The Anglo-Saxon chancery

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

Course Description and
Provisional scheme of lectures
2017–18

SDK is on leave in the Michaelmas Term 2017 and in the Lent Term 2018. The teaching will be provided initially by David Woodman and Albert Fenton; SDK will take the group therapy sessions in the Easter Term 2018.

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 might examine the form and substance of vernacular wills, and see how they can be used 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
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. An updated version of these sections will be made available in the Michaelmas Term. An introductory reading list for the paper is available on the Departmental website (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 focusing on the circumstances of their production. The teaching in the Lent Term focuses 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, in the form of images, or with text and translation), 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, or in his rooms in Trinity College (D1 Great Court), or via e-mail (sdk13@cam.ac.uk).

Provisional scheme of lectures
1. Introduction – essential reading, and some general principles (esp. archival)
2. ‘Bookland’ and ‘folkland’
3. Anglo-Saxon royal diplomas – the naming of parts
4. The use of charters as historical evidence – range of issues; what is at stake?
5. ‘Performatve’ charters (two-stage / single-stage)
6. Controlling the corpus: a conspectus of Anglo-Saxon charters
7. Production of charters, I: ‘centralised’ production, with scope for improvisation
8. Production of charters, II: the ‘royal writing office’, and why it matters
1. Understanding the seventh and eighth centuries
2. Understanding the ninth century
3. The charters of King Æthelstan (924–39), featuring ‘Æthelstan A’
4. The ‘alliterative’ charters; the ‘Dunstan B’ charters; the charters of Eadwig (956–9)
5. The charters of King Edgar (957–75) – ‘Edgar A’; New Minster Charter 966
6. Diplomas of King Æthelred the Unready <more on Eadwig and Æthelred in Easter Term?>
7. Vernacular documents (law-codes, shire courts, chirographs, and wills)
8. Anglo-Saxon writs, and the documentary culture of the 10th and 11th centuries