

HPHI7016 – Assessment 3 - Dating Exercise

Chris Dixon – 2114844

This assessment requires the dating of 4 extracts of medieval text.

Section (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.'

The year is identified as the 8th of the reign of King Richard II. Richard II came to the throne on 22nd June 1377¹ so the 8th year of his reign was between 22nd June 1384 and 21 June 1385.

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is celebrated on August 15th². In 1384 this was a Monday³ so the Thursday following this is Thursday 18th August 1384.

My answer therefore is: **Thursday 18th August 1384**

¹ *A Handbook of Dates*, edited by C.R.Cheyney, Revised by Michael Jones, New Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004, p35.

² *A Handbook of Dates*, p78.

³ Time and Date AS, *Calendar*, 1998 <https://www.timeanddate.com/calendar/>, [Accessed 22nd October 2021]

Section (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'

A list of bishops of St Asaph ⁴ reveals that there were in fact two bishops named Anian. The first was appointed in 1249 and was bishop until 1266, the other was appointed in 1268. The text also mentions the bishops' predecessors Reiner, Abraham and Hugh. These bishops were appointed in 1186, 1225 and 1235 respectively. A useful, but unofficial, website⁵ with huge detail about Roman Catholic bishops throughout Europe records bishop Hugh's appointment as 1233 and his ordaining as 1235. The site also includes further details about the precise dates (not just the years) and identifies the first Anian as being appointed on September 27th 1249.

I have decided that, although the three other bishops mentioned are predecessors for both the bishops named Anian, it is far more probable that the text refers to the first of them. I am also going to rely on the more detailed date information ⁶. The first year of Bishop Anian's pontificate was therefore 27th September 1249 to 26th September 1250.

The feast day of St Mary Magdalen is July 22nd ⁷ (a Friday in 1250).

My answer is therefore: **Saturday July 23rd 1250**

⁴ Diocese of St Asaph, *Bishops of St Asaph*, c2020, < <https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Bishops-of-St-Asaph.pdf> > [Accessed 22nd October 2021]

⁵ The Hierarchy of the Catholic Church, *Diocese of St Asaph*, c2013, < <https://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/ds592.html> >. Accessed 22nd October 2021]

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ *A Handbook of Dates*, p78.

Section (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]’

It is not initially clear to which King Edward the text refers. The best way of resolving this difficulty is to focus first on the episcopate of John de Ketene but we are not told of which diocese he was bishop. I decided to search first British History Online⁸ for matches to “John de Ketene” which revealed that he was bishop of Ely between 1310 and 1316. This established that the King referred to is King Edward II whose 4th regnal year was July 8th 1310 to July 7th 1311.

Easter in 1311 was April 11th⁹, Ash Wednesday is 46 days before this therefore February 24th 1310 (old style) and the Thursday following is February 25th.

My answer is therefore: **Thursday 25th February 1310/11 (Old style/New style dates)**

⁸ British History Online, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/fasti-ecclesiae/1300-1541/vol4/pp13-16> [Accessed 22/10/2021]

⁹ Handbook of Dates

Section (d)

'Henry, king of the English, greets the bishop of Lincoln and Earl David and the earl of Leicester, and Earl Rannulf of Chester, and all the barons and lords of whom Geoffrey Ridel held lands, and all the sheriffs within whose jurisdiction he held them. Know that I have given to Richard Basset the daughter of Geoffrey Ridel to wife, and the custody of Geoffrey Ridel's land until Robert Ridel can be made a knight and marry the granddaughter of Ralph Basset, namely the daughter of one of his daughters. ... And this gift and compact have been made at the request and with the advice of Rannulf, earl of Chester, and William his brother, and Nigel d'Aubigny and Robert Ridel's other kin and Geva his mother, and Geoffrey the earl's chancellor, and Simon, dean of Lincoln, and William, son of Rannulf, and Thomas of St John and Geoffrey de Clinton, and Payn son of John, and William d'Aubigny and Humphrey de Bohun and Robert Musard and Robert Basset and Osmund Basset and Thurstan Basset and William, constable of Earl Rannulf of Chester, and Ralph, son of Norman, and Hugh Maubanc. At Woodstock.'

The task here is more complex because the author of the text does not attempt to provide the date. It is therefore necessary to estimate the date by some detective work. Much of this comes from the names supplied.

The Earldom of Huntingdon is an honour which was linked to the kings of Scotland. There were two known as 'Earl David'. One was David, son of Malcolm III of Scotland who became King of Scotland in 1124. However, he inherited the title of Earl of Huntingdon in 1111 or 1113 and was known as Earl David before he became King of Scotland.

The other was the grandson of David I of Scotland. He was Earl of Huntingdon between 1185 and 1219¹⁰

The earl of Chester is named as Rannulf. There was more than one earl Ranulf (generally spelt with only one 'n'). One was Ranulf le Mechin (the younger) who was earl from 1120 to 1129 (the previous earl having perished in the White Ship disaster on November 25th 1120). Another is Ranulf de Blondville, 6th Earl of Chester whose dates were 1181 to 1232. This still does not identify for sure which King but the text refers to the brother of Ranulf, 'William'. This suggests Ranulf le Mechin as he did have a half-brother named William.

For these reasons, I intend to proceed along the presumption that the King referred to is Henry I.

The Earl David would have been referred to as this only between 1111 and April or May 1124 when he became King of Scotland.

Ranulf, Earl of Chester held office between November 26th 1120 and 1129.

This means that we now have a date range of November 26th 1120 to May 1124

¹⁰ W.L. Warren, *Henry II*, Paperback edition (London, Methuen London Ltd, 1983) p176

The last two words of the text are 'At Woodstock'. The chronicler, Henry of Huntingdon describes in detail Henry I's movements between the sinking of the White Ship in November 1120 (at which Geoffrey Ridel was also killed) and 1123 when the king was at Woodstock. Henry was at Dunstable for Christmas 1122, then he went to Berkhamstead where the King's chancellor, Ranulf, died from a riding accident. He had a son who may be the 'William, son of Ranulf' referred to in the text. Only after that did he go to Woodstock which must have been in January 1123.¹¹

The text indicates the presence of the bishop of Lincoln. Robert Bloet, the Bishop of Lincoln died suddenly at Woodstock on the IVth of the Ides of January in 1123 (January 10th) but by Candlemas (February 2nd) the King held council at Gloucester. The new bishop of Lincoln was not appointed until Easter 1123 at Winchester.¹²

There are confirming sources relating to other people mentioned in the text but none which gains us any more precise dating information.

My answer is therefore: **January 1st to 10th 1123**

¹¹ Henry of Huntingdon. *Historia Anglorum*, Edited and translated by Diana Greenway (Oxford, Clarendon Press) p469-471.

¹² The Anglo Saxon Chronicle, Edited and translated by Benjamin Thorpe, Paperback edition, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012). pp217-219. I believe that the entry dated MC.XXIII is based on a year start date of Christmas Day as the first entry describes Henry being at Dunstable at Christmas. This source does not mention Henry travelling to Berkhamstead between Christmas and arriving at Woodstock.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

The Anglo Saxon Chronicle, Edited and translated by Benjamin Thorpe, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2021 (Paperback edition)

Henry Archdeacon of Huntingdon, Historia Anglorum, Edited by Diana Greenway, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996.

Secondary Sources

Judith.A.Green, Henry I King of England and Duke of Normandy, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2009 (paperback edition).

W.L.Warren, Henry II, London, Methuen London Ltd, 1983 (paperback edition - reprint).