SOME INTERNET RESOURCES FOR MEDIEVAL GENEALOGY: 9

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The Anglo-Norman Dictionary

This important reference resource is now available at the Anglo-Norman On-Line Hub website (***www.anglo-norman.net***). The dictionary relates to the form of French used in medieval England (which the Introduction suggests would be more accurately called Anglo-French). It is in several sections - entries for A-E come from the second printed edition (2000-2006), those for F from an unprinted revision, and those for G-Z from the first edition (1977-1992). Those for G and H are also to be revised.

Primary sources online

Complementing the increased availability of older published source material through Google Book Search and similar facilities, a number of projects are in progress to provide Internet access to hitherto unpublished documents, in the form of abstracts, translations, scanned images or a combination of these. Details of four such projects are given below.

(1) Abstracts of Feet of Fines

The official records of land conveyance known as Feet of Fines have always been an important source of information for those tracing medieval English genealogy. They are particularly useful because they often record family settlements, and can therefore preserve a great deal of genealogical information, and also because married women frequently appear as parties. Although many of these records have been published, most editions have been collections for individual counties, so that coverage is rather haphazard. Thanks to a very generous offer of sponsorship, I have been able to begin work on a project to make abstracts of the records that have not yet been published, initially for the period 1360-1509.

The abstracts are available, together with some background information and a bibliography of published editions of feet of fines, at ***www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk/fines/index.shtml***.

So far nearly 1400 documents have been abstracted, mainly for counties in western England. The abstracts can be searched for place names and personal names - original spellings have been retained, but suggested modern equivalents have also been provided as a finding aid. One point to note is that, in addition to the parties and those with a life interest in the property, the agreements sometimes mention subtenants, who often hold no more than a single dwelling house and a small piece of land, so there is potential for finding peasant ancestors as well as the wealthier holders of freehold property.

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(2) The Henry III Fine Rolls Project

Genealogists are fortunate that calendars of the main series of English public records have been published for most of the medieval period. One exception has been the Fine Rolls for the reign of Henry III (1216-1272), of which only excerpts were published by the Record Commission in the 19th century. A collaborative project between the National Archives and King's College, London, is now under way to produce a calendar of these records. Over the first three years the period 1216-1248 will be covered, and it is hoped to complete the work in a further three-year period.

The English calendar will be published on paper, but the text will also be provided freely online, accompanied by colour images of the documents themselves. Draft calendars and images for the period 1216-1234 are already available on the project's website (***www.finerollshenry3.org.uk***), together with images of the rolls (Adobe Flash Player is required).

In the future it is planned to provide a dedicated search facility for the calendar. This is not available yet, but the text can be searched using Google, by adding the qualifier *site:finerollshenry3.org.uk*. (Place names and surnames have been modernised as far as possible, so that spelling variations shouldn't present a problem.)

(3) Ancient Petitions

In collaboration with the University of York, the National Archives is also making available through its website monochrome images (in PDF format) of the "ancient petitions" in the series SC 8 (***www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline/petitions.asp***). These date from the 13th to 17th centuries, though most are from the late-13th to the mid-15th centuries. They are mostly in French, and of course reading them does require some experience of medieval script. However, the images are accompanied by abstracts of the documents, accessible through the online catalogue of the National Archives, and this also means that the user can search for place names and personal names. Images and abstracts for over 14,000 petitions are already online.

(NB The images are currently provided through the National Archives DocumentsOnline service, and although access to them is free, it's necessary to follow the usual "shopping cart" procedure to download them. This includes opting to pay by credit card, but in fact the only information required is a valid email address.)

[Thanks to John Watson for posting this information on the *soc.genealogy.medieval* newsgroup.]

(4) Domesday Book

Of course, the Domesday Book has been very thoroughly published over the last few centuries - in transcript, translation and facsimile - but the National Archives has now made colour images of the manuscript (in PDF format) and English translations available on its website as part of its pay-per-view DocumentsOnline service (***www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline/domesday.asp***).

The images and translations are those previously published on paper by Editions Alecto - they cover both Great and Little Domesday. There is a facility to search by place name and/or personal name, or else a folio number can be specified. A range of background information, including a glossary and a bibliography, is available on the same website.