

The Court Roll of the Manor of Wakefield, from 15 October 1658 to 16 September 1659. Edited by DAVID ASQUITH. Yorkshire Archaeological Society, vol. 18, Leeds, 2015. xviii + 182pp. £20.00 pbk. ISBN978-1-903564-47-9.

This volume is the eighteenth in a series established in 1974 that charts the remarkable manor court rolls of Wakefield at various points between 1331 and 1813. The series builds on five earlier volumes ranging from 1274 to 1331 published between 1901 and 1945. Each volume covers a period of two or three years. The publishing committee of the series have produced scholarly editions of details from Wakefield's manor court rolls over a variety of periods, making it the most ambitious and long-running project of this nature in England. The jurisdiction of Wakefield's manor court was also unusually large. From Normanton in the east to Heptonstall in the west, it encompassed well over a thousand tenants and covered up to 150 square miles across much of the West Riding of Yorkshire. The volume shows how the Courts Baron met at Wakefield every three weeks in this period, but owing to the vast size of the manor, the sessions of the 'view of frankpledge' or Court Leet were held twice yearly at Brighouse, Halifax and Kirkburton as well as at Wakefield. The lord of the manor was Christopher Clapham, a West Riding JP. Prior to 1630, the manor had formerly been crown land, but Clapham acquired it in 1658 from the trustees of the Earl of Holland, executed in 1649 for his ill-fated insurrection against the Long Parliament.

The edition provides a calendar or summary of cases on the engrossed roll that provided the official record of the court. The editor's introduction sets the material in context well, equipping the reader to tackle the text. Most of the court's business involved the transfer of copyhold tenancies, along with heriots, quitclaims, reversions and seizures. As well as the inheritance and transfer of land, the court also dealt with minor criminal matters and policed the enforcement of local custom. We find instances of the appointment of tutors and guardians, judgements on rights of way, orders for the maintenance of boundary fences and hedges, as well as the fining of scolds, debtors and assailants by the court. There are also fines for breaking pinfolds and fences, affrays over tolls, polluting town wells, digging up or pasturing cattle illegally on the commons, and washing clothes in the town spring at Halifax. The details in the rolls will interest social historians because they reveal the pattern of landholding and the sheer extent of minor office-holders across the manor such as jurors, graves and constables whose participation was required to make the system functional. There is also much of interest to agrarian historians, with some cases throwing light upon the economy of makeshifts that enabled many of the poor to subsist. Aside from the occasional mention of dyehouses and a dozen references to clothiers, there is surprisingly little in the rolls about the cloth trade which dominated this part of the West Riding during these years. However there are references to a landscape riddled with enclosures, which included mills, ditches, water-courses and stone-pits. The feoffees for the establishment of a preacher at Ripponden Chapel provide a reminder of the continued demand for godly sermons in the populous puritan parish of Halifax. There are also interesting references to the dealings in land of John Brearcliffe, Halifax's apothecary, whose personal papers survive in the West Yorkshire Archive Service at Halifax Central Library.

The appendices comprise a helpful glossary for non-specialists that includes some terms from the area's dialect, an index of individuals that will be helpful for family and surname historians and an index of place names that should prove valuable to local and landscape historians. The editorial method is clearly explained and appears to have been consistently applied. There are few slips in the scholarship, although, contrary to the claim in the glossary, Cromwell did not become head of state until nearly five years after the execution of Charles I. The edition might also have included a photograph of a sample from the engrossed roll to give the reader a clearer impression of the appearance and palaeography

of the document. It has been asserted that in some localities the authority of the manor court was seriously undermined by the experience of civil wars and revolution, but the meticulous and voluminous record keeping for the case of Wakefield suggests otherwise. This volume provides a welcome addition to the series, helping to cement Wakefield's reputation for its unrivalled series of manor court rolls and providing us with a window into local society during the last months of the English republic.

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