

## MONASTIC RESEARCH BULLETIN

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### CONTENTS OF ISSUE 17 (2011)

Elizabeth New, *The Seals in Medieval Wales Project and its Potential for Monastic and Ecclesiastical History*, p. 2; Karen Stöber, *Church and Society in Medieval Catalonia*, p. 5; Veronica O'Mara, *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe*, p. 7; Emma Wells, *Kings, Commoners and Communities: 'Sensing' the Pilgrimage Experience of the English Medieval Church, c. 1170-1550*, p. 11; James Jenkins, *King John and the Cistercians in Wales*, p. 16; Jayne Wackett, *The Litlyngton Missal of Westminster Abbey: its Patron, Iconography and Message*, p. 18; Jessica Berenbeim, *Art of Documentation: the Sherborne Missal and the Role of Documents in English Medieval Art*, p. 20; Harry Hawkins, *Records of Shap Abbey, Cumbria*, p. 22; Henry Summerson, *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: the English Episcopacy 1050-1550 and the Late Medieval Religious*, p. 23; Pat Cullum and Katherine Lewis, *Religious Men in the Middle Ages*, p. 25; Jayne Wackett, *Me fieri fecit: the Representation and Role of Owners, Donors and Patrons in Medieval Art*, p. 27; Janet Burton and Karen Stöber, *The Journal of Medieval Monastic Studies*, p. 29; *Select Bibliography*, p. 32.

## **THE *SEALS IN MEDIEVAL WALES* PROJECT AND ITS POTENTIAL FOR MONASTIC AND ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY**

*Seals in Medieval Wales* is a major three-year project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, running from September 2009 until the end of August 2012. *Seals in Medieval Wales* is based within the Department of History and Welsh History at Aberystwyth University, and is part of the Institute of Medieval and Early Modern Studies (Aberystwyth - Bangor). The project team consists of Principal Investigator Professor Phillipp Schofield, Co-Investigator Dr Sue Johns (Bangor), and researchers Dr Elizabeth New and Dr John McEwan. The project team are using seals from across Wales and the Welsh Marches to explore a wide range of issues relating to medieval Welsh and Marcher society, and engaging with this under-exploited source for medieval history. This research includes previously unrecorded material which undoubtedly will be of interest to scholars of monastic and ecclesiastical history.

Seals are an inherently cross-disciplinary resource, feeding into social, political, religious, linguistic and cultural studies, and to historical research at many levels. As early as the seventeenth century William Dugdale (d.1686) and Jean Mabillon (d.1707) recognised the importance of seals, and the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed a great deal of activity in the field of sigillography. Ecclesiastical seals received considerable attention at this time, both through specific works which focused on monastic and episcopal seals and through the inclusion of a description of known seals for religious houses and cathedrals in the Victoria County History series (the latter a feature which has, fortunately, been continued to the present day). Although seals were largely overlooked by scholars for much of the twentieth century, the last thirty years have witnessed a renaissance in seal-studies. Ecclesiastical seals have fared well in this revival, with close attention paid to the seals from a number of individual cathedrals

and monasteries (the work of T. A. Heslop is notable in this regard), and important catalogues of monastic seals compiled by Roger Ellis and David H. Williams.

The *Seals in Medieval Wales* project is actively engaging with this existing sigillographic material, but one key difference between the recording process of *Seals in Medieval Wales* and a number of previous catalogues is that it does not focus on particular types of seal. The data-set for the project comprises over 3,000 seal impressions drawn from thirty-eight collections distributed across nine repositories, and contains the full range of material. This includes some previously unrecorded seals of monasteries and the secular Church and new examples of known ecclesiastical seals. All the seals recorded by the project are still attached to their parent document and so these items are contextualised and closely datable.

An example of the type of monastic material which the *Seals in Medieval Wales* project has uncovered are two seals associated with the Franciscans of Bridgnorth. The finely-engraved design on the first seal attached to the 1337 letters of confraternity granted to Nicholas of Pitchford and Joanna his wife (National Library of Wales, Pitchford Hall Deeds 605) is a depiction of the Virgin and Child flanked to the left by Mary Magdalene and to the right by an episcopal saint with a shield of arms (England) below. From the sealing clause and surviving portion of the legend indicates that this was the communal seal of the Bridgnorth Greyfriars, for which there apparently is no reference in print (Henry Kingsford was somewhat misled by an inaccurate description of the sealed instrument: H. S. Kingsford, 'The Seals of the Franciscans', in A.G. Little, ed., *Franciscan History and Legend in English Medieval Art*, British Society of Franciscan Studies 18-19 (Manchester, 1937), pp. 81-100, 87). The second seal is that of the Bridgnorth warden, depicting the Risen Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene with, beneath an arch, a half-length suppliant figure. This seal is mentioned in the Shropshire VCH and in Thomas Farmer Dues'

*Antiquities of Shropshire* (Appx p. xli) but is not described by either publication.

Of perhaps even greater potential for monastic studies is the information collected by *Seals in Medieval Wales* about the patrons, donors and tenants associated with religious houses. The seals owned and used by hundreds of such people have been recorded, and work is beginning on analysing the corpus of material. Important areas of investigation being undertaken by the project team are for example the role of monastic houses in the adoption of seals by the laity in twelfth-century Wales, and the possible influence of monastic models on the motifs employed by people who interacted with abbeys and priories.

The project team is sharing information about the seals of Welsh religious houses with the *Monastic Wales* project, and the data gathered by *Seals in Medieval Wales* will be made publically accessible after the completion of the project. In the meantime researchers are welcome to contact the team with specific enquiries. A conference, *Seals and their Context in the Middle Ages*, will be held in Aberystwyth from 27-29 April 2012, timed to coincide with the opening of an exhibition of Welsh and Marcher seals at the National Library of Wales. As the title of the conference suggests, the aim is to discuss and explore seals and their uses in the broadest possible contexts, with several papers considering monastic examples.

For further information please see the project webpage [www.aber.ac.uk/en/history/research-projects/seals](http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/history/research-projects/seals) or contact the team at [smwstaff@aber.ac.uk](mailto:smwstaff@aber.ac.uk).

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## CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN MEDIEVAL CATALONIA

This project seeks to contribute to our understanding of medieval Catalan monasticism, of the interactions of church and society, and the shaping of identities in the region. There are at present a whole range of studies being underway, often based on interdisciplinary research, which seek to establish the role of religious houses in particular regions across medieval Western Christendom – these include Wales, Ireland, Galicia, to name but a few – comparing different religious orders, or occasionally individual houses in their localities. My project aims to contribute to this wider research. It will offer an examination, first and foremost, of the wider social relevance of medieval religious communities, their role in medieval society and the non-religious aspects of the regular life. What was the nature of the relations between religious communities and secular society? What were the contacts through patronage, as reflected in actions such as bequests, corrodies and burials? What were the factors that contributed to the shaping of a ‘Catalan Augustinian, or Cistercian, identity’? The findings of this study will help to analyse the dynamics between these two groups, religious and lay, and their wider repercussions for Catalonia’s social, religious, and political history.

Catalonia in the Middle Ages was a region caught between religious confessions and competing kingdoms, and thus a frontier zone in political, cultural, linguistic and religious terms. It was a region rich in religious houses of monks, canons, friars and nuns, and shaped by the different cultural influences that surrounded it, and which had an impact both on its religious and on its lay community. And finally, it is a region with an almost unequalled wealth of documentary resources, much of it uncatalogued, preserved in its numerous archives.

The project began with the case studies of a number of mostly comparatively small houses of regular canons in medieval Catalonia, the Augustinian canons being among the better-studied religious groups in Catalonia. Analysing the social networks of these small

Augustinian communities goes a long way to explaining the dynamics and the relationships between religious and society in the region. The Augustinian house of Roca Rossa, for example, a small priory not far from the city of Girona, serves as an illuminating example, soon to be published, of a moderately endowed community of regular canons which had very close ties with the local lay community and an abundant documentation to prove it. The importance of this priory was predominantly local, both in terms of recruitment and benefactions, yet on this local level the canons' achievements were considerable. The priory was at the heart of the religious, cultural, economic activity in the locality. It was a key employer and educator for the local laity, it provided the social services required by the population, it fed their poor, cared for their sick, buried their dead, and it kept the region in touch with the wider world through the extra-claustral activities of its canons, which saw them attend universities abroad, probably mainly in France, attend meetings outside Catalonia, and receive international visitors. The situation of Roca Rossa was repeated numerous times across medieval Catalonia, emphasising the far-reaching importance of the regular canons in their communities, regions, and countries.

It is well known that different religious orders played different roles in the lives of their regions, and in order to broaden the perspective of this study it will be valuable to introduce a further comparative element and consider different religious groups in the same area. The next step of this project will therefore look in particular at the Cistercian order in Catalonia, a religious group which has been treated unevenly in the historiography of the region. There were fewer than twenty Cistercian monasteries in medieval Catalonia and yet they include some of the most famous and most-studied of all the religious houses in Catalonia, the abbeys Poblet and Santes Creus for example, whose magnificent buildings (in the case of Poblet still in use by a Cistercian community today) are matched by their plentiful documentation. They also, however, include over a dozen abbeys many of which have to date been rather less appreciated by scholars, and it is to these Cistercian monasteries that the focus of this study will now turn.

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## NUNS' LITERACIES IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

A conference on 'Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe' took place at the University of Hull from 20–23 June 2011. It was designed to bring together specialists working on diverse geographical areas to create a dialogue about the Latin and vernacular texts nuns read, wrote, and exchanged, primarily from the late eighth to the mid-sixteenth centuries. To date, there had been significant research in this field but little in the way of cross-cultural study. For this reason twenty-three international experts (from Belgium, England, Germany, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, the United States, and Wales) addressed those issues in Hull. The resulting papers from this conference will be published by Brepols. Further conferences will take place at the universities of Missouri-Kansas City (2012) and Antwerp (2013). All papers are by invitation only; the programmes for Kansas City and Antwerp have been finalised and will be announced in due course on the project website [www.nuns-literacies.org](http://www.nuns-literacies.org)

### ORGANISERS:

- Virginia Blanton, Associate Professor of English at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.
- Veronica O'Mara, Senior Lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Hull.
- Patricia Stoop, Postdoctoraal onderzoeker, FWO-Vlaanderen, Universiteit Antwerpen, Ruusbroecgenootschap.

HULL CONFERENCE PROGRAMME:

Dr **Thom Mertens**, Professor of Religious Literature in the Low Countries at the Ruusbroec Institute (Universiteit Antwerpen), ‘Praying in the Vernacular: Middle Dutch Imitative Forms of the Divine Office from the 1370s to 1520s’

**Ulla Bucarey**, Doctoral Student (Universität Augsburg, Philologisch-Historische Fakultät Deutsche Sprache und Literatur des Mittelalters), ‘Educating Nuns: The Library of Lichtenthal in the Fifteenth Century’

Dr **Virginia Blanton**, Associate Professor of English (Department of English, University of Missouri-Kansas City), ‘The Devotional Reading of Nuns: Three Legendaries of Native Saints in Late Medieval England’

Dr **Patricia Stoop**, Postdoctoral Fellow of Research Foundation Flanders (FWO) at the Ruusbroec Institute (Universiteit Antwerpen), ‘Nuns’ Literacy in Sixteenth-Century Convent Sermons from the Cistercian Abbey of La Cambre’

Dr **Ingela Hedström** (Riksarkivet, Stockholm), ‘Vadstena Abbey and Female Literacy in Late Medieval Sweden’

Dr **Veronica O’Mara**, Senior Lecturer (Department of English, University of Hull), ‘Medieval English Nuns Read but where is the Evidence that they Wrote?’

Dr **Helene Scheck**, Associate Professor of English (Department of English, The University at Albany), ‘Reading Women at the Margins of Quedlinburg Codex 74’

Dr **Regina Schiewer**, Researcher (Forschungsstelle für Geistliche Literatur des Mittelalters (FGLM), Katholische Universität Eichstätt), ‘Books in Texts — Texts in Books: The *St Georgen Sermons* as an Example of Nuns’ Literacy in Late Medieval Germany’

Dr **Cynthia Cyrus**, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs, Associate Professor of Musicology and Affiliated Faculty in Women’s and Gender Studies (Vanderbilt University), ‘Vernacular and Latinate Literacy in Viennese Women’s Convents’

Dr **Monica Hedlund**, Professor Emerita of Latin with Latin Palaeography and Codicology (Institutionen för lingvistik och filologi,



Uppsala universitet), ‘Nuns and Latin: With Special Reference to the Birgittines and Vadstena Abbey’

Dr **Alfred Thomas**, Professor of English and Germanic Studies (Department of English, University of Illinois at Chicago), ‘Between Court and Cloister: Royal Patronage and Nuns’ Literacy in Late-Medieval Prague’

Dr **Mary Erler**, Professor of English (Department of English, Fordham University), ‘Syon, Maria Troon, and Low Countries Devotion’

Dr **Lisa Weston**, Professor of English (English Department, California State University-Fresno): ‘Conceiving the Word(s): Habits of Literacy among Earlier Anglo-Saxon Monastic Women’

Dr **Marilyn Oliva**, Associate Adjunct Professor in the Center for Medieval Studies (Fordham University), ‘The Pragmatic Literacy of Late Medieval English Nuns’ [read by Dr Virginia Blanton]

Dr **Wybren Scheepsma**, Researcher (Faculteit der Geesteswetenschappen, Institute for Cultural Disciplines, Universiteit Leiden), ‘The Sister Book of Diepenveen: A Mirror of Literacy from the Monastic Branch of the Modern Devotion’

Dr **Stephanie Hollis**, Professor Emerita (Department of English, University of Auckland), ‘The Literary Culture of the Anglo-Saxon Royal Nunneries: Romsey and London, British Library, MS Lansdowne 436’

Dr **Bruce Venarde**, Professor of History (Department of History, University of Pittsburgh), ‘Making History at Fontevraud: Abbess Petronilla of Chemillé & Practical Literacy’

Dr **Nancy Bradley Warren**, Professor of English and Courtesy Professor of Religion (Department of English, Florida State University) ‘Chaucer in the Monasteries’

Dr **Alison Beach**, Professor of History (Historisches Seminar I, Mittlere und Neuere Geschichte, Universität zu Köln), “‘Mathild de Niphin’ and the Female Scribes of Twelfth-Century Zwiefalten’

Dr **Darcy Donahue**, Associate Professor (Department of Spanish and Portuguese, Miami University), ‘The Personal and the Political: Ana de San Bartolomé’s Version of the Discalced Carmelite Reform’

Dr **Jonas Carlquist**, Professor of Scandinavian Languages in the Department of Languages and Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts (Umeå universitet), ‘The Birgittine Sisters at Vadstena Abbey: Their Learning and Literacy’ [read by Dr Roger Andersson]

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

In the Hull conference and in future conferences we investigate the topic of literacy primarily from the palaeographical evidence of the manuscripts but also by discussing records of book ownership and other more external evidence, both literary and historical. In so doing the speakers are asked to examine issues such as representations of nuns and literacy, nuns’ participation in the production of books, and the inter-monastic circulation and translation of texts. This collaborative effort is driven by a series of questions about the nature of medieval nuns and books:

- How was literacy defined in specific geographical regions and in particular monastic orders? How does class or social status affect these distinctions? Is it possible to develop a definition of literacy ‘writ large’ for nuns across medieval Europe?
- When and where did nuns use vernacular languages as a means of access to books?
- What level of access and understanding of Latin did nuns have? How did they use Latin in concert with vernacular texts?
- How did nuns’ use of language change over time and place and monastic order?
- What surviving manuscripts show evidence of nuns as writers, readers, copyists?
- Are there distinguishing features of manuscripts written by nuns?
- How did nuns learn to write or teach other nuns to write?
- What are the differences in writing ability across the different vernaculars (for example, English, Dutch, German, French, Hungarian, Italian, Spanish, and Swedish)? Or at different periods in the same country (for example, Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-Norman, Middle English)

- What books were nuns writing, as opposed to what books were they reading or copying?
- What evidence survives about now-lost manuscripts that were once part of women's intellectual culture?
- What kinds of books were gifted to nuns? Is there a pattern among the types of books gifted? Are there differences across regions? Monastic orders? Cultures? Languages?
- How did men figure into the production or reception of women's intellectual culture?
- How were ecclesiastical structures framed that provided nuns access (or not) to literary culture?

The list of questions above is not intended to be exhaustive but rather generative; undoubtedly, the scholars involved with the project will develop answers to these questions, even as the questions themselves become catalysts for further areas of inquiry. The questions, moreover, will evolve as scholars come together, share their research, and react to others' findings.

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**KINGS, COMMONERS AND COMMUNITIES: 'SENSING'  
 THE PILGRIMAGE EXPERIENCE OF THE ENGLISH  
 MEDIEVAL CHURCH, c.1170-1550**

The experience of architecture and imagery is a critical area of inquiry for pilgrimage studies. For example, how was the building perceived and interpreted? Who were the spectators, and what might the decoration have meant to them? In many cases devotional campaigns – material, architectural or decorative – worked as a visual link between building and spectator, communicating to them the function of the

building. Pilgrimage art and architecture was, predominantly, designed to be seen and understood and, as such, played an integral role in the visitor's experience of a space, accommodating and expecting multiple responses whilst inspiring a reaction of the senses. Thus, these aesthetic schemes communicated; they were intended to be read and cannot be divorced from the spaces they inhabited or the people they affected.<sup>1</sup>

Anthropology and history have demonstrated that saintly devotion was, in many contexts, a very physical affair, involving touching, kissing and even crawling as a way of coming into direct contact with the intercessory power of the divine. The challenge for archaeologists is to invigorate analyses of our own subject matter with methodologies and theoretical approaches that allow a rigorous, fully sensory interpretation of these past devotional practices. This thesis exposes the visualist bias inherent in traditional studies of the art and architecture of medieval pilgrim churches and their visitors, and establishes an alternative sensory and social perspective on them as synthaesthetic experiences created for and by a diverse range of ritual participants.<sup>2</sup> In short, it uses an innovative interdisciplinary approach to the understanding of pilgrimage sites by examining how the visual and tangible infrastructure of cult churches – including the relationship between artefacts, documents and structures – was received from three individual perspectives: royalty, laity and parochial society; a comparison which has, as yet, escaped scholarly attention. Based on the principles of recent socio-anthropological and archaeological analyses on the sensory culture of the past, the research provides an alternative socio-sensual approach to illustrate that the medieval

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<sup>1</sup> This follows the principles of post-structuralist approaches that see artefacts as a similar form to text in that they also have to be 'read', R. Layton, 'Structuralism and Semiotics', in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. C Tilley (London, 2006), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> A great analysis of Prehistoric communities that uses a socio-sensory approach is, R. Skeates, *An Archaeology of the Senses: Prehistoric Malta* (Oxford, 2010).

‘pilgrimage experience’ was socially constructed for and by a diverse range of ritual participants. The perspective employed draws on Abercrombie and Turner’s ‘Dominant Ideology Thesis’ to argue against more recent suggestions that social status was removed during mass ritualistic devotion. It is my personal estimation that an increase in the sensory aspects of the pilgrimage schemes of the church was a direct result of the demand by pilgrims for more ‘interaction’ with their devotion. By analysing the involvement in the construction of such schemes, as well as the experience generated by the churches, we can identify the differences and the reasons for these and, as a result, *why* the senses became increasingly integral to the construction of pilgrimage art and architecture. As will be proven, late medieval culture promoted interaction between people and objects, spaces and bodies.

The four major pilgrimage churches of Durham Cathedral Priory, York Minster, Canterbury Cathedral and St Neot parish church, Cornwall, were chosen due to the richness and quality of the surviving archaeological remains, and the profusion and detail of extant illustrative and contemporary documentary material. They also allow for a comparison of Northern and Southern pilgrimage churches, and saints of local, national and even international reverence. Thus, the chief sources upon which this study relies are the churches themselves: their stone, glass, altars, screens, paintings, shrines and written records. These elements are physical materialisations of mental, emotional and spiritual practices on individual *and* communal levels that accommodated and expected multiple responses whilst inspiring a reaction of the senses. Despite various approaches to medieval pilgrimage art and architecture, the wealth of past studies have produced only functionalist descriptions with an overwhelmingly inherent visualist bias, thus rendering negligible the sensory impact that cult churches gave to their visitors and vice versa. Furthermore, analyses of the documentary accounts have overlooked the significant relationship between historical patterns of visitation and the changing aspects of shrine architecture and the surrounding locale. As such, the

question around which my research envelops is whether the settings of shrines were built for pilgrims and to accommodate the cults. My contention is that we need to go further with our evidence and methodologies to consider the human use and experience of the constructed sensory environment of the church in relation to its variability over space and time – the *habitus*. This approach is based on the premise that a study of the medieval church is not complete without inclusion of the human, ideological and artistic significances within which it was constructed.

Evidence of which the data set comprises was gathered using a methodology informed by a post-processual mindset to expose the collective mentality of specific social groups, building on Clifford Geertz's notion of 'thick description'. A similar holistic approach is applied to my research to challenge how broader social, religious, doctrinal, economic and even architectural effects, influenced by the veneration of saints, created the total sensory experience of the pilgrim. Examination of the four churches is conducted individually, each church standing as a case study of a specific component in the larger discussion of the experience of late-medieval sacred space, yet with York and Canterbury combined for the 'royal' analysis. This evidence forms the main body of my thesis which is split into five chapters. The first, Asceticism and Aestheticism, encompasses a historiography of medieval devotion towards the cults of saints, forming the background for which 'pilgrimage experience' can be analysed. It covers the following subtopics: the ideological interaction between people and objects, spaces and bodies,<sup>3</sup> theorising 'sensory' aspects of devotion, and a discussion of the ritualistic customaries of saintly veneration. The chapter then briefly considers the affect of the inherent focus on sensory (or corporeal) interaction within medieval worship on the

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<sup>3</sup> See forthcoming article by the author 'Making 'Sense' of the Pilgrimage Experience of the Medieval Church', in the 2011 issue of *Peregrinations Journal* for further discussion of the importance of corporeal veneration of the late medieval church.

sixteenth-century Henrician Reforms, suggesting it as a possible catalyst among many.<sup>4</sup> The second chapter analyses the royal pilgrimage experience of York Minster and Canterbury Cathedral arguing that a full understanding of medieval pilgrimage cannot be gained without consideration of the ruling monarchies due to the integral part that sovereigns played in constructing not only the cults themselves, but their aesthetic and physical settings – a product of their fervour for particular saints. The third chapter examines the parish church of St Neot. Emphasis is placed on how this rural Cornish parish not only venerated its local saint but helped create the sacred environment in which the cult originated. A considerable lack of scholarship is apparent on the church itself – particularly the alleged shrine structure; a significant oversight given the popularity of the local saint and the exceptional nature of the church construction: funded and partially designed by certain groups within the parochial society. The fourth chapter considers the lay experience of Durham Cathedral Priory. Through an analysis of how the senses were stimulated and interplayed at the most significant cult stations, an examination of the sensory experience of the lay pilgrim in response to the architectural and decorative schemes of the church, was undertaken. The final chapter, Cuthbert vs. Becket and other such tales,<sup>5</sup> forms the first

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<sup>4</sup> Two good articles on the function of the body in Post-Reformation worship are: M Aston, ‘Public Worship and Iconoclasm’, in *The Archaeology of Reformation 1480 - 1580: Papers Given at the Archaeology of Reformation Conference, February 2001*, eds. D. Gaimster and R. Gilchrist (Leeds, 2003), pp. 9-28; and C .P. Graves, ‘From an Archaeology of Iconoclasm to an Anthropology of the Body: Images, Punishment and Personhood in England 1500-1660’, *Current Anthropology*, 49(1) (2008), pp. 45-57.

<sup>5</sup> For further discussion of St Cuthbert’s cult in the late medieval north-east see the forthcoming article by the author, ‘“...he went round the holy places praying and offering”: Evidence for Cuthbertine Pilgrimage to Lindisfarne and Farne in the Late Medieval Period’, in *Newcastle and Northumberland: Roman and Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology*, eds. J. Ashbee and J.M. Luxford (Leeds, 2010).

contextualised comparative study of the experiences of the three most distinct social groups of the medieval period, elucidating how each influenced and was influenced by their requirement for ‘interactive’ devotion with the cults of saints.

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### **KING JOHN AND THE CISTERCIANS IN WALES**

My thesis, under the supervision of Dr. Helen Nicholson, explores the relationship between one of the most stereotypical villains of history, King John, and the Cistercians in Wales. In doing so, it shall not only shed new light on the political ability of John but also the position of the Cistercians in Wales. It has long been argued that the Cistercian Order in Wales was fundamentally split along two lines, namely there were houses which were founded by the Anglo-Normans and in areas of Anglo-Norman control, which supported the Anglo-Norman cause, and those which were founded in *Pura Wallia*, by the native Welsh princes, which supported the native Welsh. The relationship therefore between the English King and the Cistercians in Wales should be based on this. However, this PhD demonstrates that this was by no means the case, and John in fact enjoyed on occasion a far better relationship with the native Welsh houses than the Anglo-Norman houses.

For most scholars, the charters John granted to Cistercian houses were merely issued routinely at the request of the abbot, and as such have little historical value, above assessing what lands these abbeys held. This PhD intends to demonstrate, however, that both these assumptions may be incorrect. In fact, from a detailed analysis of the charters John issued to the Cistercian abbeys in Wales, this PhD demonstrates that



these charters were not always issued routinely but were often inextricably linked to John's wider political aims in these areas. This is not to say that all charters ever issued were evidence of a political relationship. However, it remains the case that John granted charters to the abbeys in Wales whose patrons he attempted to woo or to pacify, such as that to Strata Marcella on 11 April 1200, the same day that he granted its patron, Gwenwynwyn, a charter by which he was granted the royal manor of Ashford in Derbyshire; whilst another charter of the same day allowed him to hunt in the king's forests. Clearly John was attempting to woo Gwenwynwyn in order to try and settle Wales so John could concentrate on his French lands.

John also used the abbeys as a means of hurting the patron, for example, ordering the destruction of Strata Florida in 1212, which was likely intended to hurt its patrons Rhys Gryg and Maelgwyn ap Rhys who, although they once supported the king, had turned against him. It also argues that John's relationship with abbeys in these areas on occasion transcended all other concerns, with John enjoying a continually positive relationship with Margam Abbey in South Wales for example, due to his personal contact with the house and the hospitality he enjoyed there. By contrast, John had a continually negative relationship with Dore Abbey, a house on the Welsh border, continually fining this abbey and seizing its lands, because the house had manipulated his brother Richard into granting them a valuable piece of land.

In order to put his relationship with the Cistercian Order in Wales into greater relief, this PhD has analysed John's relations with the Cistercians in Ireland. As with the Welsh material, John's relationship with the Cistercian Order in Ireland was once again explicitly connected to his wider political relationships and alliances. This is perhaps best demonstrated by his continual granting of charters to Ua Briain abbeys, a family which since the 1190s had been a staunch supporter of John. In the final year of this PhD I intend to investigate John's relationship with the Cistercians in England, to see if a similar

political relationship with the Cistercians occurred here: namely did he use his grants to the Cistercians in order to cultivate or improve a relationship with its patron and hurt those abbeys whose patrons turned against him, with particular reference to those who opposed him in the run up to Magna Carta and the ensuing Civil War.

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### **THE LITLYNGTON MISSAL OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY: ITS PATRON, ICONOGRAPHY AND MESSAGE**

The Litlyngton Missal, created c.1383-1384<sup>6</sup> under the patronage of Abbot Nicholas Litlyngton for the Benedictine house of Westminster Abbey, is an extremely rare example of a lavishly decorated large English service book from the later Middle Ages. The manuscript is particularly precious as very few monastic missals survived the Reformation. The Litlyngton Missal is one of those strange anomalies whereby it is both familiar and has certain well-known facts attached to it, but that as yet, not very much in-depth work has been carried out on it. Although famed for its Crucifixion miniature, and despite appearing in most catalogues and books on medieval art, its iconography, and the messages held therein, remain largely unexplored.

One part of my thesis explores the important role of the patron within the missal. Even had it not been recorded that the great Westminster Missal was gifted to the abbey by Abbot Nicholas Litlyngton,<sup>7</sup> it would

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<sup>6</sup> A list of expenses for the Litlyngton Missal, Westminster Abbey exists in the Abbot Treasurer's Roll for the years 1383 and 1384 (W.A.M. 24265\*)

<sup>7</sup> Westminster Abbey Vestry Inventory 1388, Canterbury Cathedral Library, Y/XA. John Flete also mentions the benefaction in his fifteenth-century

be possible to recognize the patron through the use of the monogram and coat of arms that appear at various instances within the pages of the book. Indeed, there is also a personal coat of arms on the outer edges of the book which allows the identity of the donor to be discerned even when the book is shut. However, it is interesting to consider more closely the details of the patron beyond mere identification. The primary evidence regarding Nicholas Litlyngton creates a clear idea of certain facets of his character, as revealed through his actions and concerns. The thesis explores the biographical details of Nicholas Litlyngton, thus enabling a better understanding of the man who, as patron, influenced the nature of the missal's creation and adornment. A broader knowledge of the patron as a person lends valuable insight into his intentions and incentives as perceived within the iconography of the missal itself. Certainly, there is an unmistakable direct correlation between Nicholas Litlyngton's personality, motivations and even particular life events to be found in the iconography employed within the missal that he commissioned to be made.

Another area of investigation in this mainly monographic work is the portrayal of ritual and the representation of the Benedictine monks within their own liturgical work. Investigation of subject matter, image placement and comparison with other like works allows an interpretation of the Westminster monks, or at least their leader's, view of themselves.<sup>8</sup> Particularly intriguing is an examination of how and why Westminster Abbey, a house of some prestige with a particular role and established tradition in connection to royalty, is portrayed within the iconography of this glamorous missal. Finally, through an exploration of both text and image, the thesis looks into a

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history of Westminster Abbey: John Flete, *The History of Westminster Abbey*, ed. J. Armitage Robinson, (Cambridge, 1909), p. 135.

<sup>8</sup> Interesting work on the issue of self-representation can be found in *Self-Representation of Medieval Religious Communities*, ed. A. Müller & K. Stöber, (Berlin, 2009).

comparative study of Jesus and Mary as points of devotion and whether iconography can be linked to changing trends in worship.

This thesis is supervised by Dr Alixe Bovey and I would like to thank Westminster Abbey Library, through whose kind permission I have been privileged to study in first-hand detail the artwork of the entire Missal.

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**ART OF DOCUMENTATION: THE SHERBORNE MISSAL  
AND THE ROLE OF DOCUMENTS IN ENGLISH MEDIEVAL  
ART**

This Ph.D. thesis considers the interactions of documents and the visual arts in later medieval England.<sup>9</sup> It begins from three methodological premises, explained in detail in the first chapter: that the materials of documentation are part of the history of art; that documents are an important subject of artistic representation, and therefore important sources for the cultural reception of documentary practices; and, finally, that the document came to constitute an important model or paradigm for representation.

The thesis then pursues these arguments through the analysis of individual works of art—charters, seals, archival manuscripts, liturgical manuscripts, architecture, and sculpture, mostly English works of the

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<sup>9</sup> The thesis is supervised by Jeffrey Hamburger, Department of History of Art & Architecture, Harvard University, and is due to be defended in February 2012. It has been supported by the Harvard Presidential Scholars program, the Frank Knox Memorial Fellowship program, the Paul Mellon Centre for British Art, and the Kress Foundation.

thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. In particular, these chapters include a study of one of the great monuments of English gothic art: the Sherborne Missal, written and illuminated c.1400 for the Benedictine abbey of Sherborne (London, British Library Add. MS 74236).

In Part I of the thesis, Chapter 1 provides the theoretical background for what follows. Chapter 2 concentrates on the Sherborne Missal itself, beginning with an introduction to the manuscript and its design and illumination, with particular attention to the role of documentary themes and modes. The chapter includes an examination of the Missal's patronage and its representation, a subject I have also discussed in a related article ('Personal and Institutional Patronage in the Sherborne Missal', in *Patrons and Professionals in the Middle Ages*, ed. Paul Binski and Elizabeth New, Harlaxton Medieval Studies, N.S.: XXII, forthcoming).

Part II considers the representation of documents through the visual analysis of archival manuscripts and of an extended series of charters depicted in the Sherborne Missal. Chapter 3 discusses conventual cartularies, and the ways in which their formal characteristics constitute significant evidence for the reception of documents. The Sherborne Missal follows this visual interpretation of the archive a step further, by integrating an institutional archive into the decoration of a liturgical manuscript. Chapter 4 therefore examines the Sherborne Missal's document scheme in the context of archival manuscripts, in its capacity as a kind of embedded cartulary. The analysis investigates how this scheme both responds to and expands upon the abbey's archival tradition, especially through its interaction with the Missal's liturgy, codicology, and illumination.

Part III looks at cases in which representations of documents are incorporated into the materials of documentation themselves in a kind of self-reflexive commentary. Chapter 5 is a study of the late-medieval seal of Evesham abbey, which depicts the abbey's foundation charter—with imagined seal. (Appendix III provides a handlist of its recorded

and surviving impressions.) Chapter 6 discusses the form of the *vidimus* charter or *inspeximus*. An *inspeximus* charter's repetition and reconfirmation of a document also constitutes a kind of visual representation—a charter-within-a-charter, like Evesham's seal-within-a-seal. The chapter then considers the fourteenth-century *inspeximus* of Croyland Abbey as a particularly suggestive example (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1831).

Apart from in Chapter 1, which is broader in scope, the principal objects discussed come primarily from English religious institutions. The thesis as a whole therefore adds a diplomatic dimension to the scholarship of late-medieval monastic art; an art-historical dimension to monastic archival research; and a particularly monastic dimension to historical and literary studies of English documentary culture. The importance of documentation of course extends beyond the English conventual sphere, and the studies in this thesis represent only one especially illuminating example of where its arguments might lead. To this end, the Conclusion considers what some of these broader applications might be.

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### **RECORDS OF SHAP ABBEY, CUMBRIA, BY HARRY HAWKINS**

In 1998 I started work on collecting the records of and references to Shap Abbey, Cumbria (*MRB*, 4 (1998), p. 21). I completed the project in 2005 and have edited and collated the documents into book form as the *Records of Shap Abbey*.

The *Records of Shap Abbey* include English translations of the copies made by Dodsworth in the seventeenth century of charters from the original cartulary of the abbey, translations of original charters in the Lonsdale Papers, extracts from State Papers, Papal registers and bishops' registers and documents in private collections. The conventional format for publishing cartularies of religious houses has been largely followed but because the book contains material from a variety of sources charters are interspersed with other documents and references in chronological order. There is an introduction, a chapter on the founder, patrons and the move to Shap and a second chapter tracing the history of the abbey from its establishment at Shap to the Dissolution. There is a Person and Places Index.

The *Records* will not be published as book but is available from myself on a CD for £10 – the price reflects the cost of producing the CD and postage.

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**THE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF NATIONAL BIOGRAPHY:  
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**English bishops in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography:**

May 2011 marked the completion of a research project to include biographies in the *Oxford DNB* of every English bishop—from the Norman conquest to the Reformation. On first publication, in 2004, the *Oxford DNB* included the biographies of some 360 English bishops. Since 2007 regular updates to the *ODNB* online have added entries on a further 100 church leaders.

The *Oxford DNB* online now provides a complete, and unique, listing of the leaders of the pre-Reformation English church. Now, with a complete series in place, it becomes possible to study the medieval episcopate in the round—asking questions about bishops’ education, routes to power, relations with kings and popes, and so on.

***Researching the medieval church***

To mark the project’s completion, its editor, Dr Henry Summerson, explains what the full record can tell us about the diverse, and changing, social origins of the medieval episcopate. Were bishops Born to rule?

<http://www.oup.com/oxforddnb/info/freeodnb/shelves/episcopate/>

In addition, we offer a gallery of portraits selected from the biographies of the 460 medieval bishops now available in the *Oxford DNB*:

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Researchers can undertake their own enquiries via the *ODNB*’s People Search option—combining searches for bishops by date, place of birth, education, or for references to patronage, papal influence, and other themes.

***The late medieval religious in the Oxford DNB: a call for possible new subjects:***

We are looking to extend the coverage of the religious in the *Oxford DNB*.

The *Dictionary*’s coverage is reasonably complete to *c.*1300, and again for the period of the Dissolution. However, that for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is dominated by the mendicants, often chosen (such were the criteria behind the first edition of the *Dictionary*, and passed



on to its recent successor) for literary reasons - even though the works which justified their inclusion have usually been mostly, or even wholly, lost.

We now wish to redress the balance in favour of the monks, above all by adding to the number of articles on heads of houses, both male and female, as part of *ODNB* updates published in future years. Such people were often leading figures in the society in which they moved, and might even be of national consequence (some abbots were summoned to parliament). However, their importance is not always fully appreciated.

At a time when historians are taking a renewed interest in English monasticism in the late middle ages, we hope that additional articles in the *Oxford DNB* will both reflect and contribute to this reassessment. All suggestions for new subjects will be gratefully received, especially if they come accompanied by offers to write the proposed articles.

If you would like to suggest a new subject for the *Oxford DNB*, please contact Philip Carter, Publication Editor, [philip.carter@oup.com](mailto:philip.carter@oup.com) or 01865 355036.

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## RELIGIOUS MEN IN THE MIDDLE AGES

**6-8 July 2012 University of Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, UK**

This conference seeks to explore and re-evaluate medieval men's relationship with religion, both professed religious men and laymen of any faith. Despite their centrality to 'traditional' histories of the Middle Ages, many aspects of the lives and representation of medieval men remain relatively unexplored. Only recently have scholars begun to

consider what religion, belief and devotion meant to men *as* men and how these informed and intersected with other aspects of their identity (social status, gender, occupation, ethnicity, age, location, etc). We hope to publish a volume of essays based on a selection of the papers delivered at the conference.

Plenary speakers:

**Professor Michael L Satlow**, Professor of Religious Studies and Judaic studies, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, USA: ‘Antique and Early Medieval Rabbinic thought on constructions of masculinity and religiosity, with particular reference to Torah study’

**Dr Jennifer Thibodeaux**, Associate Professor in Women’s Studies and Anthropology, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater: ‘The disciplining of the Norman clergy and the engagement with celibacy as a defining feature of clerical identity in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries’

**Dr James Clark**, Reader in Late Medieval History, University of Bristol: ‘The attractions of the monastic life for English men between the Black Death and the Reformation’

The conference will be held at the University of Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, UK. It has been timed for the weekend before the Leeds IMC to allow international visitors to attend both. Leeds is a 20 minute train journey from Huddersfield. Huddersfield has good train connections to Manchester Airport which lies less than an hour away.

<http://www2.hud.ac.uk/about/visiting/>

The conference organisers are Dr Pat Cullum and Dr Katherine J. Lewis, editors of *Holiness and Masculinity in the Middle Ages*, (Cardiff, 2004)

For further information go to

<http://www2.hud.ac.uk/mhm/history/research/conferences/religiousmen.php>

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**ME FIERI FECIT:  
THE REPRESENTATION AND ROLE OF OWNERS, DONORS  
AND PATRONS IN MEDIEVAL ART**

**Friday 11th May 2012  
Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies, University of Kent  
at Canterbury**

**Keynote Speaker: Dr Julian Luxford, University of St Andrews**

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

Medieval art teems with examples of owners, donors or patrons whose presence is expressed in a variety of ways. Representation ranges in form, frequency and subtlety from heraldry, and actual portrayal, to choice of image subject matter. It is interesting to consider more closely the details of the owners, donors and patrons beyond mere identification and to explore the role and influence of the man or woman, lay or religious, upon the iconography employed in the artwork itself. The *'Me Fieri Fecit'* symposium seeks to generate discussion not only on the *who* but also the *why* of ownership, donorship and patronage of medieval art.



Themes for discussion might include, but are not limited to:

- Representation and portrayal
- Making a statement
- Motivations: personal, political, religious
- Use of evidence
- Religious versus lay
- Levels of influence
- Absence of presence in major works
- Gender trends
- Effects of giving & receiving on iconography
- Identity

This symposium welcomes proposals **from doctoral students and established researchers**. Expressions of interest and abstracts of 250

words, for a 20 minute paper, should be sent to Jayne Wackett at [jaw62@kent.ac.uk](mailto:jaw62@kent.ac.uk) by January 15th 2012.

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