time'! Students are not going to be comfortable moving forwards and backwards mentally across time unless they're given practice in doing so – they may feel lost to begin with but that won't be overcome by abandoning the idea. And yes, it would be wonderful to spend more time on each of these but perhaps there is more to be gained in seeing the whole pattern in one viewing than risk losing them if spread across the key stage. Students should have the chance to see any major theme in one viewing (standards of living, for example) but with some you can spend time on more detail in each year.

c) Spend half a term on a GCSE-style Thematic study near the end of Key Stage 3 to prepare for GCSE and revisit some of the major characteristics of the medieval period.

One final point (which I'd hoped to spend longer on but will write up online) – do we really need to think of there being a significant break in 'history' around 1500? Are we too in thrall to the idea of the Renaissance, a periodisation established centuries ago but which has been challenged by historians on the grounds that (a) there were changes taking place during the Middle Ages and plenty of evidence of enquiring minds and (b) there were a great many continuities between the 1400s and the early 1700s: transport, the nature of work, forms of energy, population size, life expectancy, health and medical care saw only slow change. Other changes were not much greater – Britain's involvement with the wider world, the reduction in the power of the monarchy, for example. Perhaps the clue is in that most unhelpful of labels 'Early Modern' which, in many aspects, is really just the 'Later, Later Middle Ages'. Is it possible that we search too hard for 'change' c.1450-1700 to justify the label 'Renaissance' rather than thinking from the other direction? Do all the really major changes come in the eighteenth century?

Yes, massive generalisations in that paragraph but, if you only have two years for Key Stage 3, then maybe seeing c.1000 to c.1750 as one period and looking at patterns of change and continuity across that bigger period can both save time and make more sense, create more coherence for students, enabling clearer contrast to be made between pre-industrial and industrial societies. The Reformation – yes, a huge split

in Christianity but in terms of varieties of belief and non-belief in Britain perhaps the major change is even later still, in the twentieth century.

Conclusions

Can we keep that tune audible i.e. make sure that coverage of the Middle Ages is not 'just' one interesting lesson after another but a series of interesting lessons which give students a sense of the period – its chief characteristics, its rich variety, its contradictions – illuminated, not obscured, by people and events? Such a course could be more representative of the period, not creating a rosy glow around all aspects of the Middle Ages, not turning it into a more glamorously-dressed version of the early twenty-first century, but respecting people for what they achieved and tried to achieve. If this sounds harder for students then it's even more important to begin with their assumptions. It's a good and helpful strategy to challenge students explicitly – 'this is going to be challenging and it will make you think – are you up for this?' and bring in the work of historians to compare students' views with. Better still, bring in an historian to discuss his or her views on the Middle Ages!

Resources linked to this article

I hope to use this framework to produce free online resources over the next two or three years.

There are many articles in *Teaching History* which overlap with the issues in this article. Inadequate though it is I'll pick out three, two new, one older – those by Chris Eldridge in edition 165, by Tony McConnell in edition 166 and by Dale Banham in edition 99.

See also discussions on planning on the History Resource Cupboard website run by Richard McFahn: www.historyresourcecupboard.co.uk/ and a recent (September 2017) blog by David Hibbert on interleaving at GCSE which could have parallels at Key Stage 3: https://anactofcommunication.wordpress.com/2017/09/01/planning-for-memory-interleaving-at-gcse/

My own website has a range of discussions on planning across Key Stage 3, particularly exploring themes such as royal power, plus related teaching activities and articles on this theme originally published in *Teaching History*. See the 'Teaching Issues and Discussions' in the Key Stage 3 section of: www.thinkinghistory.co.uk

For discussions of periodisation on different scales see, for example:

J. L. Watts (ed.), *The End of the Middle Ages?* (Sutton Publishing, Stroud, 1998) – a collection of articles exploring aspects of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

Jacques Le Goff, *Must We Divide History into periods?* (Columbia University Press, New York, 2015) –one of the great historians of the twentieth century discusses the idea of the Renaissance and whether a 'long Middle Ages' provides a helpful rethinking of periodisation.

Historians in the classroom:
using historical scholarship with students

Elizabeth Carr

History is a conversation between historians engaged in constructing the past, and in the pages of historical scholarship this conversation is carried on in written form. There can be no better model than the work of historians, then, to shape students' understanding of the nature of history as a discipline.

The pitfalls of using historical scholarship in the classroom with students are evident: students may stumble over complex vocabulary and syntax, and lack the depth and breadth of knowledge required to make sense of the text. If this is challenging for sixth-formers, perhaps it seems unthinkable for Year 7. In recent years, however, a number of history teachers, sharing their practice in the pages of *Teaching History* and elsewhere, have disagreed.

By using extracts from historical scholarship in the classroom with younger students, teachers such as Rachel Foster and Paula Worth are not advocating that we treat novice historians, our students, as if they were experts, nor that we ask them to emulate the work of expert historians; for a discussion of the difference, see page 111. They do, however, show that direct encounters with the work of expert historians can help students to understand what history is. Historical scholarship provides a model of the aims, the process and the outcome of 'doing history': what questions historians ask and how they answer them. The sections below exemplify ways in which the work of historians can be used in the classroom, with examples of how this might be applied to the teaching of medieval history.

1. Language and argument
Historians use different kinds of language to describe and analyse historical processes such as causation or change, or to argue for historical significance. Models of this language can help students to conceptualise and explore these different kinds of historical thinking. John Gillingham (see pages 6-7) writes of change and continuity in the medieval period, exemplifying the language historians use to engage with this concept. He writes, for example, of 'profound discontinuities',

'spectacular' political upheaval, 'abrupt shifts' and 'survival'. Students could read an extract from his text to pick out words he uses to characterise change and continuity, analysing the implications of this language before using these or similar words and metaphors in their own writing.

A fundamental objective, for many teachers, of using historical scholarship with students is to model to students the multi-voiced, argumentative nature of history.[1] Michael Fordham, Jim Carroll, and others, have developed this to explore ways in which historical scholarship can provide a model for students' own written argument.[2] We might want our students to write about their conclusions to an enquiry question about the kingship of King John, perhaps in an essay or similar piece of extended writing. Marc Morris provides a useful model to students of the structure and style of such a conclusion, as well as of its substance, in his recent biography of John. 'There was no doubt,' writes Morris, 'that John's reign had been a disaster. …Was this because, as Coggeshall and others implied, John was a thoroughly bad man, or was he the victim of circumstance?' Morris makes his case clearly in answer to this question, familiar to many a Key Stage 3 student, dealing with alternative points of view and the problems of evidence as he goes.[3]

Students might read a passage from Morris's conclusion and deconstruct it through a series of activities to focus on the claims Morris makes and how he substantiates them. For example, students might focus on an extract of text and identify where in the text a given claim is made or supported. They could use colour-coding to distinguish Morris's claims from his evidence, or to identify where he challenges alternative views. Analysis of Morris's structure and language provides examples that students could use in their own written work.[4]

2. A model of the use of sources
Several historians writing in this booklet explore the nature and use of sources, and historians of medieval England weave their evaluation of the evidence-base available to

them into their historical analysis and argument. Chris Given-Wilson (pages 15-17) explains the issues with chronicle evidence: students using chronicles to explore accounts of, for example, the Norman Conquest, the reign of King John or or the Revolt of 1381, could read an extract from Given-Wilson's article to understand the problems with the source material.

Historians have to work with the sources available, no matter how unsatisfactory. Therefore a historian making positive and constructive use of sources offers an inspiring corrective to the tendency some students may have to lapse into despair about whether, in view of the problems and biases in the sources, anything can be known about medieval history. Stephen Baxter (see pages 33-37) writing about the debates about the Norman Conquest is an excellent example; so, too, is Marc Morris in his recent book *The Norman Conquest*.

Students studying the Battle of Hastings could read and compare extracts from the different sources that provide accounts of the battle, including the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle D version, the *Carmen de Proelio Hastingae*, William of Poitiers and Orderic Vitalis, perhaps comparing these written sources to the Bayeux Tapestry account as well.[5] Students could then read an extract from Marc Morris's chapter on the battle in which he does just this: jigsawing together the sources while analysing their reliability, to construct his account of events and to challenge that of other historians in the process.[6] For example, in describing the turning point of the battle, when the Norman retreat caused some of the English to break the shield wall, he writes that 'At some stage, …presumably several hours into the conflict, there came a crucial turning point, though the *Carmen* and William of Poitiers offer different versions of how it happened. According to Poitiers… . The *Carmen* tells it somewhat differently.'[7] Morris also models language and structure students could emulate, for dealing with areas of uncertainty in the sources. He writes, for example, that 'William landed in England, probably on the morning of 28 September, possibly the morning after. When did Harold learn of his arrival? The answer depends, of course, on where the English king was, and here our sources leave us somewhere in the dark.'[8]

3. To develop a 'sense of period'
One of the most valuable but intangible qualities of a historian is sense of period: an understanding of what it was like to live at a given time, from the rhythms and routines of everyday life, to the structures of power, to contemporary ideas and assumptions. Like the foundations of a house, our sense of period underpins our ability to assimilate new information we encounter about a topic or period and to avoid misconceptions. Developing this sense of period in our students, and challenging superficial or false assumptions they may hold, is invaluable to their development as historians; it provides a starting point for building a secure superstructure of deep knowledge of the period.

Many school textbooks designed for Key Stage 3 pupils include reconstruction drawings of medieval villages and medieval life. Other such images are easy to find in non-fiction books and on the internet.[9] These are excellent starting points, enabling pupils to begin building a mental picture of the past. We can go further, however, by engaging pupils in the complexity of the past and the challenges of its reconstruction in such interpretations. We might read them an extract from historical scholarship describing life in a medieval village (such as Christopher Dyer's article on pages 52-55). While listening to the extract, pupils might draw what they hear described. With the text in front of them, they could then explore Dyer's challenge to 'the common picture' of 'grim struggle', comparing their drawings to one by a reconstruction artist. Pupils could annotate the drawings to identify what the artist had included that was in line with, or differed from, Dyer's account. They could explore how far the image represents the complexity of medieval life: the differences between landless and landholding peasants, for example, and which part of the period it most accurately represented, in the light of Dyer's account of the process of change taking place.

One further example of historical scholarship which can help students develop a sense not just of the visual landscape and everyday routines, but of the ideas and assumptions of the medieval period, is John Hatcher's book *The Black Death: an intimate history*. Hatcher's micro-historical reconstruction of life in the fourteenth-century Suffolk village of Walsham can be used to help students leave aside present-day assumptions and climb into the mindset of villagers facing the Black Death, exploring complexity and diversity within that mindset.[10]

Several historians in this booklet write to challenge common myths and assumptions about the medieval period. Students could read Oliver Creighton's challenge (pages 28-32) to myths about castles and castle-building and compare it to a classic textbook account, to add complexity and nuance to their own explanations of the evolution of castle-building and the value of wooden castles. Students may well have assumptions about the extent of literacy, reading and book-ownership in medieval England. They could record their hypotheses on this topic and then test and refine these by reading sections of Catherine Nall's article (pages 64-67), identifying where she confirms or challenges their assumptions.

4. A model of history's place in the bigger picture: how history differs from fiction
'Historians are in bondage to knowledge,' wrote Colin Richmond; 'What we do not know may not be written about: it is simpler being a novelist.'[11] Not infrequently, I find sixth-formers referring to works of historical scholarship as novels: seemingly failing to distinguish the authorial intentions of an historian, or the process

which lies behind a work of historical scholarship, from those of writers in other genres. Some students may not readily understand the difference between fiction and history; for some, perhaps more than we realise, 'book' means a storybook, and 'research' means Google.

There is a wealth of children's historical fiction, and many fine examples in the pages of *Teaching History,* and elsewhere, of its use in the classroom. If we want to strengthen students' understanding of the nature of history, however, we can compare an extract of historical fiction to an extract of historical scholarship. Henrietta Branford's children's novel *Fire, Bed and Bone*, for example, tells of the revolt of 1381 through the eyes of a dog.[12] Students could compare Dan Jones's account, in *Summer of Blood,* of the encounter between Richard II and the rebels at Mile End and Smithfield, with the story told by Branford in chapter 12, in which the events are recounted in dialogue between characters in the story.[13] They might identify where Branford and Jones are similar in their accounts, and explore how both can be seen to be drawing on the same sources. They could then pick out parts of Branford's narrative which Jones could not have written, and discuss why and how it differs from an historian's account of the same events.

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1 For example, Carroll, J. (2017) '"I feel if I say this in my essay it's not going to be as strong": multi-voicedness, "oral rehearsal" and Year 13 students' written arguments' in *Teaching History, 167, Complicating Narratives Edition*, pp. 8-17; Fordham, M. (2007) 'Slaying dragons and sorcerers in Year 12: in search of historical argument' in *Teaching History, 129, Disciplined Minds Edition,* pp. 31-38.
2 Carroll, J. *op. cit.*; Fordham, M. *op. cit.*
3 M. Morris, *King John: treachery, tyranny and the road to Magna Carta* (Hutchinson, London, 2016) pp. 286 ff.
4 For examples of classroom activities deconstructing the argument in historians' texts see Foster, R. (2011) 'Passive receivers or constructive readers? Pupils' experiences of an encounter with academic history' in *Teaching History, 142, Experiencing History Edition*, pp. 4-13, and Worth, P. (2014) '"English king Frederick I won at Arsuf, then took Acre, then they all went home": exploring the challenges involved in reading and writing historical narrative' in *Teaching History, 156, Chronology Edition*, pp. 8-19.
5 In my department we model our activity on this on a similar activity using sources on the Peasants' Revolt: see Byrom, J. (1998) 'Working with sources: scepticism or cynicism? Putting the sources back together again' in *Teaching History, 91*, pp. 32-35.
6 M. Morris, *The Norman Conquest* (Hutchinson, London, 2012) pp. 166-88.
7 Morris, *op.cit.*, p. 181.
8 Morris, *op.cit.*, p. 171.
9 See, for example, I. Dawson and M. Wilson, *SHP History Year 7* (Hodder Education, London 2008) pp. 14-17 and 126-27; R.J. Unstead *The Medieval Scene;* www.lookandlearn.com.
10 See, for example, Smith, D. (2014) 'Period, place and mental space: using historical scholarship to develop Year 7 pupils' sense of period' in *Teaching History, 154, A Sense of History edition,* pp. 8-16.
11 C. Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: Volume 2, Fastolf's Will* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002) p. 7.
12 H. Branford, *Fire, Bed and Bone* (Walker Books, London, 1997).
13 D. Jones, *Summer of Blood* (Harper Collins, London, 2010); Branford, H. *op. cit.*

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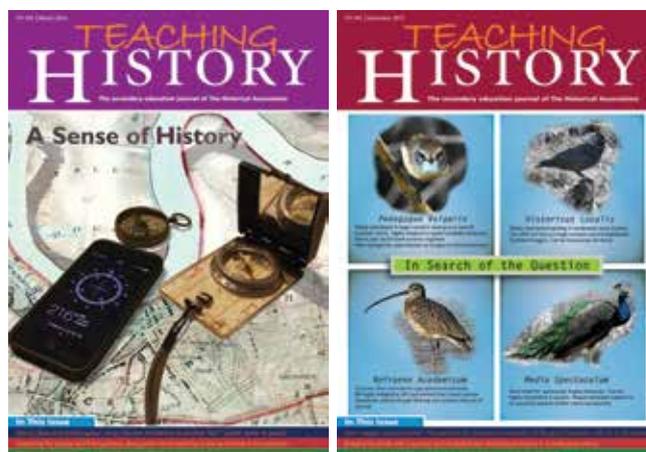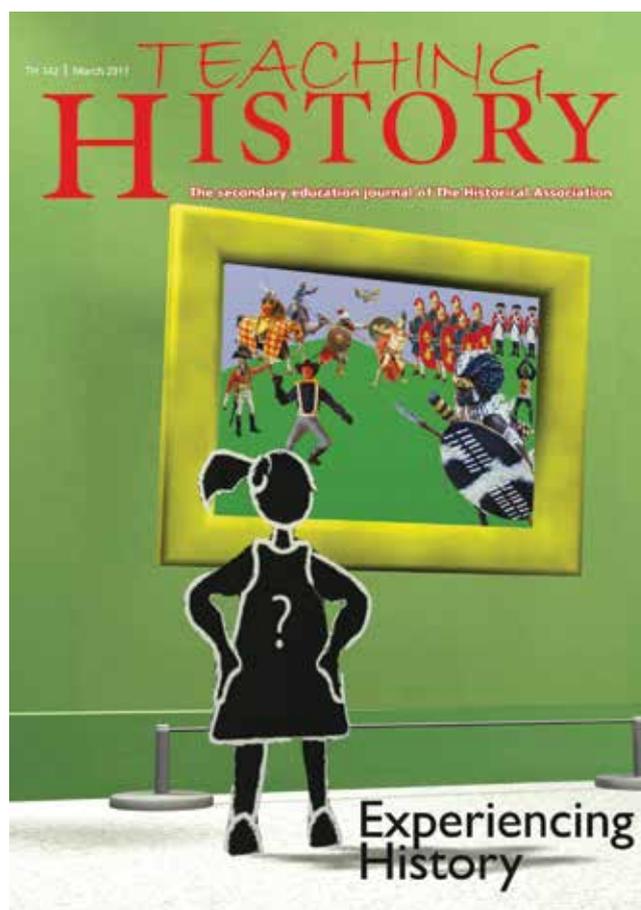
Resources linked to this article

Teaching History
See, among other articles, those by Jim Carroll in editions 162, 163 and 167; Michael Fordham in edition 129; Rachel Foster in editions 142 and 159; Diana Laffin in edition 149; Kirsty Murray in edition 160; Dan Smith in edition 154 and Paula Worth and Tom Wheeley in edition 156.

The *Polychronicon* feature in each edition of *Teaching History* provides a short discussion of the historiography of an individual topic with suggestions for reading and for classroom implementation.

What do we want students to understand about the process of 'doing history'?

Ian Dawson

Studying the process of 'doing history' explicitly is essential if students are to understand the nature of the discipline and, as importantly, to study with increasing independence as they mature. The answer to the question in the title may seem obvious – objectives abound in examination courses – but therein lies a problem. For years the individual parts of the process (e.g. understandings of the nature of evidence) have been artificially separated for assessment purposes, creating the danger that students do not see the bigger picture of 'doing history'. Can they explain in a few sentences what historians do and, separately, how they themselves progress from knowing little or nothing about, say, the Norman Conquest, to knowing a substantial amount more? Those questions lead to a third – do students need to be clear on the similarities and differences between what they do as they explore a topic and what historians are doing in their work?

This article offers ideas for discussion about the overall shape of what students understand about the process of studying history – the focus is the big picture (not the details) that students build in Key Stage 3 and develop at GCSE and A-level as they move towards working independently.

What big picture of 'doing history' do we want students to develop?

I'll begin with my very un-theoretical sense of what happens when students explore a new topic – and what we all do when faced with teaching an unfamiliar topic!

As Diagram 1 sets out, we begin with little or no knowledge (a few shards of information or a vague understanding of why the topic was important) and by the end of the study (a few lessons, a term, an A-level course, a PhD) we become a great deal more knowledgeable – we hold far more information in our heads and our files and use it to explain what happened and why, the consequences and significance of events, how interpretations of the topic differ and, maybe, the historiography has developed.

That sounds obvious, but for students this big picture level may be missing if it's left implicit. If they aren't asked to compare their final answer to a question with their ideas at the beginning (because there's so much to cover in a scheme of work) there's no time to reflect on the achievement of knowing more than at the beginning and on how they moved from knowing a little to knowing a lot.

Diagram 1

Little or no knowledge or understanding

ENQUIRY OR ENQUIRIES

More knowledge, greater understanding
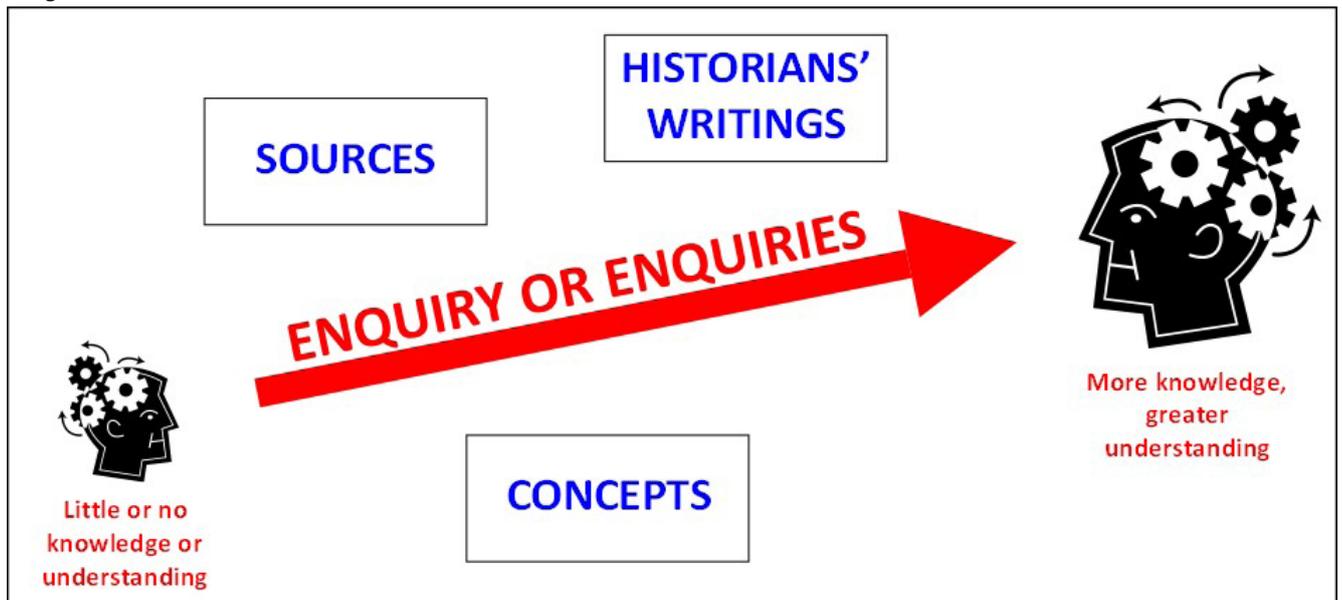
Diagram 2

Now for Diagram 2 which explains what we use when moving from little or no knowledge to more knowledge. We explore our questions using:

- sources from the time or soon afterwards
- historians' writings
- our understanding of concepts which shape questions and structure answers.

I could have put more detail in the form of examples into Diagram 2 but that risks the wood being obscured by the trees. Diagram 3 provides examples, however, and you could add more:

Before going further it's IMPORTANT to say (hence the capitals) that this is NOT a ROUTE MAP setting out a sequence of activity. It's a RESOURCE MAP showing the resources (sources, writings and concepts) we use on the way from A to B. At different stages of our historical experience we take different routes. As adults we usually start with books by historians but in the classroom we may ask students to begin with sources. These diagrams can help students by:

a) defining the historical process simply and making it visual. (Add in displays of books and sources?)
b) making the outcomes of work in history clear i.e. developing greater knowledge, so showing where all that work on, for example, analysing evidence leads!

Diagram 3
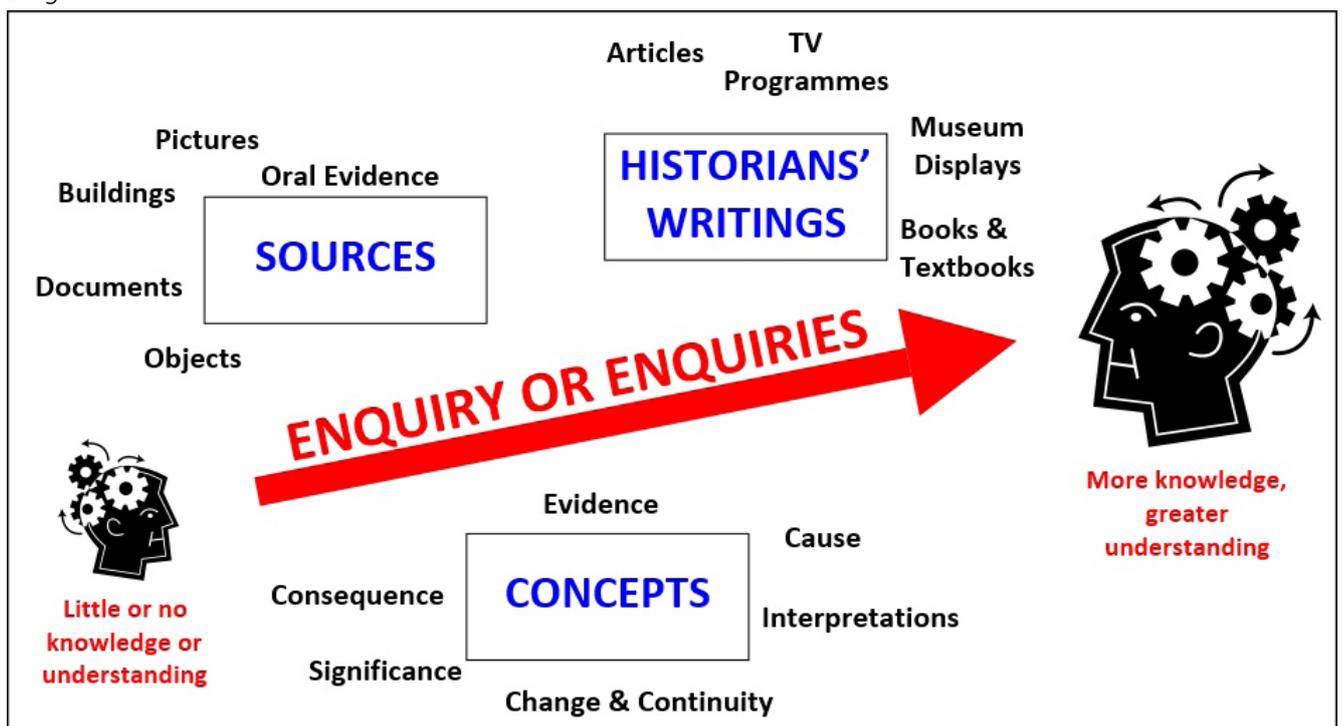
This latter point underscores the importance of students at all levels being introduced to the work of historians – imagine trying to improve your batting without ever seeing Joe Root in action and analysing his footwork and range of shots. Without meeting the work of historians how can students appreciate, among other things, that debates and arguments do take place and that history as a discipline is alive and bubbling, not a done and dusted catalogue on which everyone agrees.

Would embedding this outline into existing work take much time? At intervals it does need time to underline its importance but in between can be reinforced briefly. When students have completed work on a topic give them a copy of Diagram 2 (or your own version) and ask them to annotate it to track their work. They could:

On the left – note what they knew at the beginning (or do this at the outset?)

In the middle – write out the questions they've investigated and jot down the resources and concepts that have been relevant.

On the right – summarise what they now know, especially what's changed in their understanding.

This develops students' ability to visualize their route when studying any topic, essential for effective study.

Distinguishing between the work of students and the work of historians

One aspect of this discussion that seems important is helping students see the similarities and differences between what they do and what historians do. These two can be spoken of as if identical but they aren't, not least in starting points because historians are, almost always, working in an area they know a great deal about. It's as if both students and historians are on the same athletics track but the students are on the starting line, running a sprint, the historians on the final bend and already well set for the next 26 miles. Diagram 4 is an attempt to explore the similarities and differences – very much an early draft – but is it important that students are aware of these similarities and differences?

Diagram 4

An historian's work	Starts with	Identifies	Research	Result	Communicates
	Usually has lots of knowledge of the topic, the sources and what other historians have written about it	New questions about the topic A list of sources to explore and books to read	Reads sources and books. Develops hypotheses, suggesting answers to questions Works independently but discusses with other historians	More knowledge Has come up with new ideas and discoveries which set out new answers to the questions	Answers in books or articles or TV programmes or blogs
What they have in common	Both use understanding of causation and effects, change and continuity, significance, of sources as evidence, sense of the period being studied.				
A student's work	Starts with	Identifies	Research	Result	Communicates
	Little or no knowledge of the topic, the sources or what historians have said about it	With teacher – provided with or identifies questions to ask and sources and books to help answer the questions	Reads sources and books. Develops hypotheses, suggesting answers. Usually works with teacher but gradually learning to study independently	More knowledge Has developed enough knowledge to answer the questions effectively	Answers in schoolbooks, in files or in wall displays or recordings

This display was created by Hugh Richards of Huntington School, York, building on some of the ideas in this article. For details of Hugh's work see the Resources box below.

Questions for discussion about this bigger picture

1. Do students develop a big picture of the process of studying history that makes sense of their individual understandings of evidence, change and continuity etc?

If they don't, how can they gain independence by A-level – to do that they need a model of the process to work with.

2. How can we build students' overall sense of 'doing history'?

This requires keeping that bigger picture in view and taking time at the beginning of an enquiry to find out what children know about a topic and what their 'starter answer' to the question might be – if you don't find that out at the beginning how can they measure how far they've come at the end? Realising they've learned a great deal is wonderful for confidence – a key factor in improving performance.

3. Is understanding this bigger picture important for helping students see the value beyond the classroom of what they've learned in history lessons?

It's the process that's so transferable and valuable – enquiry, research, supporting conclusions with evidence, working independently, knowing the degree of certainty of conclusions and communicating them clearly. Research by Terry Haydn and Richard Harris suggested that 'large numbers of [pupils] have a limited grasp of the intended purposes of a historical education.' Is this because students don't see what all the individualized work on sources, significance etc. add up to?

4. Should you assess understanding of the whole process?

Assessment would show its importance and ensure it's not sidelined BUT does assessment risk losing flexibility and variety and turn this from a flexible model into a set of flatpack instructions? Maybe it's better not to assess formally than end up with the latter?

Looking beyond the horizon:

why we should teach about societies other than English society in the Middle Ages

Helen Snelson

What would be the benefits of devoting at least a couple of precious history lessons at Key Stage 3 to studying societies other than English society in the Middle Ages? By that I don't mean a lesson on Scotland and Wales at the time of Wallace and Llewelyn; or bringing in a map of modern France to show the Angevin Empire. These are worthy topics, but I want to focus upon teaching students about different societies and what it might have been like to live in them in the period we know as the Middle Ages.

Let's begin with an example. Which civilisation is this paragraph describing?

This civilisation 'treasured sophisticated aesthetic sensibilities, including extraordinarily beautiful feather work and a literary genre called "flower song". A literary and legal culture supported historians, judges, ministers and clerks. An education system embraced girls as well as boys. Cities … were masterpieces of urban engineering, architectural harmony and organizational harmony … centres for festivals and families.'

Did the Aztecs (who flourished c.1350-c1520) spring immediately to mind? Congratulations if they did because that quotation comes from Matthew Restall's article 'The Aztec Empire: a surprise ending?' in *The Historian* (Issue 134, 2017). What's striking here is the emphasis on sophistication. Indeed, the whole article is a corrective to common modern assumptions about the Aztecs which are still based on accounts by the conquering and self-justifying Spanish invaders and replicated in what Professor Restall describes as 'the errors of fact and interpretation' in books such as Deary's *Angry Aztecs*.

While some schools do teach about other places they may focus on just one other society. There are advantages to such depth studies but detailed knowledge tends to fall out of our brains, whereas teaching about multiple societies in this period could achieve broader aims. Therefore, here are a number of over-lapping reasons for suggesting such work,

concerned both with students' broader historical education and their ability to reflect on developments in England in this period:

- A greater respect for human endeavour around the world and in a range of societies. How have other people in the past lived the experience of our shared humanity?

- Stimulating greater engagement with and curiosity about the diversity of the period. Shouldn't we be fostering a general curiosity and engagement with other societies and where they have emerged from? This would include helping students who may not see their histories reflected in a purely English narrative of the period known as the Middle Ages.

- The 'Wow, I'd never have thought of that!' factor – simply the excitement of discovery and enjoyment of acquiring new and unexpected knowledge.

- Historical context for later studies about people beyond these shores

- Greater awareness of the long story of relationships between human societies, both between other societies and between other societies and Britain. People living on these islands in the Middle Ages had contacts and connections with other societies and by the end of the period they were at least thinking about reaching out even further afield. The consequences of these connections are reflected in modern Britain.

- Comparative work with England, enabling more complex thinking about medieval society here. An insular view of the Middle Ages prevents students from reflecting upon English society by knowing more about its similarities and differences with other societies.

Work on other societies may create a shift in perception about what was happening at this time around the world. A small-scale research project undertaken by Paul B. Sturtevant on the popular understanding of the medieval past suggested that young people may think

that the Middle Ages was just something concerning England. To quote one respondent: 'England is all I think of when I think of this sort of period … and a bit of Wales.' Do our Key Stage 3 courses do anything to challenge such ideas and help our students have a more rounded sense of the Middle Ages?

Teaching approaches

Teaching about other societies in the Middle Ages isn't easy, however. Students often have a weak sense of place and period. If we dot about in time and place to the highlights of various cultures, then we can end up with chronological confusion and no idea of location. If we ask narrow questions, then we can end up with isolated knowledge, but no connected understanding. The rest of this article presents a couple of ideas as to how to approach this challenge.

Suggested places for study

The following cities and regions could be studied in both lesson ideas below.

Maine (France)	Helsinger (Denmark)
Granada (Spain)	Baghdad
Augsburg (Holy Roman Empire)	
Nanjing (Ming China)	Delhi (Lodi India)
Zhetysu (Kazakhstan)	Horn of Africa (Abyssinia)
Chinchasuyu (Inca)	Venice
Constantinople (Ottoman Empire)	

Idea 1: The world in the later 1400s – similarities and differences in how people lived

In one lesson, focus upon a particular moment in time, such as the second half of the fifteenth century. Start by projecting a map showing the locations of different societies. Then get students working in twos/threes to read case studies of these different societies, from as close as Denmark and also further afield, such as Lodi India. From the case studies students can complete a factfile and a ten-word description of the society they have studied which they then stick up around the classroom.

Once the factfiles are complete, put them up around the classroom. Give students a copy of a chart called 'Collecting information'. It is a way to make sure students read the different factfiles as they go around the classroom to look at them:

Finally, debrief with some careful questioning. (You will want to keep your map projected.) For example, how varied were people's beliefs across different societies? What do students notice about the location of the places that were Muslim and the countries that were Christian? What was the most common way that people were ruled? Which groups of people were most often in control of education? What did richer people usually spend their money on? In which societies would life have been easier for the poor? And, thinking back to their group's initial case study, how connected were places to the rest of the world, which places were developing and getting more powerful, which did not seem to have changed much and which seemed to have declined?

The purpose of all this is to consider human societies at one moment in time with a strong focus upon location. This enables students to consider matters of relationship – connections and contrasts. They should take away understandings such as the geography of religion at the time, the shared experience of autocratic rule, the idea that societies can be in relative ascendancy or decline, and see some of the contemporary connections

Chart A

Factfile for:	
What did people believe in?	
Who had power?	
What were the rulers most concerned about?	
Who controlled education?	
What did wealthy people spend money on?	
How far did people trade?	
How different was life for poorer people?	
How did most people get their news?	
Ten words to describe this society…	

Chart B

Collecting information	
List all the different examples you find. You don't need to list the same thing twice	
Things people believed in…	
Ways people were governed…	
What rulers worried about…	
Ways education was provided…	
Ways that wealthy people spent their money…	
Distances people traded…	
Support for poorer people…	
Ways people got their news…	

in the world at the time. This could be assessed by asking students to write a descriptive introduction to a book called: 'Human societies in the later 1400s'. Alternatively, students could annotate a map of the places with some of their key findings, or develop a key to key features.

Idea 2: When was the best time to visit…?

This approach once again uses a map projected to show the locations of various places. In this instance, the lesson is focused upon the points in time when different societies were in their heyday. It again uses case studies, but this time from different, though often over-lapping, time periods, describing societies and also explaining any changes taking place.

Ask pairs of students to produce a sales pitch for their place: Where was it? What date was it? and what features made it so wonderful? Give students an advert sheet with the name of their place and these questions down the side. Get students to complete their advert sheet for their place and then display them around the classroom. Next give students a timeline and send them around the room to read the other sheets and add the name of each place to the timeline at the time when it was in its heyday. When this task is completed draw students' attention to the whole timeline and its changes and continuities. Ask students which factors explain the success of a society and discuss with them what makes a place good to live in. Agree criteria and give pairs a chance to amend their sales pitches before a final activity. This could be a balloon debate, or a simple tally against the criteria. Students pitch for their place and either you, or the whole class, can decide where they would have liked to have lived.

The purpose of this activity is to enable students to consider that human societies have high and low points

at different times and for different durations. If you are going on to study the development of the European empires, this provides an introduction to the reasons for growth and decline of empires and civilisations in general and draws attention to the relative decline of other societies that may have made them vulnerable to European advance.

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Resources linked to this article

On the Historical Association website you can find a range of podcasts and pamphlets about relevant world history topics, including the Ottoman Empire and the Incas in the fifteenth century.

For a particularly interesting approach at Key Stage 3 see the article by John Watts and David Gimson in *Teaching History, 156*.

For more about the study of global history relating to the Middle Ages at university level see: http://globalmiddleages.history.ox.ac.uk/

For discussion of common misunderstandings about Aztec society and for teaching possibilities: www.mexicolore.co.uk/aztecs/kids/angry-aztecs

The research by Paul B. Sturtevant can be seen at this link (page 132): http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/1117/1/Paul_B_ Sturtevant_PhD_Thesis_2010.pdf

Understanding migration in the Middle Ages

Martin Spafford

Stories of medieval immigration can be fascinating and surprising. In 1302 King Edward I gave immigrant wine merchants from Gascony a special privilege. From then on, if they appeared in court charged with a small crime, they would have the right to a half-Gascon jury. Gascony was then ruled by the English Crown and this was the spirit of Magna Carta's 'judgement by peers' being extended to English subjects overseas, so no great surprise perhaps. Half a year later, though, when German merchants asked for the same privilege, it was granted to *all* foreign merchants. Ah, we may say, this benefited only wealthy immigrants who were useful to the king. Indeed, as it was a privilege, it was not automatic and had to be requested in each case. But in 1354 the right to a mixed jury was extended to *all 'aliens'*, whatever their social status, in *all cases* including the most serious crimes. And by the mid-fifteenth century, not only did every foreign immigrant have the right to be judged by a jury half of whom were also immigrants, but a 'half-tongue' jury was increasingly being granted, meaning that foreigners who spoke a language other than English had the right to be tried by jurors who shared their tongue.

Immigration was of crucial importance to the growth of English economic power. In 1331 a Flemish wool-weaver called John Kempe was granted permission by Edward III to come with a group of men to settle in England, set up business and teach his trade. They were given special rights and protection as encouragement. Edward wanted to transform England's economy from a primary one selling raw wool that would be woven elsewhere to a manufacturing economy in which woollen cloth was woven here. The English would learn skills from the Flemings, many of whom were refugees fleeing a repressive ruler who supported Edward's enemy the king of France. Kempe seems to have settled well – he was still here in 1369 – and many fellow migrants from the Low Countries followed him to kickstart textile manufacturing in places as far apart as Lavenham in Suffolk, Castle Coombe in Wiltshire and – most significant of all for the future – Manchester. At the same time, Dutch women were teaching the people of East Anglia to brew beer from hops where they had previously only created ale from barley.

England's immigrants in the Middle Ages ranged from the wives of kings to kidnapped and enslaved Icelandic children; from Florentine bankers and Hanseatic merchants to Scottish servants; from political refugees to business opportunists. Many did well: Irishman Nicholas Devenyssh was Bristol's mayor in 1436; Henry Phelypp was a master sculptor who worked on Long Melford church in Suffolk. While the most common employment of immigrants in fifteenth-century England was as servants, the range of occupations was wide, especially after the Black Death created a labour shortage. As Mark Ormrod, Professor of History at York University, has said: 'No one in England was more than ten miles from an immigrant.' Here is a selection of occupations from contemporary tax records:

armourer, barrel-maker, botcher, brickman, carter, carver, chandler, clerk, clockmaker, cobbler, collier, cooper, cordwainer, currier, dyer, farrier, fiddler, flaxwife, glazier, glover, hosier, lastmaker, leatherworker, leech, minstrel, optician, pommel-maker, purser, saddler, sawyer, scrivener, shuttlemaker, spinner, spurrier.

Were people from the wider world beyond Europe living in medieval England? There are clues that suggest their possible presence. In May 2010, forensic anthropologists from Dundee University revealed that a skeleton found in Ipswich was that of a thirteenth-century North African Muslim. They knew this from carbon-dating, bone analysis, facial reconstruction and historical detective work. Perhaps he was brought here after the Ninth Crusade: buried in consecrated ground, he may have been converted to Christianity. Nine other Africans were buried in the same cemetery. Two entries in the aliens' register refer to people from 'Inde', which could be anywhere east of the Mediterranean. Did 'Benedict and Antonia Calamon' and 'Jacobus Black' (a servant in Dartmouth) take on Christian names that would help them fit into Catholic England?

A letter of denization
www.englandsimmigrants.com/page/sources/letters-of-denization-and-other-sources
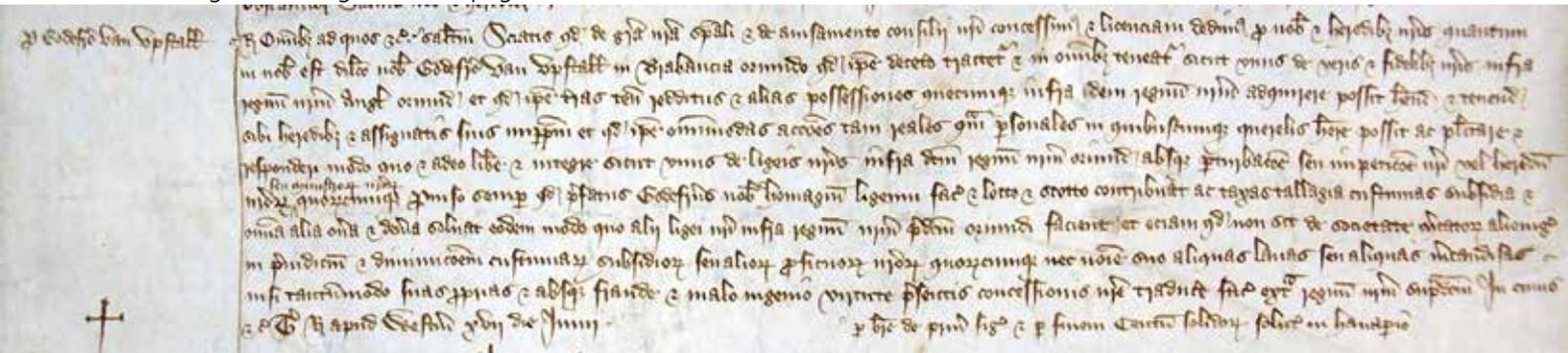
Responses to immigration

But how were 'aliens' – those born outside the monarch's realm – received? The story was complex and many-faceted. A changing political and economic climate could make them vulnerable. There are numerous examples of the changeability of policy on alien status and towards immigrants. For example, in 1270 Henry III invited Flemish cloth-workers to settle in England, but changed his mind a month later and expelled many of them. There was also opposition, especially from London's guilds who saw the special treatment given to Flemings (and later to Gascons) as a threat to indigenous workers who worked under regulations foreign cloth-workers were exempt from. Flemish weavers set up their own guild in 1362, however, and in 1380 they came to a compromise with the English guilds but this unravelled a year later with the Great Revolt, when high tension and violence mixed with xenophobia in murderous attacks on Flemings. According to the claims of chronicles, adults and children were dragged from churches and killed and people were stopped in the street and told to say 'bread and cheese'. If they spoke with a foreign accent their throats were cut.

Accounts of hostility to foreigners are rare despite the common claim throughout the period that 'aliens and strangers who eat the bread from the poor fatherless children' – in the words of Dr Bell, a Spitalfields preacher who incited major anti-foreigner riots in 1517 – were being foisted on the poor by a rich elite. A counter-argument was that immigration was essential for the economy and the wellbeing of all, bringing a labour force and badly needed skills. When in 1469 a householder in Havering asked for a Dutch mason to build his chimney because 'they can best fare', it could almost be the words of a twenty-first-century householder preferring a Polish builder. Contemporary evidence of widespread settlement is so plentiful that it appears most immigrants assimilated and the norm was one of acceptance.

The Jewish community in England

One story of huge importance for understanding later European and world history is that of England's medieval Jews. Invited by William I to bankroll cathedrals and castles, they established communities in a wide range of occupations. Over time they became the targets of religious xenophobia. The 'Blood Libel', which resulted in massacres of Jews all over Europe, originated in Lincoln and Norwich. Jews in England had their rights and freedoms removed bit by bit, were forced to wear yellow badges, were imprisoned, murdered and finally expelled in 1290. As the spread of antisemitism in mid-twentieth-century Germany is almost universally taught in schools, an understanding of its long history in Europe and the part played by this country is surely crucial.

> The land exhaust us by demanding payments, and the people's disgust is heard
> While we are silent and wait for the light
> You are mighty and full of light, you turn the darkness into light.
> They make our yoke heavier, they are finishing us off.
> They continually say of us, let us despoil them until the morning light
>
> from 'Put a Curse on my Enemy' by Meir Bin Elijah of Norwich, late thirteenth century

How do we know about individual immigrants?

A trail of documents still extant provides a wonderful resource that gives us names, origins, location and occupations of thousands of foreign-born residents in late medieval England. Letters of denization were introduced in the 1370s, documents from the king granting full rights and protection to those who could pay. The aliens' subsidy was a tax on all foreign-born residents introduced in 1440 under King Henry VI as a result of anti-immigrant lobbying.

Both denization letters and the aliens' subsidy tax returns are at the National Archive and the *England's Immigrants* database created from them is online and accessible free of charge. Anyone can find out – through maps and graphs – who the immigrants were in their town or village with – in many cases – their names and occupations and where they came from.

Teaching about migration

The value and richness of studying medieval migration is clear from the above examples. There are extraordinary human stories that enable students to connect with those who lived then, and to understand and respect people who lived in a period which is full of surprises that challenge simplistic stereotypes. The key role played

Numbers of immigrants in Essex 1330-1550 (on modern map)
www.englandsimmigrants.com

by migration in the change from a primary economy to a wealthier manufacturing one is essential to understanding how this small island became a European and then a world power, the pattern being repeated in later centuries by other refugee groups. The similarities and differences between the debates then and now mean that students will understand from their own experience some of the concepts involved, as well as enabling discussion of controversial issues in the safe space of locating them in the past.

A specific enquiry into medieval migration could start with your own local area. Use the *England's Immigrants* site to find out who the local immigrants were according to the tax records: where had they come from, what were they doing? Then set questions to widen the enquiry about where immigrants came from, why they came, how they were received and about their impact, and about the typicality of your area.

A thematic study over time during Key Stage 3 can look at migration from the early Middle Ages until now, a way to understand key developments in the country's history – Hundred Years War, Reformation, empire, industrialisation, world wars, Europe as well as our continually transforming economy – through the lives of 'ordinary' people whose decisions to move led to and resulted from these changes. This could be done in Year 7 as a 'fast forward' across time or at the end of Key Stage 3 as a 'fast rewind' overview.

Migration as an enquiry within a unit on the Middle Ages, with the questions revisited in each period studied during Key Stage 3, can build an understanding of key themes and connections between periods.

Martin Spafford is a retired school history teacher who co-wrote textbooks for the OCR GCSE thematic unit on migration. He now runs workshops on history, human rights and social action for teachers and students.

Resources linked to this article

We hoped to include a section on emigration but ran out of space. You can find this along with an extended version of this article at: http://thinkinghistory.co.uk/Medieval/index.htm

Articles by Professor Mark Ormrod, leader of the England's immigrants project on the Historical Association website (which also provides other materials on this topic) and in BBC History Magazine: www.historyextra.com/article/premium/moving-medieval-england

The searchable database at England's Immigrants: www.englandsimmigrants.com and for individual stories go to www.englandsimmigrants.com/page/individual-studies

Our Migration Story: www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk/oms/by-era/AD43-1500

www.ahrc.ac.uk/newsevents/news/englandsimmigrantsinthemiddleages/

Marcus Roberts, *The story of England's Jews: the first thousand years* (Oxford Heritage Projects/National Anglo-Jewish Heritage Trail, 2007). Also available as a PDF.

Anthony Bale, *'Poems of protest: Meir ben Elijah and the Jewish people of early Britain'*: www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk/oms/put-a-curse-on-my-enemies-meir-ben-elijah-and-the-jews-of-early-norwich

Were there any women in the Middle Ages, Miss?

Ian Dawson

In 1394 a determined young woman called Margery Spuret stood up to give evidence before a church court in York. She was in court to prove that five years earlier she and Thomas Hornby had been married. Thomas, however, said that he had not married Margery. Witnesses were called. Margery's relatives and others in the house where she'd been a servant swore that Thomas and Margery had indeed married five years earlier. However, Thomas, a 24-year-old saddler, had witnesses of his own from the saddlery trade who swore the marriage could not have taken place as Thomas hadn't been in York at the time. Then came Beatrix Gillyng who said that Thomas was already married – but to her! After the witnesses had all been heard, the court found in favour of Beatrix. Margery, presumably both disappointed and outraged, did not give up. She made a series of appeals to the court and only after they failed does she seem to have accepted the verdict.

Fourteen years later, in 1408, another determined woman, though of much higher status, had better fortune before the Archbishop of York's court, though the case must have set Yorkshire tongues gossiping for quite a while. Sybil Aldburgh was an heiress who, with her sister Elizabeth, had inherited their father's estates and castle at Harewood. Sybil was taking action against her husband, Sir William Ryther, who was forced to agree that in future he 'shall not do her either bodily harm or mayhem or beat or imprison her but keep her in full freedom'. Sir William also had to swear to send 'Marion of Gryndon' away and never again to have dealings with Marion 'by way of sin'. (It sounds even more salacious in the original spelling of 'synne'!) What happened after this we don't know but, perhaps happily, Sybil survived her husband by 14 years after his death around 1426 and, despite the events of their lifetimes, their effigies have been lying peacefully side by side in Harewood church for the past 600 years.

Despite the examples of Margery and Sybil and others like them, many students could be forgiven for thinking that women were rare as unicorns in the Middle Ages, semi-mythical creatures known about but never seen.

Key Stage 3 schemes of work tend to be dominated by conquests, wars, rebellions and plagues – not so much 'boys and their toys' as 'boys and their disasters'. There is therefore a danger that women are missing from Key Stage 3 (except as victims of plagues or working in the fields at harvest time) until students meet those very atypical individuals caught up in the Tudor 'crowns and executions' saga. It's possible some students regard Millicent Fawcett and Emmeline Pankhurst as the first capable women in British history.

It was, of course, difficult for medieval women to play roles which challenged society's expectations (as Louise Wilkinson explains on pages 56-59) but historians' research into individual lives and the positive roles that some women did play can allow them to emerge into the light of history lessons. So how can Key Stage 3 schemes of work provide more representative coverage of medieval society? Here are four different routes to doing so, some of which could be combined to build a stronger female presence across the key stage. There is, of course, a danger of these approaches being seen as 'tokenism' but it's worth noting that many historians research and write about all kinds of aspects of women's experiences in history without that research being seen as tokenism. These approaches can only be sketched in outline here but see below for information about more detailed resources.

1. An enquiry exploring the roles that women played in the Middle Ages. Start with students' existing ideas as a hypothesis to explore i.e. 'this is how we think women might have been treated and what they did; now let's find out if that was really the case.' Alternatively, students could start from the theory of women's roles and explore the realities or take a generalisation and develop a longer statement of their own, exploring the accuracy of the generalisation.

2. The 'take every opportunity' approach
One problem appears to be lack of information about individual women but the opportunities are there with even the most apparently 'male' of topics. The life

of Emma of Normandy makes an excellent starting point for the Norman Conquest because she's the embodiment of the complex links between England, Scandinavia and Normandy. Why Nichola de la Haye was leading the defence of Lincoln against an army led by Louis of France in 1217 is an intriguing opening to work on Magna Carta (starting near the end of a story is a great way into almost any story – 'Why do you think that was happening? Let's go back and unravel this.'). Margery Kempe's travels and devotions open up the field of religion and challenges the myth that people never left their home town or village. There are many other examples to be found.

3. A 'fast forward' thematic coverage of women's rights and experiences from c.1000 to today, covered in one bloc in Year 7 OR a 'fast rewind' thematic coverage of the same material in one bloc near the end of Key Stage 3. Rather than breaking up the theme into separate chronological chunks, this approach would do more to clarify patterns of continuity and change and the pace of change. This overview should also consolidate students' broad sense of chronology.

4. Why is it so difficult to find out about women in the Middle Ages? This is two, maybe three, questions in one – with the range and nature of primary sources to be investigated and possibly a look at the changing pattern of the historiography (again see Louise Wilkinson's article, particularly page 56), identifying when and why historians' views of women begin to change.

Resources linked to this article

For more detailed discussion of these issues see www.teachingwomenshistory.com and the following articles in *Teaching History* – by Bridget Lockyer and Abigail Tazzyman in 165, Joanne Pearson in 147, Ruth Tudor in 107.

Resources to support the activities described above will be developed and resourced during 2018 and made available at www.thinkinghistory.co.uk including information similar to that alongside about Nichola de la Haye and on page 121 about Margery Kempe.

A classroom activity based on the court case involving Margery Spuret has been developed by Mike Tyler during the Historical Association Teacher Fellowship course on the later Middle Ages. A description of the activity and full resources are available open-access on the HA website.

Nichola de la Haye (1150s–1230)
Anyone who completed the Knights' Trail in Lincoln in 2017 will remember meeting Nichola de la Haye standing guard outside Lincoln Castle. There is no more fitting place to meet Nichola as it was her role in the defence of the castle that has led Professor Carenza Lewis to describe her as 'England's Joan of Arc'.

In May 1217 England was in chaos, split between forces loyal to the young king, Henry III, and rebel barons who had fought against Henry's father, King John, and were now headed by Prince Louis of France. Louis was well on the way to making himself king of England for he controlled a third of the country and was besieging Lincoln castle, the last stronghold loyal to King Henry in the area. What made this siege so remarkable was that the defence was led by Nichola de la Haye, then aged about 60.

Nichola had become a wealthy heiress on her father's death, with estates in Lincolnshire and a claim to hold the office of castellan of Lincoln. We know nothing of her first marriage but during her second, to Gerard de Camville, she played an important role in protecting their lands during King Richard's absence on crusade. The chronicler Richard of Devizes wrote that while Gerard assisted Prince John in gaining control of Nottingham and Tickhill in 1191, 'Nichola, not thinking

about anything womanly, defended … [Lincoln] castle manfully'.

Nichola's appointment as sheriff in Lincolnshire in 1216 owed a great deal to that service to John and to her role as castellan of Lincoln castle. When John visited Lincoln in 1216, Nichola offered him the castle keys and her resignation as castellan, saying that 'she was a woman of great age and had endured many labours and anxieties … and was not able to endure such [burdens] any longer'. King John replied 'sweetly' according to local records, instructing her to keep the castle. Hence it was Nichola who led the defence of Lincoln castle in 1217 against Prince Louis until relieved by a royal army led by William Marshal. The resulting battle of Lincoln was a royalist victory, a major step in ending Louis's ambitions. How important was Nichola's role? Here is Professor Carenza Lewis's view:

> Like Joan of Arc, Nichola was a woman in a male-dominated world who helped turn the tide when her young king was about to lose his kingdom; if Nichola had lost in 2017, the Battle of Lincoln would have eclipsed Hastings in England's national story as the point when English crown passed into French hands. But unlike Joan, Nichola was a survivor, who was also the first ever woman to be appointed a county sheriff. English chroniclers admired her 'manful' campaigning, while French ones castigated her as 'cunning, bad-hearted and old' but both views acknowledged her importance – today, however, this battling Lincolnshire grandmother is one of our country's forgotten heroes.

Margery Kempe (c.1373–c.1438)

Until she reached the age of 40, there was nothing obviously unusual about the life of Margery Kempe, nothing to suggest that nearly 600 years later she would be remembered as one of the most remarkable women of the later Middle Ages. Margery was born in the port of Lynn, daughter of John Burnham, a prosperous merchant who was mayor of and MP for Lynn. By the time she was 20, she had married a brewer, John Kempe, and was soon pregnant with their first child. The birth, however, affected Margery deeply as she suffered severe depression for eight months afterwards, only recovering when she had a vision of Jesus sitting at the end of her bed and talking comfortingly to her. Even then, Margery's life continued as before, at least on the surface. She and John had 14 children and she too went into business as a brewer. When her business failed, however, she became convinced that this was a punishment for her sins and she had to change her life.

So in 1413, at the age of 40, Margery began a very different life, first persuading John that they must live in chastity. Later that year she set off on a pilgrimage that was to last 18 months, travelling via Venice to Jerusalem where she visited Calvary and the Tomb of the Holy Sepulchre. It was there that she began to behave in a way that alarmed and worried many who met her –

Margery Kempe, the East Anglian woman who became a Penguin Classic.
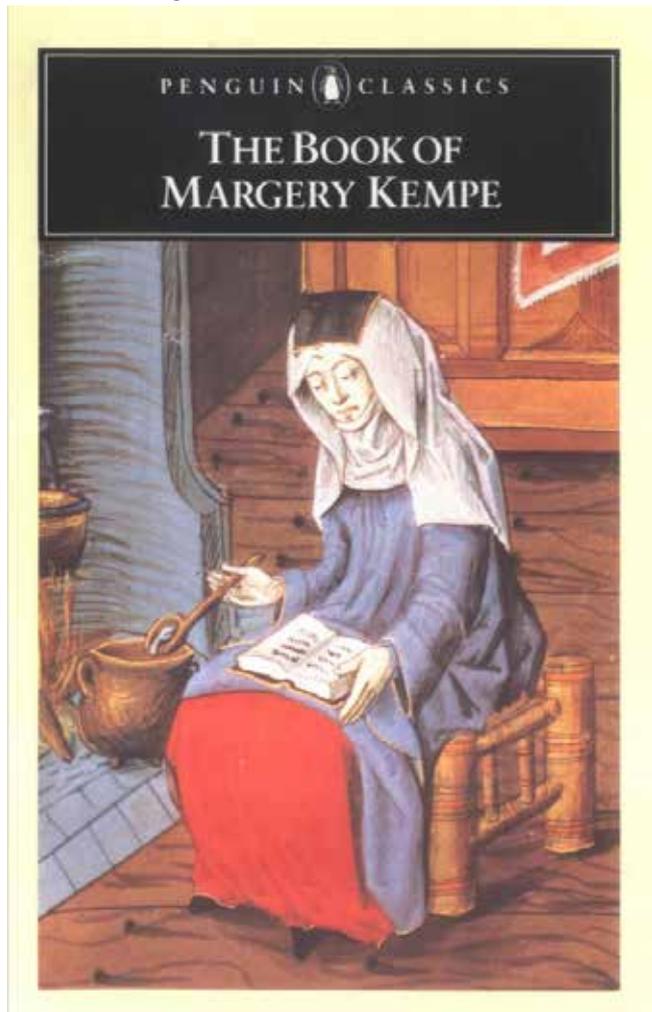
she wept endlessly and uncontrollably and kept up a constant, loud roaring noise. This continued throughout her journey home, including in Rome, and throughout the rest of her life. Margery also wore simple white robes, which made her stand out among other pilgrims as an unusually devout woman.

Back in England, she came under suspicion of heresy and was questioned by several bishops, including the Archbishop of York, but her responses persuaded them that she was not a heretic. She also won the support of a number of local priests and other religious leaders who regarded her as a woman of great holiness. Margery continued to live her life as she believed God had instructed her, wearing a hair-shirt and experiencing more visions and conversations with Jesus. At the same time, she nursed her husband through illness and death in 1431 and after her son's death she set off on more travels, accompanying her German daughter-in-law back to Danzig, modern-day Gdansk, where her son had lived as a merchant.

In 1436 Margery began the task that allows us to tell her story today. She employed a local priest to write down the story of her life, working at her dictation, and so produced what is now the earliest surviving autobiography in English.

Teaching medieval history at A-level:
Anglo-Saxon and Norman England and the Crusades

Sarah Faulkner

We've all been on exam board training days peppered with polite attempts to make conversation with people we don't know, haven't we? When we'd really rather be sticking a stash of free pens in our bags as casually as we can, or simply enjoying blissful quiet time on a day when we would otherwise have had to teach a full six periods. With the arrival of the new exam specs at both GCSE and A-level, there have been more of these training days and so many more opportunities for polite conversation with unknown colleagues and inevitably, these chats have usually revolved around the choice of new exam specs. While the choices made at GCSE, be it board or specific units, are usually met with an understanding nod from all involved, ('Yes, we've gone for Elizabeth I. Oh really, you've gone for the Normans? We thought about that as well, actually.'), I've found that once the conversation turns to A-level, things are somewhat different. This is when, once I've explained what our students are studying in Year 12, I tend to encounter The Face. The Face is a combination of a wince, with a hint of disbelief or derision thrown in, and usually a smattering of pity. Because, you see, we've chosen, yes chosen, to teach a medieval history course at AS.

Are you now pulling The Face? Well, I hope that by the time you've finished reading this, you might feel more understanding towards our choices, maybe reassured that we haven't made a terrible mistake; maybe you'll even consider heading down a medieval route yourselves at some point in the future. The medieval A-level course is really nothing to fear. I promise.

Why did we choose a medieval AS course?

So yes, we went medieval. We switched back to Edexcel and decided to plump for 'Conquest, control and resistance in the medieval world' for Year 12, focusing on the crusades, c.1095-1204 for paper one, and Anglo-Saxon England and the Anglo-Norman kingdom c.1053-1106 for paper 2. Why on earth would we have made such a choice, I hear you cry! Let me confess that I am very far from being a medieval specialist; I vaguely remember writing an essay about medieval towns at university, which I'm pretty sure I handed in late, but that's about as far as it goes. Nor was anyone in my department a specialist. But, when faced with the Herculean task of re-planning an entire A-level course, along with the awareness that new GCSEs and a Key Stage 3 re-vamp were also on the cards, I tried to approach the decision pragmatically. I had already successfully taught the previous version of the Anglo-Norman unit at my last school and so this would cut down a little on the quantity of new lesson resources required. Discussions with my department were positive – yes, the new specs represented a big 'opportunity' to do whatever we liked at A-level, but realistically, a bit less planning and a bit less of a leap into the unknown were considered wise. I hope that the idea of becoming a bit more expert on a new facet of the past also held some appeal. A combination of heart and head were therefore involved in our decision.

Students' reactions to and issues with resources

One concern we all felt was that, much as we were only marginally terrified by the prospect of a medieval AS course, our students might be completely petrified, and the last thing we wanted was everyone running a mile to a safe-looking college course elsewhere about the Nazis, with extra Nazis, and some extra Nazis thrown in for good measure. Student voice with Year 11 on possible option choices was interesting, if in no way informative. As with all questionnaires asking students to express a preference, the Nazis and Jack the Ripper dominated (what that reveals about the teenage psyche I don't know) and most students wanted to cling on to something which they believed they had already mastered lower down the school. Despite studying medieval medicine at GCSE, few seemed at all clear as to what 'medieval history' might entail.

In an attempt to get students fully on board, we prepared a visually impactful display for the sixth-form open evening (there was a lot of fighting and gore in the finished display – not between the staff as

we were preparing it), as well as a detailed handout explaining what the course entailed, and presented a very enthusiastic front when discussing the modules with our interested Year 11 students. We also tempered the shock of the medieval by choosing an option on witch-hunting for paper 3, and (I know, I know) settled on a question about Hitler for our coursework. What we found when speaking to students who were keen to continue with history was that, actually, they were pretty much on board. Their love of learning about the past overrode any mild qualms about the medieval aspect. Some were even 'fascinated' at the prospect of leaping into an unknown time period and discovering what it was all about.

One issue we did find when planning was the lack of easily accessible resources, not just for students, but for us as teachers trying to get our heads around the course. None of us had the time to read 50 books, even if we'd been able to find that many which were broadly relevant, and a lot of the material available online, particularly about the crusades, was dubious at best. We ordered the Pearson textbook and largely relied on that when we were feeling our way around what to include in our lessons. The textbook is at best unwieldy, at worst impenetrable for the students, and the way it is set out thematically can actually be very confusing. The first time through, we attempted to teach the crusades following this thematic model, but by the second time had adapted our teaching to fit a more chronological

approach. That said, it provided a valuable starting point. I am still no expert, but I know what I need to know, and am building on these foundations every time I teach the course.

What problems have students faced in terms of understanding the topic?

For both staff and students, getting into the medieval mind-set was a challenge. The old adage about the past being a foreign country is never more true than when considering what motivated medieval people to behave as they did. Few of our staff or students are particularly religious; to try to understand the ways in which religion dominated peoples' lives is difficult, although sadly easier in 2017 to grasp why different religious groups may have distrusted or feared each other. The language used in many sources is difficult to understand, and students need to be coaxed into engaging with the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, rather than giving up as soon as bumping into a term they didn't understand. Names are tricky – there are too many Baldwins for a start! Staff and students also lack the level of unconscious background knowledge which more modern history can be built upon. Most of us have seen photographs or film of the people from later periods. There are also numerous TV programmes and films which we absorb without really thinking about it. Hollywood take note; medieval history teachers are crying out for a Dunkirk-style re-imagining of the Battle of Hastings. The cultural hooks on which we hang our history teaching can be

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Medieval podcasts from the HA

England from 871 to 1000: From Alfred to Æthelred

Professor Sarah Foot of Christ Church College, Oxford, looks at the development of Anglo-Saxon England from 871 to 1000, including the changing nature of kingship relations with the continent and what students should keep in mind when dealing with this period.

Origins of the Norman Conquest

Professor David Bates of the University of East Anglia looks at the origins of the Norman Conquest, including why William succeeded and attracted such a following, how he attempted to create a strong sense of legitimacy, and how we should judge him in the context of what was taking place at the time.

King John and Magna Carta

Professor Nicholas Vincent discusses the reign of King John, the origins of Magna Carta and its significance. He considers how Henry II sought to undermine feudalism, the events that led to Magna Carta, as well as its purpose and long-term legacy.

The First Crusade – Causes and Consequences

Professor Jonathan Riley-Smith gives an outline of events and causes of the First Crusade, from the response in the West, the consequences of making the crusade a pilgrimage, and the financial burden of going to war.

Our full range of podcasts includes further offerings on The Anglo-Saxons, Medieval Wales, Scotland and England, The Crusades, Medieval Monarchs, Medieval Christianity in Europe, Peasants Revolt, All the Edwards, Hundred Years' War, Wars of Roses, Agincourt and more. Visit: **history.org.uk/go/medieval**

harder to locate when teaching medieval history, nor do we have a ready bank of stories to help bring characters and situations to life. But starting to teach the course for the third time, they're easier to find and, as always, the sheer madness of human experience throws up bizarre anecdotes which help us to paint the past in glorious technicolour for our students. (I mean, there was actually a rival pope, known as the anti-pope. Like some sort of Marvel villain. That's just bonkers!)

What do we still need to do?

One of the key things to come out of GCSE and A-level changes is that we need to use our time at Key Stage 3 wisely, so students are better prepared to meet the challenges of the new specs further up the school. Yes, we did teach some medieval elements at Key Stage 3 before, but these tended to be disjointed, more individual case studies than anything which established a sense of period. Key terms and concepts which the students need to grasp at A-level were not always woven into our Key Stage 3 schemes of work as well as they could have been. As such, getting annoyed with a sixth-former who has no clear concept of kingship or succession is a bit harsh if we've failed to prepare them adequately. We need to encourage our younger students to tackle more medieval sources which have not been over-simplified or put into modern English, so that the fear factor isn't there anymore when they grapple with these at A-level. We also need to avoid the tendency to portray the medieval period as a time of filth (not in a good way) and misery if we are to enthuse our students with the prospect of delving deeper into the medieval world at A-level.

What do the students think?

Our Year 12 students last year did very well at AS, despite initially being floored by the step up in difficulty from GCSE. When we started back this year, I decided to ask them about the medieval AS experience, and they completed a short questionnaire, which drew out some interesting answers. Most students could remember studying medieval history at Key Stage 3, and most said that this had made them feel fairly positive about the

medieval topics in Year 12. I was surprised by how many students were positive about the medieval section of Medicine Through Time, which I had been sure they'd all hated! Every student commented on the lack of revision materials available at AS, having become used to buying copious revision guides at GCSE, so they felt vulnerable without one clutched to their chests in the run-up to exams. It was suggested that going on a trip would have helped to consolidate knowledge, which is something we will look into. (Some Y13 students worked out using Google maps how long it would take us to walk to Jerusalem. Sadly, it wasn't feasible). Most students had suggestions of other topics they felt would have been 'more interesting' to study at AS but in response to the final question, 'If you could go back and change to a different A-level course, would you?' only four students out of 16 surveyed said that they would, which was extremely encouraging.

Thoughts for the future

We are now teaching the medieval AS course for the third time, and it is remarkable at this point how natural it has become. I still get my Baldwins mixed up, but our subject knowledge is growing, and adding to this every year is immensely satisfying. We've started to produce more revision materials of our own and are now confident with how the exam works and what is needed for students to hit the top levels on the mark-scheme. Yes, there are still challenges to face, and some of these would have been avoided if we'd stuck to two modules on more modern history, but the sense of achievement at having survived and enjoyed a voyage into the medieval unknown is profound. I know we're teaching the course well and will only get better. So I hope that maybe you'll be less likely to pull The Face the next time someone tells you about their medieval course choices. Maybe you'll even consider a medieval option of your own. We would highly recommend it.

Sarah Faulkner is Subject Leader for History at the Brunts Academy in Mansfield.

Resources linked to this article

The Historical Association website offers a variety of resources including podcasts by Sarah Foot on England 871-1000, by Joanna Story on The Anglo-Saxons and by David Bates on The Origins of the Norman Conquest and on How did William I transform England and Wales. There are also several podcasts linked to The Crusades – see page 127 for details. There are also valuable articles in *The Historian*. These include articles on The Norman Conquest by David Bates in volume 131 and by Marc Morris in volume 117.
See www. history.org.uk for further details.

Teaching medieval History at A-level:
The Crusades

Richard Kerridge

Why are you teaching a medieval unit at A-level?

A-level reform in 2009 necessitated a change in subjects taught and this was compounded by the departure of both Tudor historians within the department. My colleague, Sacha, suggested teaching the Crusades as he had studied it at university. We both felt it offered something different from the other modules (Nazi Germany and Civil War England) and the purist in me felt that giving the students a unit in each of the medieval, early modern and modern periods was the right thing to do for their overall historical education. We had two groups of Year 12 historians starting in September 2009 so to lighten the planning load we timetabled each of us to a discrete class. That way, we both taught Crusades and were, therefore, in it together!

Where does your knowledge of the topic come from?

Knowledge was a challenge because although Sacha had studied this at university it had been several years earlier and my knowledge was zero. We had enthusiasm on our side! I read *The Crusades: a very short introduction* by Christopher Tyerman one afternoon while waiting for KwikFit to change the tyres on my car. This series of books is certainly short but I haven't found them that helpful as a beginner to a topic. Their need for brevity means they leave out the interesting stories and it's these stories that illuminate the period for me. Sacha dug out his copy of *The Crusades* by Hans Mayer. This certainly had stories but was a challenging read for me at this stage. Thankfully we bought copies of *The Crusades 1095-1204* by Jonathan Phillips, the perfect book as it split the topic into student-friendly chunks and as I was a student again I needed this. While reading to gain knowledge we decided that we would make PowerPoint presentations on various topics. These were not necessarily to be used with students but as a way for us to place our new knowledge and then disseminate to students as needed.

What problems have you faced, particularly in terms of resources?

We broke our own cardinal rule when we started this course – that we should not attempt a new topic at A-level or GCSE without a core text book to accompany it. We believe that every course should have at least one book written for students but this did not have one. To overcome this, we decided to use the three books mentioned above with Phillips being the main text.

I did not enjoy teaching the Nazi unit so after one year I took the Crusades unit while Sacha took the Nazi one. The responsibility and ownership of having to teach Crusades independently forced me to increase my knowledge. I had already begun to read more widely but now I began to build a library of useful texts. *The First Crusade: a new history* by Thomas Asbridge and *The Fourth Crusade and the Sack of Constantinople* by Jonathan Phillips are both brilliant examples of history well told. The stories unfold and are analysed in a way the reader can't help but engage with.

There has been a renaissance in Crusades studies and a proliferation of material is available. *BBC History* magazine has excellent student-friendly articles and there is also a wonderful periodical called *Medieval Warfare*. Podcasts on YouTube are helpful and in particular Real Crusades History is worth mentioning because I know my students find the content and discussions useful (and they love the American accent). BBC Radio 4's *In Our Time* is also valuable.

One major difference between Crusades (also other medieval and early modern topics) and twentieth-century history is in availability of TV documentary. Apart from a Terry Jones half-serious documentary and one on the History Channel there wasn't much to use. The BBC has added another fronted by Thomas Asbridge and I have widened my search to include extracts from *The Great Courses* series – plus you can get the students to create their own!

Students creating their own documentary history. Bohemond and Adhemar le Puy defeat Kilij Arslan at Dorylaeum – this shot from the First Crusade scripted drama shows Year 12 using props and maps to help make the narrative stick. For details see the Youtube link on page 127.

What problems have students faced in terms of understanding the topic?

The medieval period seems foreign to students. Countries, towns and cities have different names from today. Rulers have strange names. For example, the Holy Roman Emperor is the king of Germany and rules what is mainly called Germany today but also other parts of Europe. We study five Baldwins and five people called Alexius. Amalric is also translated as Aimery – historians call the king of Jerusalem Amalric but the ruler of Cyprus (and also one time ruler of Jerusalem) Aimery de Lusignan. Then you add the religious aspect of western and eastern Christians as well as Armenians plus the Shi'a-Sunni split within Islam and the whole thing can seem too difficult. Talking to an ex-student, Hannah, now studying for her PhD at Royal Holloway on the role of Papal Legates, she totally agreed, 'I always got confused between the first two Baldwins. In the end I only remembered which was which because one had the letter 'G' in his place name (Baldwin of Boulogne) and he became king first, which also has a letter 'G' in it!'

One of the ways I have tried to overcome this aspect is by providing students with a scripted role-play of the First Crusade. Students read out the script in role and we move around the classroom passing various locations so there is a physical representation of their journey. It was participating in this activity that made Hannah realise that she was enjoying the study of crusading: 'I hadn't heard of the Crusades so had no idea what it would be about. Mainly fighting, I thought, so it was just a unit to get through and I wasn't looking forward to it. The First Crusade scripted drama was fun but more importantly it helped me establish a narrative that I could use in my studies.' Students need a narrative, a story that helps them keep the pieces of their knowledge together. They are more confident to pull apart that story and analyse it if they know how it fits together again.

It is worth saying that the issues students like Hannah had in understanding the complexity of place and peoples' names is no different to those encountered by students of Stalin's Soviet Union or the Interregnum. Think about the variety of religious groups Cromwell had to deal with or the difficulty in remembering, and spelling, Russian names and the medieval period doesn't seem that different. The type of activity described above works for any time period too.

Adam, a student from 2012-14, found the relationships between the leaders and the in-fighting in Outremer as well as in Europe challenging but 'clearing up some of these issues in a visible way helped.' My Richard the Lionheart 'This is Your Life' activity may seem wildly anachronistic but for my students it helps them see the complex relationships Richard had with his father,

mother, kings of France, siblings and everyone else. Having characters sit to the left or right of Richard depending upon their relationship with him, and moving as time progresses to show the dynamics of these relationships, helps cement this difficult aspect of pre-Third Crusade European politics and why England and France were in no position to help Outremer against Saladin. For Hannah and Adam, the politics of Outremer and the west was what appealed to them: 'Once I [Hannah] started to investigate peoples' motives for going or their motives for arguing with each other I really got interested.' Adam recalled that he had 'always been interested in religious histories and really enjoyed studying that aspect of the crusades; people's motives for taking the cross and how religious events and relics inspired great events.'

One interesting difficulty put to me by Oliver, now studying history at John Moores, Liverpool, was that it was easy to see this topic from a white, western, Christian point of view, 'I had to be very careful not to view this from just one perspective. It would have been easy to see this as *us against them* but that would have completely missed the point.' One of the joys of studying this topic is challenging the myths surrounding it; the people who populated the Holy Land, Christian, Muslim and Jew *had* to get on. They had to live, work and trade together, otherwise the region would have ground to a halt. Helping students understand this is difficult but deepening their knowledge of key individuals and showing they were not two-dimensional cartoons helps by, for example, investigating interpretations of Saladin and analysing his role in the capture of Jerusalem.

Trying to encourage wider reading is also problematic. Hannah admitted to me that she really just stuck to the reading I gave her although she did buy *A Brief History of the Crusades* by Geoffrey Hindley as a supplement. I drop recommendations for further reading into lessons. I know students do buy copies of 'Asbridge' or 'Phillips' because at the end of the year they ask me if I want them! One wonderful student bought *God's War* by Christopher Tyerman but after looking up the meaning of 27 words on the first page I bought it from her. With fiction I find that you need some understanding of the period if you are to fully appreciate it so I recommend these later in the course. '*God Wills It!': a tale of the First Crusade* by William Stearns Davis is my recommendation.

How do students react at first and does this change?

Some students do think the Crusades will be boring! Hannah is a perfect example but Oliver looked forward to this topic because he had seen Richard the Lionheart in Robin Hood films and wanted to know, 'if the myth matched the man'. Adam was, 'intrigued to learn about a topic that [he] had not had much exposure to except in films like *The Kingdom of Heaven*.' I'm sure some

decide not to take history at A-level because of this topic but within a few weeks of teaching, students are generally hooked and enjoy the topic. We insist that Year 12 choose their independent coursework from one of their two AS units – so far there is a 50:50 split.

Has it been a success?

Previously the Crusades was our best unit with students often outperforming their target grade. The first set of new A-level examinations showed that results were in line with expectations with no major positive or negative differences from the other two units.

The Crusades is still an area I enjoy reading about but there is not enough cheap accessible material on everyday life in Outremer. There are better student-friendly text books now – *The Crusades* by Michael Riley and Jamie Byrom and my own *The Age of the Crusades* speak to the student, the former without links to any exam board but even my AQA-focused book gives a sweeping narrative with activities suitable for any classroom. There are also activities in my teaching that I want to improve as well as writing new ones but time constraints tend to mean that never happens as quickly as I'd like.

Students enjoy the topic and after a year can speak with some authority on different aspects. My ultimate test has been teaching my son but, while he has enjoyed the unit he is still going to university to study modern history! Epic fail! However with Hannah's medieval PhD and Adam's MA in Crusader Studies I reckon I can get away with a score draw!

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Resources linked to this article

The Historical Association website offers a variety of resources including podcasts by Jonathan Phillips, Tom Asbridge and Jonathan Riley-Smith, Susan Edgington's pamphlet on The First Crusade and articles by Jonathan Riley-Smith in *Teaching History* numbers 127 and 133. There are also summaries of Richard Kerridge's HA Conference workshops in teaching The Crusades in 2015 and 2016. See www.history.org.uk.

Our activity on the First Crusade can be found in the A-level section of
www.thinkinghistory.co.uk
Our 2016-17 cohort's attempt at making a documentary on the Third Crusade:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFpJISSkbC4

Transcripts of documents used in this publication

Letter from Richard III to Bishop Russell, Chancellor of England

[In secretarial hand-writing]
Right reverend father in God, right trusty and welbeloved we greet you well. And in our heartiest wise thank you for the manifold presents that your servants on your behalf have presented unto us at that our being here, which we assure you we took and accepted with good heart, and so we have cause. And whereas we by God's grace intend briefly to advance us towards our rebel and traitor the duke of Buckingham to resist and withstand his malicious purpose as lately by our letters we certified you (of) our mind more at large. For which cause it behoves us to have our great seal here. We being informed that for certain infirmities and diseases as you sustain you may not in your person to your ease conveniently come unto us with the same. Wherefore we desire and nevertheless charge you that forthwith upon the sight of these you safely do the same our great seal to be sent unto us, and such of the officers of our Chancery as by your wisdom shall be thought necessary. Receiving these our letters for your sufficient discharge in that behalf. Given under our signet at our city of Lincoln, the 12th day of October

[In King Richard's hand-writing]
We would most gladly you came yourself if that you may, and if you may not we pray you not to fail but to accomplish in all diligence our said commandment to send our seal incontinent upon the sight hereof as we trust you with such as we trust, and the officers pertaining to attend with it, praying you to ascertain us of your news. Here, loved be God, is all well and truly determined and for to resist the duke of Buckingham the most untrue creature living, whom with God's grace we shall not be long until that we will be in that [*sic*, those] parts and subdue his malice. We assure you that never was false traitor better provided for as this bearer, Gloucester, can show.

Notes on this letter
In this letter from October 1483, King Richard III reveals the personal connection of medieval monarchs to the everyday processes of government. The duke of Buckingham has joined a rebellion in favour of the exiled Henry Tudor, earl of Richmond (although many assumed he would try to take the crown himself, given the chance). Richard is at Lincoln, co-ordinating the resistance of his allies and their troops. He is about to lead his army towards the south-west but is greatly concerned that he does not have possession of the Great Seal. The chancellor, Bishop John Russell of Lincoln, has been ill in London and has been unable to travel with the king. Without the seal, Richard does not have full control of the machinery of government. If it were to fall into the hands of rebels they could issue orders and authenticate decisions that would cause confusion in the royal ranks and undermine Richard's power. To boost the formal command, written by one of the clerks with the king, Richard hastily scrawls a personal message to Russell on the warrant – if he can't come in person then he is to ensure that a trusted man is sent with the seal as soon as possible. While Richard sensibly announces that he is well-set and determined to fight for his crown, he cannot help but reveal his sense of injustice in the behaviour of the malicious and ungrateful duke – the most untrue creature living. The bearer of the warrant, one of Richard's heralds, can disclose more by word of mouth. Formal and personal correspondence was normally separated in the late medieval period. Here they are merged. While we still have a great volume of the former in our archival collections, glimpses into personality and the instant response to events that this letter reveals, can only make us lament the losses of virtually all the private letters circulating at that time –small parts of the Paston, Stonor, Plumpton, Cely and Armburgh family papers being the very valuable exceptions.

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Geoffrey Chaucer's evidence in Scrope v Grosvenor case
Geoffrey Chaucer, esquire, of the age of forty and more, armed for 27 years, appearing on the part of Sir Richard le Scrope, on being asked whether the arms, Azure, a bend Or, belonged to Sir Richard Scrope by right and heritage, said yes, because he saw him so armed in France before the town of Retters [Réthel], and Sir Henry Scrope armed in the same arms with a white label, and with banner; and the said Sir Richard armed in the entire arms, and so during the whole of the said expedition, until the said Geoffrey was taken.

Being asked how he knew that the arms appertained to Sir Richard said, that he had heard old knights and esquires say that they had had continual possession of the said arms; and that he had seen them displayed publicly on banners, glass, paintings, and vestments, and commonly called the arms of Scrope.

Being asked whether he had ever heard of any interruption or challenge made by Sir Robert Grosvenor or his ancestors, said no, but that he was once in Friday Street, London, and walking through the street, he observed a new sign hanging out with these arms thereon, and inquired 'what inn that was that had hung out these arms of Scrope?'

And one answered him, saying, 'They are not hung out, Sir, for the arms of Scrope, nor painted there for those arms, but they are painted and put there by a Knight of the county of Chester, called Sir Robert Grosvenor;' and that was the first time that he ever heard speak of Sir Robert Grosvenor, or his ancestors, or of any one bearing the name of Grosvenor.

Based on *The Controversy between Sir Richard Scrope and Sir Robert Grosvenor in the Court of Chivalry A.D. MCCCLXXXV-MCCCXC*, ed. Sir N. Harris Nicholas (London, 1832), pp. 411-412.

Notes on this document
This document reminds us that people in the past were not one-dimensional – even the most celebrated of people. Here, on 15 October 1385, Geoffrey Chaucer gives evidence in a chivalry dispute between Sir Richard Scrope and Sir Robert Grosvenor over the right to bear certain heraldic badges. Alongside other leading soldiers appearing at the inquest, Chaucer supplies his name and age and lets us know that he has been a soldier for the past 27 years. Chaucer had also already worked as one of the customs officers in the port of London, as a royal ambassador in Italy, and as a member of King Edward III's household. He would go on to become clerk of the king's works – responsible for the king's official building projects. All the while, he found time to write the poetry for which he is now so famous.

The document is in French but very clearly written. Like other official records charting Chaucer's life, it makes no mention of his literary interests or skill. Without his surviving works we would have no idea from these and other administrative documents that this Crown official was also one of England's greatest writers. We should be mindful that administrators could be multi-talented and had a variety of roles. Other medieval poets, like John Gower and Thomas Hoccleve, shared a similar career path to Chaucer. Perhaps we should think of them as we do ourselves – not identified by one career choice or situation for our entire lives. We see in records containing sketches and drawings that some other clerks were talented artists. We might wonder, therefore, if in other circumstances any other administrators might have contributed at the highest level of England's medieval culture as well as keeping the wheels of government turning.

The names on the muster roll for Sir Thomas Erpingham's retinue, 13 July 1415.

This lists 20 men serving as men-at-arms (their names are given first, headed by Sir Thomas and two lines later, another knight, Sir Walter Goldyngham) and 60 archers (listed under the heading 'Archers'). 20+60 was the size of the retinue for which he had contracted with the king. But Sir Thomas had been able to raise more men. In the middle of the document you can see the names of four 'lances' (a word often used for men-at-arms in this period) 'oultre le nombre' ('in addition to the number'). At the bottom left it is noted in Latin that he also had 12 archers 'oultre le nombre')

Men at arms	Archers	
(Sir) Thomas Erpingham	Mathew Rudham	Robert Tunwell
Richard Gegge	Stephen Geryng	John Ferrour
Sir Walter Goldingham	William Motom	William Fenton
John Calthorp	Richard Venter	John Sawer
Hamo Straunge	John Swynford	John Lynn
Thomas Geney	Robert Hawes	William Chirche
Auston Stratton	John Pye	Nicholas Bracy
John Rouff	Thomas Reynam	John Farefeld
John Starlyng	John Leveryche	John de la Boutre
John Laveney	John Farmer	Nicholas Hert
John Birston	Richard Hayward	Robert Playford
Lynard Straunge	Richard Hake	John Can[er?]o
Robert Scogan	Thomas Evelgold	William Thoresby
John Gegge	Robert Cook	Thomas Sauxton
Rauf Sauxton	Paul Knoppyng	Robert Horn
John Aungers	John Blade	Richard Scott
Nicholas Gumville	John Turnour	John Balham
Piers Thorley	Thomas Martin	Walter Cook
William Bamburg	John Cook	Robert Lamkyn
John Asshman	Thomas Cokerell	Bartholemew Abram
Richard Andrewe	John Carter	John Foster
Reynald Bresingham	John Cadewold	Thomas Farman
Thomas Beaurepaire	John Hoo	Symond Fitz Aberley
John Daubeney	Thomas Bilisby	John Horn
Lances oultre le nombre	Piers Terry	John Farman
Nicholas Andrewe	John Blakeston	John Grygges
Reynald Bressingham	John Lovell	Henry Prom
Thomas Beaurepaire	Edmund Grene	
John Daubeney	John Lanedissh	
	John Lovell	
	William Lovell	
	Robert Hemmyng	
	Henry Bryghemer	

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Letter from Agnes Paston to her husband, William

Dear husband, I recommend me to you etc. Blessed be God, I send you good tidings of the coming and the bringing home of the gentlewoman that ye weeten of fro Reedham this same night, according to pointment that ye made therefor yourself. And as for the first acquaintance between John Paston and the said gentlewoman, she made him gentle cheer in gentle wise, and said he was verily your son. And so I hope there shall need no great treaty betwixt them. The parson of Stockton told me if ye would buyen her a gown, her mother would give thereto a goodly fur. The gown needeth for to be had, and of colour it would be a goodly blue or else a bright sanguine. I pray you do buyen for me two pipes of gold. Your stews do well. The Holy Trinity have you in governance. Written at Paston in haste the Wednesday next after *Deus qui errantibus*, for default of a good secretary etc.

From The Paston Letters, ed. Norman Davis, OUP, 1983 (World Classics paperback) – spelling partly modernised.

Some effects of the Norman Conquest

Stephen Baxter

When considering the effects of the Norman Conquest, it is important to register that continuity and change represent different ends of a spectrum of possibility, and that the nature of change can vary depending on its origins, trajectory, pace and intensity. England, Normandy and many other parts of the medieval west were undergoing considerable, and in some instances rapid social and political change during the long eleventh century. The period witnessed, for example, the collapse of the Carolingian empire and the reconfiguration of the political map of western Europe, arising from the retreat of royal authority in France and the growth of several new smaller competing entities; the growth of localized aristocratic power, resulting in the intensification of lordship within more tightly controlled seigneurial cells and the caging of the peasantry within them; the development of new military technologies including the castle, crossbow and horseback warfare, which empowered the elites who mastered them to strengthen their hold on their own lordships and to expand territorially at the expense of those who did not; changes in family structure with a growing emphasis on primogeniture, which placed pressure on aristocrats to acquire property to provide for their younger sons and daughters, and thus created further stimulus for territorial acquisitiveness; sustained population growth, which placed pressure on agrarian resources and stimulated economic growth, manifest in the expansion of cultivated land, towns and long-distance trade; and a growing appetite for questioning religious orthodoxies, which led to increasingly radical calls for the reform of the church.[1] We must therefore be alert to the possibility that some of the changes visible in conquered England had already begun before the Conquest, or were a function of wider processes of transformation; and that the Normans were not responsible for all the changes that occurred in England after 1066. It is certainly possible to detect different kinds of change in conquered England: some non-change, that is direct continuity before and after the Conquest; some compound change, elements of continuity and change mixed together to form distinctively new phenomena; some continuing change, apparent on either side of the Conquest, though in some cases accelerated by it; some pan-European change, driven by broader shifts affecting societies throughout the medieval west, including England; and some unique change, exclusively attributable to and inconceivable without the Norman Conquest.

English government: non-change or compound change?

A strong case can be made for the continuity of English government into the early Norman period and beyond. The Conqueror's regime inherited and exploited most of the institutional framework of the English state: the coinage system, the geld, regular meetings of royal assemblies, royal writs and diplomas, lawmaking, legislation and a machinery of justice consisting of shire and hundredal courts administered by earls, bishops, sheriffs and other royal officials. In a sense, this is not surprising since the power of the English government and its capacity for exploiting the kingdom's wealth was the prize which had made the Norman invasion worth risking in the first place. In addition, the Normans were opportunists, adept at taking over and working with whatever institutional structures they found. They had done so in Normandy in the tenth century, and did much the same when they conquered southern Italy and Sicily in the eleventh; but because the institutional structures they found differed, Norman government assumed distinctive forms in each of these realms. There was no blueprint of government for the Normans to apply uniformly across their conquered territories; the common characteristic of Norman government was pragmatic adaptation.

That is not to say that the Normans left English government unchanged. On the contrary, when specific features of government in conquered England are examined closely, it emerges that many of them were affected to some degree, some quite radically. Royal assemblies remained central to English government

and were in many ways similar in form and function: for instance, they continued to consist of gatherings of the wealthiest landholders in the kingdom; they were often convened at the major religious festivals of Christmas, Easter and Whitsun at Gloucester, Winchester and Westminster, and at other times and places determined by the convenience of the king's itinerary; and they continued to deal with similar business, including appointments, patronage, the affairs of the church, lawmaking, taxation and the deployment of military resources.[2] However, the composition of royal assemblies changed drastically, for after the brief experiment of collaboration ended in rebellion between 1068 and 1071, Englishmen became increasingly rare birds at royal assemblies. There was also a drastic shift in the king's itinerary and therefore the geography of assembly politics, for the Conqueror's charters reveal that he spent only about a third of his reign in England. The king's itinerant court continued to be served in England by a central agency for the production of charters, staffed by royal priests and supervised by a chancellor. However, the Conqueror's writs were authenticated with a new double-sided seal, which represented his dual authority as king of England and duke of Normandy; and in the early 1070s, the use of vernacular writs was rapidly phased out in favour of writs written in Latin, which were read out in French and Latin at meetings of shire courts. King William I issued legislation like his pre-Conquest counterparts and preserved the machinery of local justice, but some of the conqueror's laws discriminated between 'Franci' and 'Angli'. For example, William I's legislation on exculpation made it easier for Frenchmen than for Englishmen to clear themselves of blame for an alleged crime, and his 'murdrum fine' prescribed heavier penalties for the murder of Frenchmen than for Englishmen: this was ethnically discriminatory, apartheid justice.

Although William's earls and sheriffs bore familiar titles, the nature and extent of their delegated powers shifted appreciably, for William appointed fewer earls to smaller, more concentrated earldoms, and he rebalanced the distribution of authority by granting considerably more land to sheriffs than pre-Conquest kings had done, such that sheriffs were often the most powerful lords in the shires where they held office. The principal features of the monetary system persisted: a similar mint network continued to facilitate regular recoinages, and more than 90% of the Conqueror's moneyers bore English names. However, the pattern of coins found singly, which represents a good sample because both sizeable and random, suggests that the size of the English currency roughly halved between 1066 and 1100, partly because enormous quantities of English coin were exported to Normandy to pay for William's wars in northern France. William continued to levy the geld, but he exempted barons from paying tax on the land they farmed directly, as distinct from the land they enfeoffed to subtenants, and this had the effect of shifting most

of the burden of the land tax on to the dependent peasantry. Norman government in England therefore combined novel and familiar elements in a process of compound change.

Continuing change: the Conquest and the peasantry

It is a common misconception that, although the Norman Conquest transformed elite society, it had little impact on ordinary people – the peasantry – but its impact on rural life was in fact considerable. To contextualize this, it is essential to grasp that the social and economic condition of the peasantry was subject to a variety of gradual trends which had cumulatively profound effects: for a century or so either side of the Conquest, the population was growing at a much faster rate than land reclamation for agriculture, royal government placed increasingly heavy burdens of service and taxation on the whole population, and the pressure exerted by lords on peasants intensified, drawing large numbers of freer peasants into manors, where they became liable to pay a greater share of their incomes in rent.

The question is whether the Conquest made any difference to these developments. Contemporaries certainly thought that it did. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* consistently associates William's rule with oppression. It records that many Englishmen were compelled to 'buy back their land', in effect a fine for the disobedience they had shown to him by opposing his invasion; that William's henchmen 'built castles far and wide throughout this country, and distressed the wretched folk'; that William devastated great swathes of England in Yorkshire and the north-west midlands to punish rebellion in the winter of 1069-70; that the Normans 'imposed unjust tolls and did many injustices which are hard to reckon up'; that the introduction of forest law restricted customary access to hunting and woodland resources; that men 'had to follow out the king's will entirely if they wished to live or hold their land'. In short, 'In this time people had much oppression and very many injuries': 'Who cannot pity such a time?'

All this might be dismissed as the rhetoric of embittered Englishmen, were it not for the fact that Domesday Book contains clear evidence that the Norman Conquest was indeed accompanied by a sudden assault on the livelihoods of ordinary people. Domesday systematically records the 'value' of each manor in 1066 and 1086 (that is, the annual income that lords could expect to extract from their manors, which included the rents paid by the peasants tied to each manor), and when aggregated the change in manorial values is revealing. There were sharp reductions in the shires most heavily affected by movements of the Conqueror's army in 1069-70: for instance, the total value of the North, West and East Riding of Yorkshire fell by 78%, 74% and 51% respectively; that of Cheshire and Derbyshire

by 36% and 35% respectively. This demonstrates that the north was indeed devastated. Elsewhere there were sharp increases in manorial values: for instance, values went up by 38%, 21%, 20% and 29% in Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Kent was respectively. This can only mean that peasants were paying much higher rents to the new lords of their manors. In these shires and elsewhere, Domesday also records a major expansion in the number of manors and a corresponding decline in the number of free peasants who enjoyed freedom from manorial lordship. There can be little doubt that the Conquest had a sudden deleterious effect on the social and economic condition of the English peasantry.[3] The pattern here is continuing change, rapidly accelerated.

Pan-European change: the English Church and the papacy

The relationship between the English Church and the papacy serves to illustrate how Conquest England was shaped by broader, pan-European processes of change. The papacy underwent profound transformation during the later eleventh century. Two broad phases in this can be identified. The first is closely associated with Pope Leo IX (1048-54), who argued that internal flaws within the church required urgent remedy, and singled out two principal evils to attack: simony, the sale and purchase of religious office, the corrupting effects of money; and clerical marriage, the corrupting effects of flesh. The second phase is closely associated with Pope Gregory VII (1073-85), who became convinced that it was insufficient to reform the church only from within since it was infected by an external evil, lay domination of the clergy. This had to be resisted and attacked by every means possible: by demanding, for instance, the right of religious communities to elect their own bishops and abbots; the abolition of lay investiture, the power of secular lords to bestow the symbols of religious office upon priests; the loosening of lay control over religious property; the separation of secular and religious jurisdiction, and prevention of lay interference in the administration of church law; and acknowledgment of the principle that priests enjoyed greater authority (if rarely more earthly power) than laymen. Gregory VII took this principle to its logical conclusion by claiming the right to depose rulers, including the Emperor Henry IV. All this introduced radical new elements into elite ecosystems throughout western Christendom, where secular and religious authority had for centuries evolved and coexisted in close symbiosis.

As elsewhere, the Church in England responded to these developments with varying degrees of enthusiasm. There had been regular contact between England and the papacy throughout the early eleventh century: archbishops routinely collected their *pallia* in person from Rome, and the English regularly paid an annual tribute to Rome known as Rome-scot, or Peter's pence. These contacts began to intensify during King Edward's reign; for example, delegations of English bishops and abbots were present at the reforming councils convened by Pope Leo IX at Rheims, and at Rome and Vercelli; and Pope Alexander II (1061-73) sent legates to England to oversee the appointment of Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester. However, the position of Archbishop Stigand (1052-70) was at odds with the reform programme in several respects. He held Canterbury in plurality with the bishopric of Winchester; his elevation to Canterbury was theoretically uncanonical since his predecessor, Robert, remained alive; and he did not go to Rome to collect his *pallium*, but in 1058 accepted the *pallium* sent to him by Pope Benedict X, who was later branded an anti-pope.

Relations were similarly variable after the Conquest. William the Conqueror's relations with the reforming papacy were broadly cordial and constructive until the time of Gregory VII, when they cooled appreciably. Since monasteries and the episcopate flourished in Normandy before 1066, it is not surprising that he was well thought of in Rome, to the extent that Pope Alexander II could address him as a man of 'the outstanding reputation' for 'religiosity among the rulers and princes of the world'. This proved convenient for William in 1066 and its aftermath, for it enabled him to secure papal sanction for the invasion of England, and in 1070, Alexander sent cardinals to England who endorsed the deposition of Stigand and other English bishops. The letter collections of Archbishop Lanfranc and Gregory VII make it possible to trace the stages by which Gregory's relations with England deteriorated. The correspondence began cordially: from a letter dated 4 April 1074, it emerges that William had written to Gregory congratulating him on his appointment, and in reply Gregory expressed the view that William stood alone among kings for his love of the Roman church. By the late 1070s, however, the relationship had turned sour. In a letter written to another recipient in 1079, Gregory expressed frustration at William's insolence for banning bishops and archbishops from visiting Rome. In the same year, Gregory tried but failed to appoint the archbishop of Lyons as primate with authority over Rouen. Then, in 1080, Gregory VII formally requested that William should give fealty to him, as well as pay Peter's pence; William agreed to the latter, but firmly refused the former. The correspondence also reveals that Lanfranc repeatedly refused to travel to Rome, notwithstanding the fact that Gregory made several attempts to persuade him to do so; and that, by 1082, Gregory was sufficiently exasperated to threaten Lanfranc with suspension of office unless he made the journey.

In practical terms, there is some evidence for the reception of certain reforming principles in England. King William gave papal legates the authority to summon bishops to the councils of Winchester and Windsor in 1070, and indeed to issue a set of *capitula*, which denounced simony and forbade bishops to hold in plurality. Lanfranc himself presided over a council

of London in 1075 which made arrangements for the transfer of bishoprics into important towns, and again ruled against simony; the council of Winchester in 1076 denounced clerical marriage; and one reading of a legislative writ of King William concerning spiritual and temporal courts is that it provided for a degree of separation between religious and secular jurisdiction. However, the Conqueror's regime deposed English bishops on nakedly political grounds, and in 1082, William imprisoned Odo, bishop of Bayeux, drawing a sharp reaction from Gregory VII. The *Historia Novorum* written in the early twelfth century by Eadmer, an English Benedictine monk of Christ Church Canterbury, demonstrates that William's attitude to lay investiture and ecclesiastical property were utterly opposed to the papacy's injunctions on these matters. Eadmer also complains that no one was allowed to travel to Rome without the king's express permission; to receive a letter from the pope without showing it to the king; to lay down spiritual laws or to punish or excommunicate any of his barons without the king's agreement. It thus emerges that William and Lanfranc were both in tune with reforming principles only insofar as these did not intrude upon or undermine their own authority.[4]

Change uniquely attributable to the Conquest: the transformation of landed society

The transformation of landed society constitutes the clearest example of change uniquely attributable to the Conquest. Four points help to bring out the sheer scale of this tenurial revolution which occurred between 1066 and 1086 when the Domesday survey was made. First, Domesday Book records that the English nobility was decimated between 1066 and 1086. There were more than a thousand secular tenants-in-chief in 1086, but only 14 English landholders were accorded the dignity of being named individually in the lists of tenants-in-chief in Great Domesday Book. Of these, only two possessed estates of baronial dimensions, and some of these were constructed from the lands of numerous dispossessed Englishmen and do not therefore constitute examples of tenurial continuity. More Englishmen are named under special headings which group the king's servants at the end of certain Domesday shires, or as subtenants holding from tenants-in-chief; there were roughly a thousand such men, but between them they only held about 5% of the kingdom's landed wealth (that is, the sum of Domesday's manorial values).[5] Second, this revolution was achieved by shredding and reconstituting pre-Conquest lordships. In a small minority of cases, William granted out lordships as going concerns, installing new lords into old lordships, but the vast majority of Norman baronies in England were created from scratch combining the estates of numerous Englishmen.[6] Third, the Norman colonization of England resulted in a major shift in the way wealth was distributed within landed society. The king's income from the royal

demesne doubled; and the gap between the king and the richest magnates widened; landed wealth was concentrated into a relatively small number of baronies, such that by 1086 about 150 people controlled 90% of the kingdom's wealth; and the number of modest landholders plummeted. Late Anglo-Saxon England had a large and variegated aristocracy spanning enormous disparities of wealth, but it was also one that sustained a major stratum of modest free landholders, who between them controlled roughly a fifth of the kingdom's wealth. The Conqueror's elite transformed landed society by plundering and redistributing their land. Fourth, the Conquest transformed the whole basis on which land was held, for the king became the source of all property rights. The structure of Domesday Book assumes that all land was either royal demesne or held from the king immediately by tenants-in-chief or mediately by their subtenants. This empowered William and his successors to exercise lordship over the nobility on an unprecedented scale, and to generate substantial income streams by exploiting a range of feudal incidents: the latter included the right to collect the income from the estates of bishops and abbots throughout the period when these offices were vacant; to demand that heirs paid a relief to enter into their inheritance; to enjoy the income from the estates of minors or wards until they reached majority; and to sell the right to marry and thus acquire the property of heiresses and widows. King Edward exercised a significant degree of control over the landed wealth of the English nobility, and doubtless profited from doing so, but not on this scale.

The Domesday survey

The making of Domesday was a manifestation of the Conqueror's dominance of England's landed wealth. Current research on Exon Domesday – one of the manuscripts produced during the course of the Domesday survey in 1086 – has produced new insights into how and why it was made.[7] The survey was launched at a royal assembly held at Gloucester in midwinter 1085, in an atmosphere of crisis: it was known that King Cnut of Denmark was planning to invade England, and King William had crossed the Channel from Normandy with a large army to defend his kingdom. William began at the Gloucester assembly by appointing seven groups of commissioners to survey groups of shires known as circuits, and by issuing the survey's terms of reference. Royal officials and landholders then spent January gathering information: existing geld lists would supply the basic framework, which would be fleshed out with manorial data supplied by landholders. The commissioners then arranged to interview each landholder in private sessions, and compiled a first draft of the survey organized on a geographical framework, hundred by hundred. This was all done before Easter (5 April 1086), when a royal assembly gathered at Winchester. After Easter, a second group of commissioners were sent into circuits where they did not have landed interests to

check the first draft. These proceedings took place in public at extraordinary meetings of shire courts where representatives of each shire, hundred and village were compelled to confirm or contest the contents of the survey on oath. They identified numerous 'invasions' or illicit appropriations of royal property and many more property disputes between tenants-in-chief; details of these were added to the survey, but were mostly left unresolved. All this was done before a royal assembly met at Westminster at Whitsun (24 May). The survey was then reconstituted from a geographical into a feudal order, grouping all of the estates held by particular tenants-in-chief together. A summary of each lord's fief was also made at this stage; Exon Domesday is the sole surviving witness to this feudally organized stage of the process. These records were then taken to the king at a royal assembly convened at Salisbury in Wiltshire, where all the landholders of any account in the kingdom swore oaths of fealty and performed homage to the king. Finally, a single scribe (with one assistant) was instructed to abbreviate the feudal records into a single volume organized one shire at a time, and within each shire by tenant-in-chief. In the event, two such volumes were written, Little Domesday, covering Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex, and Great Domesday, covering all other shires south of the Tees; these volumes are collectively known as Domesday Book.

Since no contemporary source explains why Domesday was made, the matter has been the subject of a long controversy. Most historians have interpreted the survey as a response to the threat of Danish invasion, and have tended to subscribe to one of two views: the survey was either concerned with the administration of the geld, or was intended to strengthen the king in his ability to exact feudal incidents from tenants-in-chief. It is now becoming clear that the survey generated several outputs, each carefully structured for specific purposes. A later document, the pipe roll of King Henry I for the year 1129-30, records that his fabled wealth tumbled into the treasury from four main sources: the royal demesne, the geld, the profits of justice and government and feudal incidents. The Domesday survey produced precisely the records that treasury officials and sheriffs needed to administer each of these income streams more effectively. The first stage of the survey organized material in exactly the way that the geld was administered, hundred by hundred; it also created the potential to reassess the tax liabilities of each manor, linking these more closely to their ability to pay. The second stage of the survey listed 'invasions' on royal property and property disputes between barons, all of which created abundant potential for the king to generate either cash from what Henry's pipe roll calls 'help in judicial matters' (i.e. bribes), or political capital by forgiving or delaying the collection of judicial debts. The third and fourth stage of the survey organized the material fief by fief. This made sheriffs and all other officials responsible for managing the royal demesne

more precisely and directly accountable. It also gave sheriffs and treasury officials precisely the information they needed to administer feudal incidents, and was designed on the assumption that every manor in every fief would eventually fall into royal control. In short, the Domesday survey produced several valuable outputs, not just Domesday Book itself, and was intended to maximize royal income from every conceivable source. It had probably been conceived by treasury officials and the king's advisers over a period of time before the crisis of 1085: if so, it was not so much a response to the threat of Danish invasion as partly occasioned by it, for that threat both concentrated the king's mind on his fiscal resources, and ensured that most of the major landholders were then in England – a fact that made the survey logistically more feasible. Indeed, it could not have been done without baronial support, but the barons co-operated willingly because they received something precious in return. The survey was in effect a great land conveyance ritual played out and Domesday Book itself constituted a confirmation charter for each tenant-in-chief: the exercise therefore gave the barons greater security in possession of their lands.[8]

Different kinds of change are visible in all this. The Domesday survey could not have been made without the structures of government which the Conqueror's regime inherited from the English, but these institutions had never been deployed on quite this scale or for anything like these purposes. The survey also forms part of the long-term process, already well advanced by 1066, whereby literacy and record-making became important elements in royal government. It also drew inspiration from continental technologies and practices. The language and working methods of the scribes who wrote Exon Domesday suggests that they were trained in the schools of northern France; and the closest parallels to Domesday are estate surveys and inventories made in Carolingian Francia, and Norman pancartes (confirmation charters for entire fiefs endorsed by ducal authority) which proliferated in Normandy after the Conquest. Domesday therefore has a deep contextual hinterland; but nothing quite like it was achieved in any other medieval polity. The survey was brilliantly conceived, executed with astonishing efficiency, was made possible by an exceptionally decisive Conquest, and was the product of the limitless energy and drive of William the Conqueror.

Further reading

D. Bates, *William the Conqueror* (London, 2016): the best and most recent biography, written with deep expertise in, and sympathy for, the Norman evidence

G. Garnett, *The Norman Conquest: a very short introduction* (Oxford, 2009): trenchantly but clearly argued

B. Golding, *Conquest and Colonisation: the Normans in Britain, 1066–1100*, revised edn (Basingstoke, 2001): the best of the many textbooks, with much original insight

The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography contains articles of all the principal protagonists.

Several of the points made in this article are to be developed at greater length in the following articles by Stephen Baxter, scheduled for publication in 2018 or 2019: '1066 and Government', forthcoming in *1066 in Perspective*, ed. D. Bates and E. Impey; 'Domesday Book and the Transformation of English Landed Society', forthcoming in the journal *Anglo-Saxon England*; and 'The Domesday Controversy', forthcoming in *Haskins Society Journal*. The making and purposes of of Domesday Book will be treated at book length in Stephen Baxter, Julia Crick, Christopher Lewis and Frank Thorn, *Making Domesday: The Conqueror's Survey in Context*, Studies in Exon Domesday II, general editor Julia Crick (forthcoming, Oxford University Press).

Stephen Baxter is Clarendon Associate Professor and Barron Fellow in Medieval History at St Peter's College, Oxford. His research is principally concerned with England and Normandy in the long eleventh century. His first book, *The Earls of Mercia: lordship and power in late Anglo–Saxon England* (Oxford, 2007), explores how one leading family survived the vicissitudes of English politics between the 990s and 1070s, and studies the relationship between government, lordship, land tenure, religious patronage and the course of politics. He is currently writing a book about the Norman nobility in the long eleventh century, which inverts the usual focus of enquiry by examining the effects of the Conquest on Normandy and the Normans. He has recently directed two large-scale publicly funded projects. One of these resulted in the publication of *PASE Domesday*, an online database of Domesday landholders, linked to mapping resources (http://domesday.pase.ac.uk/); its long-term goal is to identify all of the landholders named in Domesday Book, thus laying empirical foundations for a book on landed society in 1066 and the impact of the Norman Conquest upon it. The other project aims to publish a facsimile, text, and translation of *Exon Domesday* freely available online (at www.exondomesday.ac.uk/), and a book concerned with the making and purposes of Domesday. He has also written and presented television documentaries on Domesday and on medieval childhood for the BBC. Most of his articles are accessible online at www.academia.edu/

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1   Important surveys of these developments, which of course affected different regions to differing extents, include C. Wickham (2009) *The Inheritance of Rome: a history of Europe from 400 to 1000,* London: Allen Lane; R. Bartlett (1993) *The Making of Europe: conquest, colonization and cultural change 950–1350,* London: Allen Lane; R. I. Moore (2000) *The First European Revolution, c. 970–1215,* Oxford: Blackwell.

2   J. R. Maddicott (2010) *The Origins of the English Parliament, 924–1327,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

3   S. Baxter (2011) 'Lordship and Labour' in *A Social History of England 900–1200*, ed. J. Crick and E. van Houts, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 98–114.

4   Z. N. Brooke (1931) *The English Church and the Papacy,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, remains valuable, as does F. Barlow (1979) *The English Church 1000–1066*, 2nd edn, London: Longmans; *idem* (1979) *The English Church 1066–1154,* London: Longmans. See also H.E.J. Cowdrey (1988) *Pope Gregory VII, 1073–1085,* Oxford: Oxford University Press; *idem* (2003) *Lanfranc: scholar, monk and archbishop,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

5   A. Williams (1991) *The English and the Norman Conquest,* Woodbridge: The Boydell Press; H. M. Thomas (2003) 'The Significance and Fate of the English landholders of 1066', in *English Historical Review, 18,* pp. 303–33.

6   R. Fleming (1991) *Kings and Lords in Conquest England,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

7   For the Exon Domesday project (AHRC grant reference: AH/L013975/1), see www.exondomesday.ac.uk/.

8   S. Baxter, 'How and Why was Domesday Made?' forthcoming in *Anglo-Norman Studies* (2017).