

RECORDS OF MEDIEVAL NEWMARKET: Manor Court Rolls 1399-1413 and Manor Account Rolls 1403–1483 edited by *James Davis and Joanne Sear* (Suffolk Records Society vol 66 xxxix+319pp ISBN 978-1-83765-012-5) £70 from Boydell & Brewer or £25 direct from the SRS

The manor court rolls of medieval Newmarket are significant because, although they span only 15 years (1399–1413, the reign of Henry IV), they represent four different types of court (general, market, fair and leet): records from all four types have not survived together for any other medieval English small town. The manor's account rolls, on the other hand, survive for various years across the fifteenth century and so provide details of change over time of holdings, stalls and shops that were rented to Newmarket tenants and traders from further afield.

The editors discuss the activities of the different courts. The general court, held twice yearly, was an instrument used by the manorial lord to ensure that their seigneurial rights over the dependant peasantry were enforced (21 records). The manorial jury presented on a range of offences that affected the rights of the lord and also the wider interests of the community. Business conducted at Newmarket's general court reflected its particular circumstances and needs – much of it referred to transgressions relating to the marketing of food and drink (which would normally be dealt with in the leet court). Conversely, property and land transfers were recorded by the market court which took place fortnightly on market day (Tuesday) (183 records). The presentment jury comprised up to 13 men who traded in Newmarket and many cases (which cost 4d or more to litigate) related to debts; others, for example, to broken contracts or poor-quality goods, such as the horse sold to Richard Derlyng by Thomas atte Hel that, despite his claims to the contrary, was 'unsound in wind and limb' (p.65). Some cases were resolved on the day but most required a jury of inquisition to look into the matter. The fair court coincided with the biannual fairs (on the feast of St Barnabas the apostle (11 June), and on the morrow, or soon after, the feast of the apostles Simon and Jude (29 October to 3 November) (17 records). Although logically cases brought to that court would relate specifically to the fair, many related to the tenancy of shops and stalls in the marketplace, or their condition. Peter May, the earlier historian of these records, suggested that the fair court acted almost like an AGM of the market court (p.xix). The leet court met once a year on 1 August (10 records). Technically this was the lowest court of royal jurisdiction and punished minor infringements of the king's peace. As elsewhere, much of the business related to physical assaults, such as the six men assaulted in 1403 by John Sowtere of Exning, including a relative, although whether in one frenzied outburst, or different days is unclear; or, the assault in 1408 by John Pondere on John Drawswerd, in retaliation for the latter's assault on Pondere's wife, presented at the same court. Newmarket's manorial accounts differ in content from 'typical' medieval manorial accounts.

In general, accounts recorded the management, yield and expenditure of the different elements of a manor, but whereas for most medieval manors the bulk of this relates to rents, agriculture and/or stock-rearing, at Newmarket the only 'livestock' recorded are capons paid as rent and nearly all the rest comprises details of individual holdings, shops and stalls for which rent is payable. In the later years, rather than list all the holdings, reference is made to the rental of 1472/73 (pp.235-249).

The condition and layout of the manuscripts are described and the working practices of the clerks analysed. Although written in highly abbreviated Latin, some location names, such as field names or the various commercial rows in the town, are a combination of English and the Norman French definite article, e.g. *le Myllehyll*, *le Draperi*. Internal evidence suggests that the records were working documents, which were rarely written out on a single occasion.

Whereas the dates of courts were recorded, their location was not: possibly the marketplace, the church of St Mary (technically a chapel of ease as Newmarket was not a parish), or the steward's house. The second part of the Introduction discusses the origins and development of Newmarket as a trading settlement, which had grown up on the boundary of two parishes (and two counties): Exning in Suffolk and Woodditton in Cambridgeshire. Not on a river network, it had good road connections with other counties, as clearly demonstrated by the late medieval Gough Map (used as the cover illustration) and modern maps (pp. xxv, xxvii). Newmarket's success can be attributed to having a largely absentee lay landlord, enabling a 'lack of seigneurial interference' and a 'high level of freedom', both of which were conducive to the development of trade, although the landlord remained in overall control. Indeed the editors detect changes in management when the manor passed from the Argentiens to the Alyngtons, which suggest that the latter were aware of the trading potential of their new manor and were more proactive in increasing income from trade. Comparison of the number of trading units in 1429/30 with those in 1472/73 (pp. xxxii-xxxiii) indicates an increase in both trade and demand for units: 67½ trading units with 10½ untenanted, compared with 115½ possible units all tenanted. Table 1 shows the number of identifiable shops or stalls in each of the commodity rows and Plate 5 maps them. There is also a discussion of the limited references to women in these records – mostly in relation to brewing and selling ale, baking bread and cooking other food, although 10 are recorded as holding land and/or shops or stalls.

To demonstrate the contents of each type of document, in the main text, as well as providing a photograph of (part of) the first folio, the Latin of that folio has been transcribed, followed by its translation; thereafter the documents are published in translation. There is a useful glossary, which reveals that *le Shraggerye* (e.g. p.242) was the row for the sale of second-hand clothing, and comprehensive indexes of people & places and subjects. As noted above, these records of medieval Newmarket are significant and the editors are to be congratulated on this excellent publication, which builds on the earlier work of Peter May.