

## **York-Norwich Medieval Studies Graduate Conference 2006:** **Programme**

### **Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> June**

#### **Session 1: Criminals, Whores and Bastards: Marginal Groups in the Late Middle Ages**

**Chair: Jayne Rimmer**

**14:00-15:30**

##### **Criminal masterminds? Forgers in fourteenth-century London**

**Catherine Casson**

Forgery of weights and measures in London in the period 1350-1400 provides an interesting insight into the operation of the London economy. The identity of the offenders, how they perpetrated forgery, the incentives for the forgery and the attitude of the authorities towards the offence will all be examined. Change over time can be perceived in the grouping of prosecutions relating to charcoal sellers in the 1370s, and the change by the fishmongers from committing weights and measures offences to falsifying nets in the 1380s. Prosecutions in the London courts provide the primary information.

Offenders acted in an organised regular manner (the fishmongers) and as individual regular offenders (charcoal sellers). Offences were committed either by the creation of artificially small non-standard weights or measures, or the alteration of existing standards - as with the brewers. Incentives for forgery included post-Black Death population movement and a toleration by the Crown and civic authorities of the use of local standards for local trade in perishable goods. Possible deterrents introduced included the economic specialisation of the London judicial system.

##### **Prostitution and social control in later Medieval London**

**Gemma Wheeler**

The situation with regard to prostitution in England differed somewhat from that found on the Continent during the later Middle Ages - rather than the municipal brothels found in Germany, France and some Italian states, English civic authorities tended to grudgingly accept prostitution, but to attempt to enforce restrictions upon prostitutes. These restrictions ranged from sumptuary laws (forbidding certain types of dress) to the geographical area they were permitted to live in.

The true purpose of the civic authorities in trying to enforce these laws is hinted at by unusual cases such as the prosecution of procuress Elizabeth Moring, who operated a brothel staffed with young girls under the guise of a 'broidery' business. The record of the case (by no means an unbiased and objective account) makes it plain that the case was seen as an example to others - but who were these others? The potential procuresses, or the vulnerable young women who were at risk of being drawn into the trade? Along with the evidence from the sumptuary codes, this paper will make a case for the punishment of prostitutes as an attempt to deter young girls from a life of sexual transgression.

##### **Good puddings and a grievous scandal: fathers and their illegitimate offspring in the Plumpton and Cely letters.**

**Rachel Moss**

This paper illuminates aspects of medieval fatherhood by focusing on the relationships between fathers and their illegitimate children. Using the Cely and Plumpton letters, it addresses questions about the nature of fatherhood in this period. Did men only consider themselves fathers if they

had legitimate children? What responsibility did they feel towards their bastards? Was the demarcation between legitimate and illegitimate offspring always clear? By analysing the language of the letters, I demonstrate that social conventions allowed for the subtle downplaying of the ties between fathers and bastards, both as an acknowledgment of fathers' shame and as a way for them to enforce the idea that bastards were not "proper" children. At the same time, however, men recognised and even welcomed these children, and often assisted them in establishing careers, as well as provided for them in material terms. Moreover, when it came to preserving the family name, social and legal conventions about bastardy could be overcome, as one startling case study shows. The father-bastard relationship has been neglected by scholarship, as it falls outside the norms of the household, but this difficult and complex set of ties reveals much of interest about men's attitudes towards fatherhood, and towards themselves.

## **COFFEE**

### **Session 2: Medieval Medical Theory and Practice**

**Chair: Chris Bonfield**

**16:00-17:30**

#### **Scent as a Therapeutic in Later Medieval England**

**Taryn Queree**

How medieval people thought scent affected the body and how it could be used as a therapeutic.

#### **Smell and Sight: The Senses and Health in the Later Middle Ages**

**Joy Hawkins**

My paper will show how the body was influenced by external factors, such as good and bad smells and sights. I will explore the medieval English concepts of physiology and ideas about health which found expression not only in the language of Church and State, but also found practical expression in the urban environment.

#### **The Fabric of Faith: The Spiritual Functions of Medieval Hospital Space**

**Louise Wilson**

The paper will discuss how the architecture of medieval hospitals reflected their changing spiritual function during the late medieval period. I will argue that late fourteenth-century and early fifteenth century alterations to hospital architecture provided evidence for a reorientation of religious priorities - rather than an increased 'secularisation' (as has previously been argued). This reorientation included the rejection of older forms of cenobitic monasticism in favour of a spirituality emphasising a more individualistic and introverted piety. The paper will focus primarily on the architecture of God's House, Ewelme and St Giles' Norwich.

## **Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> June**

### **Session 3: Material Evidence**

**Chair: Mike Reed**

**09:30-11:00**

#### **Name-stones as Manuscript Pages**

**Christine Maddern**

Insular name-stones are funerary monuments consisting of small rectangular slabs incised with a cross within a linear border. They appear to have been designed to be recumbent. Most include a name; a few include two names. Irish name-stones are usually incised in a half-uncial scribal hand common in Insular manuscripts of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, Northumbrian stones usually in one of three forms of Anglo-Saxon capital or in Anglo-Saxon runes, or a combination of the two. Some include other Christian symbols and/or a prayer formula. Name-stones vary in size between monastic centres, and the shape of their crosses display distinctive 'house styles'.

Northumbrian name-stones in particular are very small compared with later funerary memorials and include a very limited number of components. Questions therefore arise on the symbolical connection between their form and function. In size they are comparable to surviving Insular gospel books, psalters and missals. They can be seen as 'pages' (perhaps influenced by cross-carpet-pages) in liber vitae or as 'living stones' recording the lives of individuals as part of the church community. Finally, they reflect early medieval resurrection theology. This paper seeks to explore these ideas briefly and to stimulate discussion on them.

#### **Conversation by Hands: Gestures in the Bayeux Tapestry**

**John Mynott**

The Bayeux Tapestry's encapsulation of the Norman Conquest 1066 has made it one of the foremost pieces of medieval art. Its unique position as beautifully preserved embroidery increases its pre-eminence further. There are many ways in which the Tapestry communicates with its audience; foremost are the Latin commentary, running across the top of the Tapestry and the central images.

While the benefit of these two narratives is evident they do not explain everything that we see in the Tapestry, there are scenes which remain enigmas to the modern viewer. This is where a study of the gestures seen in the Tapestry can aid us. The hand and arm gestures in the tapestry are indicative of another more subtle narrative conversation, using them we are able to understand more about the events occurring within the Tapestry and hypothesis about the ambiguous scenes which we are currently unable to translate. This talk will show the benefits of unravelling the gestures in the Tapestry offering a more in-depth study into the actual conversations depicted within it. I intend to show how the usage of hands as a conversation tool can reveal hidden meanings and teach us more about the Tapestry.

#### **Iconography and Patronage in Norfolk Stained Glass: Some Questions**

**Claire Daunton**

In this paper I will give a brief introduction to the work of the Leverhulme-funded project, then about my own part in that project. I will take two examples of glass: one the outcome of gild patronage, the other the outcome of gentry patronage. I will look at the relationship between the images and the patrons; and, in relation to these two images, I will also talk a little about the problems of working in a field where so much direct evidence has been destroyed.

**COFFEE**

## **Session 4: Living in the Landscape**

**Chair: Louise Wilson**

**11:30-13:00**

### **The role of decision-making on the processes of famine**

**Alex Sapoznik**

Medieval rural life was for the most part one of hardship and adversity. Based on a complex system of cereal and animal husbandry, it was at once remarkably frail and surprisingly resilient. While the need to eat, to feed livestock, to carve out a living from the land, were all constant, the medieval peasant did not exist in a static state. What happened when this agricultural model broke down—when there is far too much or far too little rain, when summers are too hot and winters are too cold, when livestock could not be fed, when disease attacks crops and animals? Was the apparatus of agriculture manipulated to absorb or induce shock? This paper will focus on the ways in which changes in landholding patterns and varying uses of agricultural technology created situations in which famine was likely to occur, and how these patterns could reduce or increase the natural ability of the agricultural system to absorb shock.

### **Landscape, memory and custom in the Forest of Dean - c.1200-1625**

**Simon Sandall**

My paper will examine the use of mnemonic landscape features and inscription of the lived physical environment in the transmission of popular (or local) memory and customary law in this region. I intend to analyse the self-regulation of the free mining industry, particularly its relation with the Crown through whose authority these powers were defined. In so doing, I hope to demonstrate that, although this sense of customary space repressed linear readings of history, 'local' or 'peasant' memories cannot be represented solely in terms of cyclic seasonal or family historical awareness. Through reference to the uses of this past in defence of mining rights at the beginning of the seventeenth century, this paper hopefully addresses the complexity of the interplay between 'oral' and 'literate' historical record that legitimised such assertion.

### **Aspects of Historic Settlement Morphology in Huntingdonshire**

**Brendan Chester-Kadwell**

This paper will look at some of the issues around the development of historic settlement patterns in Huntingdonshire. It will draw on material from an extensive study of settlement morphology in the valley of the Great Ouse and how this impacts on current development decisions.

**LUNCH**

## **Session 5: The Man of Law's Tale**

**Chair: Bronach Kane**

**14:00-15:00**

### **Keepers of the Liberty: Stewards in Fourteenth Century England**

**Rob Kinsey**

From the thirteenth century nobles and heads of ecclesiastical institutions, in response to the expansion of royal justice and changes in crown policy, began to recruit professional men of law to aid them in the defence of their lands, liberties and franchises. Perhaps the principal legal official employed by the major religious houses to protect their interests in the courts was the 'steward of the liberty'. Focusing on some of the larger monastic houses in Eastern England, this

paper will investigate the little explored position of the steward of the liberty examining the functions of the office, the types of people who held it, and the reasons behind its emergence.

### **Great Yarmouth Court Process in the Fourteenth-Century**

**Janka Rodziewicz**

The legal processes of the Yarmouth borough court unavoidably intruded into the lives of the town's burgesses. Once a plea had been initiated the borough court had a number of processes at its disposal to bring about its resolution. Numerous other individuals with no direct connection to the complaint were required to play a role in these processes. The non-litigants who became entangled in the process of a plea were usually willing participants, involved through loyalty to a litigant or some legal office. Some less willing participants also, however, became trapped in the process. This paper shall discuss the roles of these willing and unwilling participants and the process of the borough court that linked them all.

## **COFFEE**

### **Session 6: Interpreting the Sacred and the Secular in Medieval Literature**

**Chair: Rachel Moss**

**15:15-16:15**

#### **In the Mirror, Across the Water: *Pearl's* River as *Speculum Vitae***

**Adrienne Odasso**

Few images in *Pearl*—in both the earthly framework and dream at the centre—are as painstakingly, yet ambiguously, detailed as the landscapes. From the 'erbere' where the narrator has lost his pearl ('þat spot of spyseȝ mot nedes sprede/þer such rycheȝ to rot is runnen') to the dream-landscape ('a foreste.../where rych rokkeȝ were to dyscreuen'), the poet describes these settings, physical or otherwise, with great care. Not unlike the nebulous border between waking and sleeping, 'a water by schore þat schereȝ' not only separates the dreamer from the Pearl-maiden, but also separates one landscape from the other—while simultaneously serving as a mirror that brings the dreamer's two worlds unexpectedly into alignment. In this paper, I will explore this reflective doubling effect in terms of the narrator's perception of his surroundings, of the Pearl-maiden, and of the river itself. The narrator's interaction with his surroundings prepares him for the delivery of the Pearl-maiden's wisdom and, ultimately, for waking. In this waking, the river itself plays a vital role, for the narrator's attempt to cross the water, from one side of the mirror to the other, is the act that rouses him. He is not successful, which is a comment on the validity of his claim that his 'joye watȝ sone toriuen' (which also bolsters his ironically lighthearted claim that 'man of happe more hente/þen moȝten by ryȝt vpon hem clyuen').

In addition to the mirroring effect that occurs in the early stages of the poem, a second mirroring occurs when the Pearl-maiden begins her apocalyptic description of the Holy City. The landscapes found in both the narrator's waking and dreaming worlds, merged into a single, compound setting, line up along the border between dream and allegory—this time without the benefit of river, mirror, or any reflective 'surface'. The contrast between the wild, natural world of the narrator's waking and dreaming lives and the pristine, orderly construction of the Holy City further reflects the disparity between the narrator's aspirations and what he actually achieves. This rift can be observed in even clearer relief by circling back to the central divider—the river—and observing the most obvious set of contradictions that it separates: the narrator and the Pearl-maiden themselves. In employing the river as an elegant (but blurred) line of separation feeding effortlessly into the Pearl-maiden's impartations, the poet reveals that life and all its attendant strivings bring us to a crossroads which, ultimately, the soul may transcend and the body cannot.

**‘The sunne shone in at her closet’: Marian Iconography in Late Medieval English Romance**  
**Chloe Morgan, University of York**

In this paper I will explore the ways in which late medieval English Romance makes use of traditions surrounding the iconographical representation of the Virgin. The use of Marian tropes, particularly to describe the appearance and behaviour of the heroine, is commonplace in romance. However, the contexts in which these comparisons occur frequently problematise their seemingly unambiguous connotations of moral and sexual purity.

Beginning by taking a brief look at some aspects of late medieval Marian devotion, I will go on to explore incidents from several romances, especially *The Squire of Low Degree* and *The Erle of Tolouse*, which draw upon these practices and conventions. I will pay particular attention to the rich visual and spatial elements of these literary re-positionings and re-imaginings of well-known iconographical tropes. In doing so, I will ask whether we are right to read these incidents as either reflecting or subverting institutional morality, or whether they are part of a more complex interrelation between the sacred and the secular.

**COFFEE**

**Session 7: Women and Power in the Middle Ages**

**Chair: Wanchen Tai**

**16:30-18:00**

**“Þeygi henni hendr skulfo”: Women and the Acquisition of Power in *Atlakviða* and *Atlamál***  
**Erin Goeres**

Two poems in the *Poetic Edda*, *Atlakviða* and *Atlamál*, describe the deaths of the Burgundian princes Högni and Gunnarr at the court of their brother-in-law, Atli, and their sister Guðrún’s subsequent revenge on her husband. However, despite their shared subject matter, the two poems differ greatly in their dates and places of composition. This paper explores the portrayal of Guðrún in the two poems and the ways in which women characters attempt to acquire the power to influence the events related. *Atlakviða* presents Guðrún as the woman avenger who destabilizes the male-dominated heroic world. In *Atlamál*, on the other hand, expected gender roles are inverted as Guðrún transforms into a female warrior and her husband adopts the conventionally female roles of revenge and incitement. The paper further considers how the portrayal of minor women characters in the poems comments on Guðrún’s actions. The paper concludes that both poems reveal a deep unease in medieval Scandinavian literature about women characters who challenge male and female gender divisions, reflecting a shift in the perception of gender roles that took place with the conversion to Christianity.

**From Consort to Queen Mother: An Examination of the Available Power in the Different Stages of a Queen’s Life Cycle**

**Lisa Benz**

This paper will examine the development of a queen’s power and authority as she transitions from her role as the king’s consort, to the mother of the heir to the throne. Scholars who have studied medieval queenship have argued that after the birth of an heir, the queen was able to exercise more power. In light of this argument, this paper will concentrate on a comparison of the demonstrative powers of Queen Isabella, the wife of Edward II, before she gives birth to Edward III, to her powers after his birth, through to her role as he becomes king. Through this comparison I will evaluate whether or not Isabella’s experiences follow the above argument. In doing so, I will place Isabella within the wider context of medieval queenship.

**‘a good huswyfe’: Women’s Work in a Fifteenth-Century Ballad**

**Kate McLean**

This paper proposes to address the theme of women's work in the household through the Middle English 'Ballad of A Tyrannical Husband'. This short text is extant in a single manuscript of the late fifteenth century. I will examine how the text may have been perceived, in particular, in regards to its genre and within the context of the urban household manuscript in which it is found. The unfinished text, falling somewhere between satire and English fabliau, witnesses a wife's lengthy rebuttal to her husband's accusations of her idleness and culminates in their literal reversal of roles. Unfortunately, we do not get to see the husband in the wife's working shoes, but the set up of the poem quite clearly indicates the wife's vindication and the husband's culpability of unfounded blame. The theme of the 'Ballad' is a well-known one, fitting into the medieval debate and discourse on women, or more generally as one folkloric tale of the battle of the sexes. However, this particular text, enjoyable though it is when read independently, may increase in significance for the medieval household when considered with its manuscript companions. This paper hopes to explore some of those possibilities.

## **Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> June**

### **Session 8: Constructing Medieval English Identity**

**Chair: Janka Rodziewicz**

**09:30-10:30**

#### **Representations of the English Nobility in *The Song of Lewes***

**Christine Donlan**

*The Song of Lewes*, the most important of the political poems dealing with the English Barons' War of 1264-5, is a valuable source for contemporary views of the nobility and of its rights and responsibilities. The anonymous author of *The Song of Lewes* presents the philosophies of both sides of the conflict in an unusually balanced and explicit manner not found in contemporary political songs, concluding that the rebelling barons are on the correct side of the argument. The king's leading subjects have a firm right to a place in his government, and they must enforce that right, even if they must resort to armed rebellion. This conclusion is echoed in other works of mid-thirteenth-century political theory, both academic and popular. *The Song of Lewes* is an excellent focal point for the study of popular thirteenth century expectations of the English nobility, showing that nobility was not defined by character or descent alone, but also by duty, responsibility, and the justice of one's actions.

#### **English and British Ethnicity in the Fourteenth century**

**Nick Williamson**

[No abstract currently available.]

### **COFFEE**

### **Session 9: Medieval Reconstructions of the Anglo-Saxon Past**

**Chair: Helen Birkett**

**10:45-11:45**

#### **Making a Saint: Edmund of East Anglia and the Construction of Sanctity**

**Rebecca Pinner**

Contemporary historical records for the reign of Edmund of East Anglia are scarce: a brief entry in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and a few coins minted during his reign. Yet despite this shadowy historical existence, Edmund the saint was an extremely complex figure. But because so little was known about *King* Edmund, the identity of *Saint* Edmund must necessarily be almost entirely constructed. And it is this process of construction with which I am concerned. I believe that determining the various ways in which Edmund's saintly character was imagined can enable us to better appreciate the changing manifestations of his cult and how this was understood by those responsible for its perpetuation.

In this paper I will discuss the extensive literary tradition concerning St Edmund which developed throughout the Middle Ages. I will focus on its culmination in the fifteenth century in John Lydgate's lavishly illustrated *Life of St. Edmund*. I will consider the extent to which the legend varies according to different historical, social, political and personal contexts and how Edmund's sanctity is remodelled and recast as a result.

[Title to be confirmed]

**Richard Maguire**

After Cnut failed to halt the incoming sea he made his way to Winchester and placed his crown on the cross that he and Ælfgifu had donated to the New Minster. The tale told by Henry of

Huntingdon in the *Historia Anglorum* (1154) may be apocryphal but clearly Henry considered that both parts carried meaning. In the first the limitation of Cnut's power is demonstrated by his mock battle with time and tide; in the second he performs an act of penance. This essay seeks, firstly, to establish a context for the events Henry describes and, secondly, attempts a nuanced account of their possible meanings. As represented on the frontispiece of the *Liber Vitae*, the New Minster cross follows the form of the Ottonian Lotharkreuz, but lacks its crucifixion iconography. Cnut's coronation of the cross, I will argue, is the crowning of the crucified Christ already performed on the Lotharkreuz and belongs to the same iconography, by gesture if not by image.

## **COFFEE**

### **Session 10: Modern Interpretation of the Middle Ages**

**Chair: Chris Bonfield**

**12:00-13:00**

#### **A Heresy Considered and Reconsidered: Changing Theories of Cathar Origin and Ideology**

**Gesine Oppitz-Trotman**

[No abstract available.]

#### **'The Flower of English Chivalry:' The Reinvention of Edward the Black Prince's Image as Warrior 1800-1903**

**Barbara Gribling**

This paper will explore how nineteenth-century nationalists transformed the image of Edward, the Black Prince (1330-1376), from a medieval hero of the European knighthood to a nineteenth-century English gentleman warrior. At this time, English nationalists presented the medieval prince Edward as a national hero. These historians, authors, artists and leaders used the Black Prince's image to promote their specific nationalist values and visions about the English nation and people. They did so by framing Edward as a gentleman: a key symbol of Englishness. This paper will focus on one aspect of Edward's gentlemanly persona, his image as military hero.

Edward the Black Prince became an English national hero because of his victories during the first half of the Hundred Years War. Nineteenth-century historians used terms such as the Hundred Years War to reframe this series of battles between England and France as part of a larger national struggle. The prince's name and deeds then became integrally linked with ideas of empire and imperialism in the nineteenth century. This paper will chart the rise of Edward's image as a nineteenth-century national war hero which culminated in the unveiling of a statue of the warrior prince in Leeds City Square in 1903.

**[Title to be confirmed]**

**Paul Sturtevant**

It has been argued that medievalism is often used to propagate a conservative or reactionary socio-political agenda, remembering back to a time when (supposedly) social, economic, gender, and religious roles and boundaries were desirably simpler. In medieval cinema, this is certainly no exception. Medieval films harkening back to the idealized chivalry and heroism of the Middle Ages has been used by as diverse a group as Stalin's communists (Eisenstein's *Aleksandr Nevskiy*), Franco's fascists (Mann's *El Cid*), and more dictators in the middle east (Lama's *Saladin*) to give a idealized historical precedent for their regimes.

This essay examines the three most recent medieval epic films to come out of Hollywood (*Kingdom of Heaven*, *Timeline*, and *Tristan & Isolde*), and seeks to examine them in the context of the current socio-political realities of America and the world, and whether they subtly or

overtly use the work of the medievalist to promote a message about contemporary culture and politics. It will focus on the issues of gender roles, 'freedom' and 'evil' as they are portrayed in these movies.

## **CONFERENCE DINNER**