
SOME INTERNET RESOURCES FOR MEDIEVAL GENEALOGY: 10

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The Anglo-American Legal Tradition

Professor Robert Palmer of the University of Houston Law Center has initiated a monumental project to digitise medieval and early-modern English legal records at the UK National Archives, and to make the images freely available through the Internet, at <http://aalt.law.uh.edu>.

The records covered are from the period 1272-1650, and include plea rolls (CP 40, KB 27 and E 13), Exchequer memoranda rolls (E 159 and E 368) and other series (C 33, JUST 1 [to 1350], E 124, E 126, REQ 1, DL 5 and CHES 14). Many images are already available for the reigns of Edward I, Edward III and Edward IV-Charles I, and it is planned that more material will be added at the astonishing rate of 400,000 images per year.

The images are provided in JPG format, and their resolution is usually just about adequate for legibility, though in some cases it will still be necessary to look at the original documents. This means the files are large - typically about 2MB. Unfortunately, it wasn't considered feasible to label each image with a membrane number during acquisition. Instead, the index pages display thumbnail images and, as explained in the site's FAQ section, a system of coloured markers has been used as an aid to navigation. Realistically, a broadband connection is needed to make effective use of the site.

Only images of the documents are provided - there are no transcripts or indexes. But the site does provide some material designed to help with reading the documents, including some sample entries accompanied by transcripts, and a useful diagram explaining the anatomy of an entry from a plea roll.

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