

Anglo- Saxon England 9



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CHIEF EDITOR

PETER CLEMOES

*Elrington and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon,
University of Cambridge*

What are our total manuscript resources for studying Anglo-Saxon culture? What kinds of interest have drawn scholars for the last four hundred years or so to the surviving records in Old English, and with what main results? What is our evidence for slave trafficking in Anglo-Saxon times? How can we find out about Anglo-Saxon agriculture? These and other basic questions are tackled in this book. Significant additions to our stock of some very rare kinds of evidence – Anglo-Saxon wall-paintings and literature composed in Athelstan's reign – are published here for the first time too.

This book mostly deals with manuscripts, directly or indirectly. Of outstanding general importance is the first-ever attempt to list all the surviving manuscripts that were written or owned in Anglo-Saxon England. There are nearly a thousand of them, complete or incomplete, scattered throughout the British Isles, the continent and America. A first step towards a full, bibliographical catalogue of their contents, this search-list provides a research-tool of the greatest value. There are studies of particular manuscripts: three Latin poems are added to the very few known to have been composed in the time of Athelstan (and one generally accepted by historians is subtracted); the first, damaged page in the Exeter Book of Old English poetry is made to yield a better text than ever before; the distinctive sense of scholarship and literary style that went into a late Old English editing of one of King Alfred's prose works is revealed. Another broad study, indirectly dealing with manuscripts, surveys some of the changing aims and achievements of the scholars who have sought to interpret records in Old English prose or verse since the mid-sixteenth century. It reasserts the value of much former scholarship. Three new interpretative contributions, diverse, though all concerned with poetry, are

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Her mon mæg giet gesion hiora swæð

ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

9

Edited by
PETER CLEMOES
University of Cambridge

MARTIN BIDDLE <i>University of Pennsylvania</i>	JULIAN BROWN <i>University of London</i>
RENÉ DEROLEZ <i>Rijksuniversiteit-Gent</i>	HELMUT GNEUSS <i>Universität München</i>
STANLEY GREENFIELD <i>University of Oregon</i>	LARS-GUNNAR HALLANDER <i>Stockholms Universitet</i>
SIMON KEYNES <i>University of Cambridge</i>	MICHAEL LAPIDGE <i>University of Cambridge</i>
JOHN LEYERLE <i>University of Toronto</i>	PAUL MEYVAERT <i>Mediaeval Academy of America</i>
BRUCE MITCHELL <i>University of Oxford</i>	FRED ROBINSON <i>Yale University</i>

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Abbreviations listed before the bibliography (pp. 281–3) are used throughout the volume without other explanation

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