

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

# The Anglo-Saxon chancery

ANGLO-SAXON, NORSE, AND CELTIC TRIPOS, PART II, PAPER 1

Professor S. D. Keynes

## Course description and provisional scheme of lectures 2011–12

This course involves the study of Anglo-Saxon charters (documents recording royal grants of land and privileges to ecclesiastics, religious houses and laymen), from their introduction in the seventh century to the Norman Conquest. It also involves the study of various other forms of written document produced in the Anglo-Saxon period, such as vernacular wills, records generated in the context of legal proceedings, acts of legislation, and royal writs.

### **Major themes**

Attention will be given to the form and content of royal charters, and to the techniques available for establishing the authenticity (or otherwise) of the extant corpus of texts, whether preserved in single-sheet form or in later copies (cartularies, enrollments, antiquarian transcripts, etc.). We shall consider the changing circumstances of their production during the Anglo-Saxon period, including evidence for the production of charters in the scriptoria of religious houses, by ecclesiastics operating on the occasion of meetings of the king and his councillors, or by scribes who may (or may not) be presumed to have been attached in some sense to the king's household. We shall also consider the value of charters for historical purposes, for example as evidence of particular political, social and ecclesiastical developments. The other types of written document will be approached within this general context. For example, we shall examine the form and substance of vernacular wills, and use them to reconstruct the family connections and material wealth of particular members of the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy. We shall also consider the use of the written word in royal government, and its place in Anglo-Saxon society as a whole.

### **Primary sources and secondary reading**

The reading list for this course is extracted from S. Keynes, *Anglo-Saxon England: a Bibliographical Handbook for Students of Anglo-Saxon History*, 7th ed. (2006), section B (B320, etc.), section M (M200, etc.), section Q (Q125, etc.), section R (R40, etc., and R155, etc.), and section S (S44–7). <See also P90, etc.> Copies will be distributed and discussed in the first lecture of the Michaelmas Term. An introductory reading list for the paper is available on the Departmental website ([www.asnc.cam.ac.uk](http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk)).

### **Organisation of teaching**

The basic teaching for the course will consist of a series of 16 lectures or classes (8 in the Michaelmas Term and 8 in the Lent Term), with 4 additional classes or seminars

in the Easter Term. All of the lectures will be supported by handouts, which are designed to provide you with your own copies of important historical texts, with facsimiles of selected documents, and with other illustrative material. It is expected that you will cover parts of the subject on your own initiative, by reading and taking notes in any time available during term and during the vacations. Guidance for further reading will be provided (see above).

The teaching in the Michaelmas Term focusses on the form, content, and criticism of Anglo-Saxon royal diplomas, leading to two lectures at the end of term on the circumstances of their production. The teaching in the Lent Term focusses on the use that can be made of charters for historical purposes. There is provision in the Easter Term for seminars on subjects of particular interest to the class, and for discussion of burning issues.

### **Other resources**

A major resource for the study of Anglo-Saxon charters is the 'Kemble' website. For further details, see the reading list, B332.

### **Supervision**

In common with other Part II special subjects, there is not intended to be any provision for separate supervisions. SDK is always happy to offer guidance for private study, whether informally or in the weekly classes. There will be further opportunity for discussion, or for raising any matters of difficulty, in the four classes scheduled for the Easter Term. If any supervisions are arranged, for revision purposes, in the Easter Term, they will be for the group as a whole.

### **Examinations**

There will be a single three-hour examination paper. You will be required to answer four questions. The first question will be a 'gobbets' question (as in ASNC Tripos, Part I, Paper 1), and will be compulsory. For past papers, see the Departmental website.

Should you have any queries about any aspect of the course, you should approach SDK after lectures, or in his rooms in Trinity College (D1 Great Court), or via e-mail (sdk13@cam.ac.uk).

*Lectures will take place in the English Faculty Building, unless otherwise stated.*

**Michaelmas Term 2011**  
THE ANGLO-SAXON CHANCERY

*Wednesdays at 12 noon*

**1. General introduction**

*Recommended reading.* Stevenson (M219), available only on the Kemble website. Essential guidance: Stenton (M220), Whitelock (M220), Chaplais (M225), Brooks (M222); entries in Lapidge, *et al.* (A100), pp. 94–5 and 97–100. For the British Academy-Royal Historical Society edition of charters, see B342, and peruse introductions and commentaries in Dr Kelly's editions of the charters of Shaftesbury (B271), Abingdon (B281), etc.

**2. The nature of the evidence**

*Recommended reading.* Vinogradoff (P90), Turner (P91), etc.

**3. Anglo-Saxon royal diplomas: naming of parts**

*Recommended reading:* Kelly (B271), pp. xxi–xxii, on Shaftesbury. Kelly (B281), on Abingdon.

**4. The use of charters as historical evidence**

*Recommended reading.* Charters in EHD (B1), nos. 54–135.

**5. Criticism of charters, I: charters on single sheets**

*Recommended reading:* Chaplais (M221). Keynes (J23), pp. 4–13. A classified list of charters preserved in single-sheet form is available on the charters website. Digital images of all charters in the British Library are currently on order, and will be added to the website.

**6. Criticism of charters, II: cartulary copies**

*Recommended reading:* For archival criticism, see Keynes (J23), pp. 6–13, with particular reference to Abingdon; but cf. Kelly (B281), on Abingdon.

**7. Production of charters, I: 'centralised' production**

*Recommended reading:* Keynes, *Bibliographical Handbook*, Section M. For the production of charters in ecclesiastical scriptoria, or by ecclesiastics, see Chaplais (M225, M227). For the production of charters by royal scribes, and also (in certain circumstances) by ecclesiastics, see Keynes (M226, G96). For recent contributions to the debate, with partial reversion to production in ecclesiastical scriptoria, see Kelly (M230); see also Insley (M229), and Miller (M231).

**8. Production of charters, II: the 'royal writing office'**

*Recommended reading:* Keynes, *Bibliographical Handbook*, Section M. For the Carolingian background, see Nelson (M201), and McKitterick (M200). For 'pragmatic' literacy, see Parkes (M202), Wormald (M205), and Clanchy (M206); for

the Fonthill Letter, see M170. Use of the written word in ASE: Kelly (M210), Keynes (M212).

## **Lent Term 2012**

### **1. Historical applications, I: the eighth century**

*Recommended reading.* Keynes, *Bibliographical Handbook*, Section E. For Cotton Otho A.i, see E37. Kelly (P42), on ship-toll charters. Cubitt (Q27), on church councils. On the kingdom of Kent, see Yorke (C137), and Kelly (B291), pp. 195–203. On the kingdom of Sussex, see Kelly (B293), pp. lxxiii–lxxxiv.

### **2. Historical applications, II: the ninth century**

*Recommended reading.* Keynes, *Bibliographical Handbook*, Section F. Relevant sections in Yorke (A9) and Kirby (A10); see also Wormald (F5), pp. 135–44. On ninth-century West Saxon charters, see Keynes (F10) and Crick (F13). Thacker (N43), on terminology for nobility. On the control of Kent, see Keynes (F6). Keynes (F7) is available in typescript. Ninth-century West Saxon charters: EHD no. 88 (charter of King Æthelwulf for himself). Ninth-century Kentish charters: EHD nos. 83, 89, 93. Ninth-century Mercian charters: EHD nos. 85–7, 90–2, 94–5.

### **3. Charters of King Æthelstan (924–39)**

*Recommended reading.* Keynes, *Bibliographical Handbook*, Section G, esp. G50. EHD nos. 103 (Æthelstan, ‘king of the Anglo-Saxons’) and 104 (charter of ‘Æthelstan A’). Wood (G64). Keynes (G5), pp. 466–71; Gretsche (G208), pp. 334–5; Wormald (M160), pp. 306–8 and 432–40. Keynes (G75) is forthcoming.

### **4. The ‘alliterative’ charters and the ‘Dunstan B’ charters**

*Recommended reading.* EHD no. 105 (alliterative charter of King Eadred). Hart (G95); Keynes (G96). Keynes (G5), pp. 471–6; see also entries on Archbishop Wulfstan and Bishop Coenwald in A100.

### **5. Charters of King Eadwig (955–9)**

*Recommended reading.* Hart (G90), pp. 582–5, on Æthelstan Half-King’s retirement in 956 [*sic*]. Hart (G95); Keynes (G96). Keynes (J23), pp. 48–69; Keynes (G5), pp. 476–9.

### **6. Charters of King Edgar (957–75)**

*Recommended reading.* Keynes (J23), pp. 69–79; Keynes (G5), pp. 479–83. On the authenticity (or otherwise) of the ‘Orthodoxorum’ charters (Q127): Keynes (J23), pp. 98–102, with references; Kelly (B281), vol. 1, pp. lxxxiv–cxv. For the New Minster charter, see Q125.

### **7. Vernacular documents**

*Recommended reading.* <Vernacular charters.>

## **8. Anglo-Saxon writs**

*Recommended reading.* For texts and translations of entire corpus, see Harmer (B350); see also Chaplais (M225), and Keynes (Q95), pp. 214–17. For facsimiles of surviving originals, see Bishop and Chaplais (B351). For the Saint-Denis writ and diploma, see Keynes (B337), nos. 20–1. For Regenbald, see Keynes (Q95). For Giso, see Keynes (Q96). For Anglo-Norman writs, see Bates (R155).

## **Easter Term 2012**

The content of the four scheduled sessions in the Easter Term is a matter which will be discussed at the end of the Lent Term, when we will consider work for the vacation and for the first half of the next term. You may wish to ask me to talk about matters not covered in the Michaelmas and Lent Terms; or you may wish to have an opportunity to discuss anything arising from your own reading and revision; or you may wish to work through gobbets and essay questions on some recent examination papers.