

DAVID CROUCH, ed., *The Metham Family Cartulary: Reconstructed from Antiquarian Transcripts* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press for Yorkshire Archaeological and Historical Society Record Series, Vol. 167, 2022. £30 [hardback]. 384 pp. ISBN: 9781916506633)

The Methams of Yorkshire were a leading gentry family in the medieval period, whose origins can be traced back to Howden Minster in the twelfth century. When Thomas Metham commissioned the creation of the cartulary in c.1405, the family's estates spanned across the East Riding and Vale of York. As this edition reveals, the Methams were involved in many of the pivotal events of the late medieval period, such as the civil wars between the king and Simon de Montfort (d.1265) and Thomas, earl of Lancaster (d. 1322), and the Anglo-Scottish wars. In 2014, David Crouch described the late medieval cartulary that disappeared after 1680 as the 'greatest loss' to the Methams' family archive because it contained an estimated 1,200 deeds over 250 folios.¹ His latest offering, a scholarly edition of this cartulary based on antiquarian transcripts, reconstructs the text of some 700 of these deeds. The work also offers a detailed introduction that is split into nine parts, which discusses the text's history, the sources for the edition, the disappearance of the original manuscript, the antiquarians' relationships with the manuscript and their copies, and Crouch's approach to reconstructing the 'Metham Archive'. The edition itself provides material from the opening flyleaves, the main text of the cartulary, and the endpapers. There are also a further three appendices: the full text of the calendared deeds, a family history to 1416, and a discussion of the widowhood of Sybil Metham (née Hambleton), who was abducted after the death of John Metham for her claim to the considerable portfolio of properties created by her marriage to John. Therefore, the volume is packed with material that will undoubtedly be of great value to many future scholars.

What first strikes the reader when perusing this volume is the enormous amount of work that Crouch has put into this edition. The text of the cartulary has been constructed from eight manuscript sources held by five different libraries and archives. In most cases the editor has given preference to James Torre's English version of the text and Dr Nathaniel Johnston's Latin abstracts (if they proved more detailed than Torre's version), preserved in the Bodleian's MS Top. Yorks b 14 and MS Top. gen. c56 respectively. These transcripts evidently brought diverse challenges to this project, as Crouch notes that Torre only had a limited knowledge of Latin and medieval dating clauses. Meanwhile, he describes Johnston's handwriting as 'abominable' and in need of a 'minor Rosetta Stone' to help 'decode' the mysteries of his transcript (p. xl). Crouch even provides photographic evidence of this, should the reader doubt his assertions (p. xlii). In other places, where Torre and Johnston's works are less revealing, the editor interweaves deeds and other information from the other manuscripts to form the most comprehensive reconstruction of the cartulary as possible. I particularly liked how deletions to the text have been shown using strikethrough text to give the reader a sense of how the text is presented in the transcripts. This edition also benefits from the copious notes Crouch has appended to the entries, which contain nuggets of information about a property's location or its landholding history, and point to further documentary evidence, or draw links to other entries in the cartulary.

This volume therefore offers a considerable contribution to present scholarship and scholars from many disciplines will find items of interest in the cartulary, from environmental historians searching for information about land use, linguists interested in naming practices, ecclesiastical historians investigating the property portfolio of prelates like the bishops of Durham, and much more. Indeed, the opening flyleaves contain a genealogy of the Bruce

¹ David Crouch, 'Caville Manor and the Enterprise of the Twelfth-Century Bishops of Durham', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 86.1 (2014), pp.124-137 (p.131).

family up to the reign of David II, which will be of note for those researching Anglo-Scottish relations. My only quibble with the volume is the editor's discussion of the connection between the cartulary's structure and the Metham family archive in the introduction. Crouch writes that the 'underlying primitive order' must have reflected the disorganisation of the archive itself because the cartulary contrasts the systematic organisation of other private cartularies, such as that of the Beauchamp earls of Warwick (p. xlv). However, recent scholarship has highlighted that cartularies often did not represent a transcript of an archive, but ought to be understood as a constructed 'text'. As Joanna Tucker argues, scribes were selective about what they copied and deliberate in their organisation of the cartulary's content, even if their logic is not apparent to modern readers.² Perhaps this distinction should be considered in future work on the cartulary, even if we cannot fully understand how medieval readers interacted with the text because no medieval manuscript copy survives. Despite this, the work offers a significant scholarly contribution that will be of use to researchers from a range of disciplines and I heartily recommend it as a resource for future work.

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² Joanna Tucker, 'Understanding Scotland's medieval cartularies', *Innes Review*, 70. 2 (2019), pp. 135-170 (pp.156-7).