

HPHI 7016: Past Peoples, Present Societies

Fall 2021

Sarah Wolek

Assessment 3: Dating Exercise (Medieval)

For this exercise, I summarized the medieval date expressed in the excerpt, along with any key names, holidays, places, etc that would help place the event in modern terms. I listed what I believe to be the modern equivalent and an explanation of the methodology & sources used to determine the modern date.

(a): *Memorandum that the Thursday after the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the 8th year of King Richard II the abbot of Byland was accused in the wapentake court held at Pickering.*

Medieval Date: 8th regnal year of King Richard II on the Thursday after the Assumption of Mary

Modern Equivalent: 18 August 1384

Methodology: I was able to find Richard's 8th regnal year ran from 22 June 1384-21 June 1385.¹ The Assumption of Mary is given as the 15th of August.² In Richard's 8th regnal year, this would have been 15 August 1384, which was a Monday, so the following Thursday was 3 days later.³

(b): *Confirmation by Bishop Anian of St Asaph of the charters for Shrewsbury Abbey issued by his predecessors Bishops Reiner, Abraham, and Hugh. Given at Shrewsbury the day after St Mary Magdalene in the first year of his pontificate.*

Medieval Date: 1st year of Bishop Anian's pontificate on the day after St. Mary Magdalene

Modern Equivalent: 23 July 1250

Methodology: The Feast of Mary Magdalene is fixed as 22 July.⁴ According to the *Handbook of British Chronology*, Anion was consecrated as bishop of St. Asaph in November of 1249, and the three former bishops mentioned in the passage are also listed, which helps confirm that I have the right Bishop Anian.⁵ There is a second Bishop Anian listed for St. Asaph, but I am going to assume I have the correct individual since the passage does not claim it was Bishop Anian II or mention Anian as a predecessor. Based on this, the first feast of Mary Magdalene after Anian's consecration would have been the following year, in 1250.

¹ *Handbook of British Chronology* 3rd ed., ed. by E.B. Fryde, et al (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1986), p. 21.

² *Handbook of Dates for Students of English History* No. 4, ed. by C.R. Cheney (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1955), p. 55.

³ *Dates*, p. 123.

⁴ *Dates*, p. 55.

⁵ *Chronology*, p. 295.

(c): *Downham: court held on Thursday the day after Ash Wednesday in the fourth year of the reign of King Edward and the first year of the episcopate of John de Ketene [Ketton]*

Medieval Date: 4th regnal yr of King Edward & 1st year of Bishop John de Ketene on the Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Modern Equivalent: 25 February 1311

Methodology: King Edward's 4th regnal year spanned 20 Nov 1275-19 Nov 1276.⁶ I know that Ash Wednesday always precedes Easter, so this event happened in the spring. Ash Wednesday of 1276 occurred on 18 February.⁷ However, John Ketton was not consecrated as Bishop of Ely until 6 Sept 1310.⁸ Going back to my *Handbook of Dates*, I see that Edward II was on the throne in 1310; his 4th regnal year, which spanned from 8 July 1310-7 July 1311, so the King referenced is likely Edward II.⁹ Ash Wednesday in 1311 was 24 February.¹⁰ I tried to find that Edward II held court in Downham in February 1311 as additional support but have not been able to confirm that.

(d): *Henry, king of the English, greets the bishop of Lincoln and Earl David...*

Medieval Date: none listed

Estimated Date of Issue: January 1121 – April 1123

Methodology: As no dates, holidays, events, or any references to a day are given in this passage, the date of issue will need to be worked out by researching the individuals listed. Since regnal years are the easiest to look up, I started with the years when Henry was on the throne:

From the *Handbook of Dates*:¹¹

Henry I: 1100-1135	Henry IV: 1399-1413	Henry VII: 1485-1509
Henry II: 1154-1189	Henry V: 1413-1422	Henry VIII: 1509-1547
Henry III: 1216-1272	Henry VI: 1422-1461 & 1470-1471	

From the *Handbook of British Chronology*, I was able to find 3 Earls of Chester named Rannulf:¹²

- Ranulph le Meschin (created earl c. 1120/21, died c. 1129)
- Ranulph 'de Gernon' (born before 1100, died 1153)
- Ranulph 'de Blundeville' (received livery of his lands c. 1188, died in 1232)

These lists only overlap during the reigns of Henry I or III, which significantly narrows down the timeline. From there, I searched for other individuals listed in the passage. Working from the start, I googled the phrase "Bishop of Lincoln and Earl David" to see if anything came up. The Journal *The English Historical*

⁶ *Dates*, p. 20.

⁷ *Dates*, p. 112.

⁸ *Chronology*, p. 244.

⁹ *Dates*, p. 20.

¹⁰ *Dates*, p. 124.

¹¹ *Dates*, pp. 18-24.

¹² *Chronology*, p. 454.

Review had a match in an issue detailing the itinerary of Henry I, which turned out to also be the passage in question and confirmed that the event happened during his reign.¹³

The journal article did not provide a specific date for the passage, but it does provide a range for when the event occurred.¹⁴ The document is listed as having been issued at Windsor in the timeframe between 1120-1123.¹⁵ To try and further narrow down the event, I continued searching for names and came across the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (DNB).

The DNB had an article entitled “Henry I’s new men” and many of the individuals listed in the passage are mentioned.¹⁶ I was able to learn that Geoffrey Ridel died on 25 November 1120 on the White Ship.¹⁷ The passage does reference the lands that Geoffrey Ridel “held”, suggesting that he was dead by this time. This information further narrows the possible date of the passage to be no earlier than 25 Nov 1120.

Further searching of the other individuals was unable to return a more specific date for the passage. Robert was earl of Leicester from 1118-1168, which does not narrow the range.¹⁸ I was not able to find any further information on Robert Ridel, so he may have died before he could be knighted and take back his father’s lands.

Interestingly, I did come across an article published by the *Institute of Historical Research* in 2018 which claims the passage from this Assessment was a forgery used to support that the Ridel lands were lawfully given to Basset! A footnote in the article mentions that Henry I resumed business following the sinking of the White Ship in early 1121 and left for Normandy in 1123, so that did provide some more detail to date the passage.¹⁹ I was unable to locate a copy of the source cited in this article to verify the dates directly, but I believe the journal to be reputable and reliable. The *Itinerary* states that Henry was in France by April of 1123 when he besieges Brionne.²⁰ These events and the earlier details uncovered have led me to my final modern date estimation.

¹³ W. Farrer, ‘An Outline Itinerary of King Henry I: Part II’, *English Historical Review*, 34(136) (1919) p. 530. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/XXXIV.CXXXVI.505> [accessed 6 November 2021].

¹⁴ W. Farrer, ‘An Outline Itinerary of King Henry I’, *English Historical Review*, 34(135) (1919), p. 303. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/XXXIV.CXXXV.303> [accessed 6 November 2021].

¹⁵ W. Farrer, ‘Itinerary Part II’, p. 530.

¹⁶ H.F. Doherty, “Henry I’s new men”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2009) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/95593> [accessed 7 November 2021].

¹⁷ Judith A. Green, “Ridel, Geoffrey”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2008) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/23617> [accessed 7 Nov 2021].

¹⁸ *Chronology*, p. 468.

¹⁹ D.X. Carpenter, ‘The marriage of Richard Basset: an undetected forgery in the name of Henry I’, *Historical Research*, 91(252) (2018), p. 399. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2281.12227> [accessed 7 November 2021].

²⁰ W. Farrer, ‘Itinerary Part II’, p. 534.

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