

## A COMPARATIVE CRITIQUE OF THE HENRY III FINE ROLLS PROJECT

It is not uncommon for a work of scholarship to claim to be ‘unique’ or ‘pioneering’, although they remain ambitious statements. However, if a research project purports to ‘democratise’ the very source under investigation, then the bar is raised high.

These are precisely the goals of the Henry III Fine Rolls Project.<sup>1</sup> An Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded project, involving the Department of History of King’s College London (KCL), the National Archives (TNA), Christ Church Canterbury University and the Centre for Computing in the Humanities (CCH) of KCL, it ran from 2005-11, aiming to translate the fine rolls from the reign of Henry III (1216 – 72). These documents record the offer of money (the fine) to the king in return for a favour or concession. Selected genealogical excerpts from the rolls had been published previously, using typographical abbreviations which served only to increase the difficulties inherent in deciphering a medieval document.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the fine rolls are some of the earliest documents to survive from the English Chancery: they run from 1199, possibly even earlier.<sup>3</sup> Any project seeking to bring these documents to a wider audience is undertaking work likely to have revolutionary impact for historians; whether the rolls are ‘democratised’ is the question considered in this essay.

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<sup>1</sup>The Henry III fine rolls are held at The National Archives (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO) C60/8 - C60/69. The online Henry III Fine Rolls Project is at <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk> accessed between 1 November 2011 and 10 May 2012.

<sup>2</sup>*Excerpta e Rotulis Finium in Turri Londinensi Asservatis Henrica Tertio Rege AD 1216-1272*, ed. C.Roberts, 2 vols. (London, Record Commission, 1835-6).

<sup>3</sup>[http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/commentary/historical\\_intro.html](http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/commentary/historical_intro.html) accessed 20 April 2012.

## Introduction

The Splash page to the project's website defines its understanding of democratising the rolls. It encompasses 'making them freely available in English translation', 'with a sophisticated electronic search engine'.<sup>4</sup> It expands upon this, describing the rolls as rendered 'intelligible, investigable' by the project. Digital facsimile images of the rolls are to be uploaded on the website, and the translation is to be published in book form with full indexes. The Fine of the Month feature is highlighted, where 'every month comment appears on the website about material of interest in the rolls.'<sup>5</sup>

These are quantifiable objectives which can be measured now that the project has concluded, and indeed the first goal of the project has been achieved. Translations of the rolls for the entire period were made available from December 2010, and facsimile images of the rolls are displayed too.<sup>6</sup>

Reviews of the Fine Rolls Project have been undertaken previously. The first printed volume of translations was reviewed by John Moore early in the project, and Hugh Doherty reviewed the online resource towards its end.<sup>7</sup> Three reviews of the project are displayed on the website.<sup>8</sup> The reviews of the digital project are overwhelmingly positive, and I concur with the approval expressed of the overall design, layout, ease of site navigation and use of search engine. Amanda Roper's essay places the

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<sup>4</sup> <http://frh3.org.uk/index.html> accessed 20 April 2012.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> <http://blog.frh3.org.uk/?m=201012> accessed 20 April 2012.

<sup>7</sup> John S. Moore, 'Calendar of fine rolls of the reign of Henry III preserved in the National Archives, 1216-1224', *Economic History Review*, Vol 61 No 3 (Aug 2008), 727-8; Hugh Doherty, 'Henry III Fine Rolls Project', *Reviews in History*, Institute of Historical Research [www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1064](http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1064), accessed 24 April 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Amanda Roper, 'Medieval history and the internet: the Henry III Fine Rolls Project' <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/month/fm-04-2008.html>; Carl Steward, 'The Fine Rolls Project: A Study of widows 1216-1234' <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/month/fm-05-2009.html>; Ryan Kaskel, 'The Henry III Fine Rolls Project and its website: an appraisal' <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/month/fm-06-2011.html>; all accessed 22 April 2012.

project within the developing context of digital historical resources, and Ryan Kaskel considers the website from the perspective of an IT professional. However, they both wrote before the project concluded, and neither appears to have compared the Fine Rolls Project with other similar digital resources. Such comparison is undertaken in this essay, as well as an examination of the project on its own terms.

The use of the word 'democratises' prompts discussion of the identity of users of the project which Roper helpfully discusses.<sup>9</sup> Users could be academics familiar with original medieval governmental records, and less experienced scholars encountering such material for the first time. Individuals outside a formal academic community, such as researchers of local or family history, could use the project, as could schools. These rough categories of user have been borne in mind whilst undertaking this critique of the Fine Rolls Project. Any user, however, requires reassurance about the Fine Rolls Project's level of accuracy and reliability, and here comparison with other websites is useful.

### **Websites for Comparison**

Constructing a comparative framework within which to assess the Fine Rolls Project, raises the problem of a lack of directly similar resources. However, there are a number of medieval online sources which share sufficient features with the Fine Rolls Project to render comparison worthwhile. All the following sites are accessible to anyone via the Internet, and were searched for through Google. Three of the websites emanate from projects which share a common pedigree with the Fine Rolls Project, as the CCH at KCL has been involved with them all: the Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England (PASE), the Paradox of Medieval Scotland (PoMS), and the

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<sup>9</sup> Roper, 'Medieval history'.

Gascon Rolls Project.<sup>10</sup> The lineage connection is strengthened further as PASE was a development of the Department of History at KCL (with the University of Cambridge), and David Carpenter (Director of the Fine Rolls Project) was Co-Investigator for PoMS.<sup>11</sup> The Fine Rolls Project refers to the Gascon Rolls as a 'sister' project.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the Gascon Rolls Project comes closest to the Fine Rolls Project in seeking to translate and make available digitally a selection of clearly defined set of governmental records.<sup>13</sup> PASE and PoMS consider a vast array of documentary sources (PASE also includes coins), and their websites enable access to databases which are prosopographical in focus. One other resource, the Irish Chancery Rolls (CIRCLE), is included here.<sup>14</sup> There is chronological overlap with the Fine Rolls Project, as a calendar of Chancery letters is being digitised. CIRCLE's particular challenge is that the records themselves no longer exist: the Irish Chancery Rolls were destroyed in 1922.<sup>15</sup>

## **Reliability**

For any historian, professional or lay, a primary question to be addressed when encountering a new source is that of reliability. All five digital projects here record the institutions, personnel and funding which lie behind their production, and information is given explaining the editorial and technical parameters of the projects and the style conventions adopted. PoMS is particularly good here, expressing the wish to lay bare the editorial discussions within the project team.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.pase.ac.uk>; <http://www.poms.ac.uk>; <http://www.gasconrolls.org>; all accessed 20 April 2012.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.poms.ac.uk/about/people.html> accessed 25 April 2012.

<sup>12</sup> <http://blog.frh3.org.uk/?m=201106> accessed 20 April 2012.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.gasconrolls.org/about/index.html> accessed 20 April 2012.

<sup>14</sup> <http://irishchancery.net> accessed 22 April 2012.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.poms.ac.uk/feature/index.html> accessed 25 April 2012.

PASE and PoMS are meticulous in identifying the nature and location of every source consulted in order to construct their immense databases.<sup>17</sup> The Fine Rolls and the Gascon Rolls Projects are able to go further, restricted as they are to discrete sets of records, and display digital facsimile images of the original membranes of the rolls. Whilst one loses the sense of scale and physicality involved in handling the original document, the images are surely the next best thing for someone unable to view the original. The zoom function permits the document to be scrutinised in detail, and the direct link from translation to image enables the user to study text in a manner far superior to that provided by reproductions in printed form. Such a facility provides an openness and transparency to the material, elements one assumes would be at the heart of any project seeking to 'democratise' a source.

The provision of images of the rolls overcomes one of the concerns raised by Ludmilla Jordanova in a broad discussion of public history, a genre into which fall all the resources here.<sup>18</sup> The act of putting online so much data, and making it available over the Internet completely free of charge, brings all the projects within Jordanova's definition: 'public history is *popular* history – it is seen or read by large numbers of people and has mostly been designed for a mass audience.'<sup>19</sup> Her use of the word 'designed' raises the issue of selection and compilation of material. Jordanova considers museums when addressing the problems of 'silence and invisibility' inherent in the choice and display of artefacts.<sup>20</sup> By producing facsimiles of the *entire* body of source material, in a form permitting close examination, the Fine Rolls

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<sup>17</sup> [http://www.pase.ac.uk/pdb?dosp=VIEW\\_RECORDS&st=PERSON\\_NAME&value=15&level=1&lbl=%C3%86thelwulf](http://www.pase.ac.uk/pdb?dosp=VIEW_RECORDS&st=PERSON_NAME&value=15&level=1&lbl=%C3%86thelwulf); <http://www.poms.ac.uk/db/record/person/586>; accessed 25 April 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., (London, 2006), ch. 6.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 128-9.

Project enables the user to have the closest possible access to the entire corpus of material, short of holding the document themselves.

### **Accuracy**

Jordanova refers to the 'importance of allowing readers access to the resources authors use'.<sup>21</sup> This enables a user to make their own judgements regarding the selection of sources, and to establish the accuracy of material presented as translation from original source. The Fine Rolls Project demonstrates this well. All the websites under consideration invite feedback, and those that are still subject to live research indicate that the website's content is subject to revision.<sup>22</sup> However, the Fine Rolls Project stands ahead of its peers in demonstrating its willingness to engage with its users by displaying the results of such feedback. Revisions to the translations proposed by users, rather than members of the project team, appear, albeit infrequently, in Fines of the Month.<sup>23</sup> That such revisions are offered and incorporated into the digital resource is evidence of an openness and transparency necessary for any democratic process.

### **Update Status**

The Fine Rolls Project does not excel to the same degree regarding dates of revisions to the site. This is a lament common to digital resources.<sup>24</sup> Kaskel commented that there is little likelihood of the source material here changing over time.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, now the project has ended, a clear statement on the website

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.gasconrolls.org/about/progress.html> accessed 20 April 2012.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/month/fm-08-2008.html>;  
<http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/redist/pdf/fm-03-2012.pdf> accessed 24 April 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Roper, 'Medieval history'; Mark Herring, 'Medieval Sources Online' *Reviews in History*, Institute of Historical Research <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/794> accessed 20 April 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Gaskel, 'Henry III'.

indicating when it was last updated and what plans there are for future amendment, is recommended, although the blog feature explains a commitment to continue beyond 2011 with Fines of the Month if suitable essays are made available.<sup>26</sup> In contrast, both PASE and PoMS indicate clearly the termination of their projects, and the dates of final update of the websites.<sup>27</sup>

Certainty can perhaps be better demanded from a completed project, rather than from one where work continues, and the Irish Chancery Rolls and the Gascon Rolls fall into this latter category. CIRCLE launched an online pilot in 2010, explaining that this was a discrete element of the overall project, which would be completed in June 2011 with a conference, and launch of the entire database.<sup>28</sup> The 2010 pilot is all that I could find for the Irish Chancery Rolls when searching via Google during March and April 2012. Similarly, the Gascon Rolls website has only a few rolls uploaded onto the website, with corresponding translations and digital facsimiles of membrane made available.<sup>29</sup> The Progress page describes the launch of the project and appointment of researchers in 2008-09, but nothing further.<sup>30</sup> Both CIRCLE and the Gascon Rolls Project record this particular problem associated with online resources in sharp focus: without any reference on the websites to when the material was last updated, or plans for the project changed, the user is left in limbo. These examples encapsulate some of the disadvantages of 'online history' addressed by Daniel

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<sup>26</sup> <http://blog.frh3.org.uk/?m=201106> accessed 24 April 2012.

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.pase.ac.uk/index.html>; <http://www.poms.ac.uk/about/news.html> accessed 25 April 2012.

<sup>28</sup> <http://irishchancery.net> accessed 22 April 2012.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.gasconrolls.org/edition/index.html> accessed 20 April 2012.

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.gasconrolls.org/about/progress.html> accessed 20 April 2012.

Cohen which 'include its lack of stability and persistence'.<sup>31</sup> The clarity of when a site was last amended, as well as the longevity of the site itself, are critical to issues of reliability.

I emailed project members requesting further information. Peter Crooks for CIRCLE replied promptly explaining how the project had been completed but launch of the website delayed a year.<sup>32</sup> He was enthusiastic about what appears a successful project, but it is unfortunate that no notice was posted on the website explaining the delay. A different picture emerged for the Gascon Rolls, where it appears that AHRC funding has ceased, although applications for further funding are pending.<sup>33</sup> The position is therefore different from that presented on the website, and again, an update on the site would clarify matters.

These examples demonstrate the ease with which users of online sources can adopt false positions about the status of a website (because they are out of date), and also explains why CIRCLE and the Gascon Rolls Project provide limited points of comparison in the present context. The work presented in this essay was carried out following examination of the CIRCLE pilot website. At the date of submitting the essay that website is no longer available and has been superseded by the launch of the complete CIRCLE database, which became available after 10 May 2012.<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately there has not been sufficient time to incorporate the new site into this essay.

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<sup>31</sup> Daniel J. Cohen, 'History and the Second Decade of the Web', originally published in *Rethinking History* Vol 8, No 2, June 2004, 293-301, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/essays-on-history-new-media/essays/?essayid=34> accessed 20 April 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Email to me 24 April 2012.

<sup>33</sup> Email to me 1 May 2012.

<sup>34</sup> <http://chancery.tcd.ie/content/irish-chancery-rolls> accessed 13 May 2012.



The Fine Rolls Project appears to have kept its users well informed of progress during the lifetime of the research via updates on the blog and through discussions around Fines of the Month.<sup>35</sup> However, at the end of the project there remain some outstanding issues. The project has achieved its goals of providing translations and images of all the rolls down to 1272, but I was unable to find confirmation of whether the translation for 1248-72 is fully finished.<sup>36</sup> Publication of the translations in book form was another goal of the project. Volume IV, due in March 2012, has yet to arrive at the Institute of Historical Research.<sup>37</sup> Almost 6 months after the official end of the project, it might be helpful to indicate whether it is likely that the advanced search engine will be extended down to 1272. Although minor points, they form part of the project's own determination to make the rolls 'intelligible, investigable', and a statement on the project's home page, outlining any proposed future work, would provide certainty.

### **Search Facilities**

The 'sophisticated' search engine is a prime tool in the Fine Rolls Project's aim of making the content of the rolls easily accessible, and the particular type of digital encoding used is explained in detail on the site's technical pages, and forms a considerable part of Kaskel's review.<sup>38</sup> As indicated, it does not yet operate across all the rolls, although the detailed online indexes for person, place and subject are complete, and it is possible to carry out a word search in plain text for the entire source.<sup>39</sup> The search facility (by factoid, source, person and institution) provided by

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<sup>35</sup> <http://blog.frh3.org.uk/?m=201012>; Roper, 'Medieval history'; Kaskel, 'Henry III'.

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/news/news.html> accessed 24 April 2012.

<sup>37</sup> Boydell and Brewer publicity, summer 2011.

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/commentary/technical.html> Technical editorial accessed 24 April 2012; Kaskel, 'Henry III'.

<sup>39</sup> [http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/information/project\\_info.html](http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/information/project_info.html) accessed 24 April 2012.

PoMS is also comprehensive, and its online tutorial is a masterpiece of clarity.<sup>40</sup> In searching for Maud de Senlis, typing her name into the search index brings up all the instances where she is mentioned, together with details of the relationships involved.<sup>41</sup> The search results are clearly displayed and there are links to the cross references for relevant entries in the database. The PASE search facility is less well explained, and the search page rather crowded.<sup>42</sup> Unnecessary information remains displayed once the search result has been obtained, so only one third of the screen space is available for results. However, the search facility itself is extremely effective, and in seeking information about Aethelwulf, author of a ninth-century poem, a detailed result emerged, providing references to every individual, place and role mentioned in the poem, with quotations from the source.<sup>43</sup> CIRCLE's search facility is also easy to use, albeit covering a smaller amount of data, and a search for the town of Kinsale in Co. Cork produced clearly displayed results.<sup>44</sup> The beginning of an Index to places and people is available for the Gascon Rolls, but access to the search facility requires a password.<sup>45</sup>

## Supplementary Material

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<sup>40</sup> <http://www.poms.ac.uk/redist/pdf/A%20PoMS%20Tutorial.pdf> accessed 25 April 2012.

<sup>41</sup> [http://www.poms.ac.uk/db/search?query=maud+de+senlis&basic\\_search\\_type=people&ordering=default&years=1000-1300](http://www.poms.ac.uk/db/search?query=maud+de+senlis&basic_search_type=people&ordering=default&years=1000-1300) accessed 25 April 2012.

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.pase.ac.uk/jsp/index.jsp> accessed 20 April 2012.

<sup>43</sup> [http://www.pase.ac.uk/pdb?dosp=VIEW\\_RECORDS&st=PERSON\\_NAME&value=15&level=1&lbl=%C3%86thelwulf](http://www.pase.ac.uk/pdb?dosp=VIEW_RECORDS&st=PERSON_NAME&value=15&level=1&lbl=%C3%86thelwulf) accessed 20 April 2012.

<sup>44</sup> <http://irishchancery.net/search> accessed 24 April 2012.

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.gasconrolls.org/indexes/person/A.html>;  
[http://www.gasconrolls.org/search/#q=document\\_type%3Acalendar](http://www.gasconrolls.org/search/#q=document_type%3Acalendar) accessed 20 April 2012.

The Fine Rolls Project succeeds in democratising the rolls in terms of making them freely available in an English translation, but comprehension of the content of the rolls and their significance in a specific historical context, are also elements of that process. Analysis of the measures undertaken by the project here includes consideration of features on the website other than the rolls themselves. A Historical Introduction surveying Henry III's reign is provided, together with an essay by Carpenter on the Rolls.<sup>46</sup> Similar contextual material is displayed by PoMS and CIRCLE.<sup>47</sup> Particularly helpful is the essay explaining the nature of the paradox examined by PoMS, which brilliantly conveys the historical enigma addressed by the project.<sup>48</sup> The Gascon Rolls Project provides a historical introduction, and although some of the individual rolls displayed on the site have their own introductions, several do not.<sup>49</sup> Of the resources surveyed here, PASE does not provide any form of historical context in which to view its material. The website acknowledges this, but the absence of any secondary material could be a missed opportunity to offer helpful background.<sup>50</sup>

### **Essay Series**

It is the wealth of scholarship provided by the extra material which contributes to PoMS and the Fine Rolls Project emerging as more than simply repositories of data. Both projects have a series of monthly essays. PoMS acknowledges the concept comes from the Fine Rolls and produced a limited number of essays for the last 12

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<sup>46</sup> [http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/commentary/reign\\_intro.html](http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/commentary/reign_intro.html);  
[http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/commentary/reign\\_intro.html](http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/commentary/reign_intro.html) accessed 24 April 2012.

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.poms.ac.uk/about/introduction.html> accessed 25 April 2012.

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.poms.ac.uk/about/explaining.html> accessed 25 April 2012.

<sup>49</sup> [http://www.gasconrolls.org/edition/calendars/C61\\_33/document.html](http://www.gasconrolls.org/edition/calendars/C61_33/document.html);  
[http://www.gasconrolls.org/edition/calendars/C61\\_56/document.html](http://www.gasconrolls.org/edition/calendars/C61_56/document.html) accessed 27 April 2012.

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.pase.ac.uk/about/methodology/prosopography.html> accessed 25 April 2012.

months of the project.<sup>51</sup> The website also provides a charter book, comprising 4 lengthy essays by academics on issues raised by the project.<sup>52</sup> Available for free in pdf form, this is a valuable resource, and although PoMS makes no claims to democratisation, its project demonstrates a comprehensive willingness to share its research as widely as possible. Similarly, the Fines of the Month for the rolls of Henry III, provide a unique resource, above and beyond the rolls themselves, of ongoing research. The essays record the value of the project as a whole, as the content of the rolls is revealed and analysed. Roper commented that the true test of the project would be when historians published research from the rolls.<sup>53</sup> It could be viewed as self-certification, but repeatedly the point is made in essays that insights have emerged due to the rolls being made available in their new form.<sup>54</sup>

As there are now 76 Fines of the Month it might be more appropriate to group them by subject category rather than to list in date order. Virtually all the essays could fall into one identifiable subject area, for example peasants, landholding, widows, Jews, buildings and architecture, the church, the British Isles, the wider world, the development of governmental institutions. Two essays should be highlighted for new or non-specialist users of the project. Paul Dryburgh on the Language of Making Fine provides an excellent supplement to the introductory information provided on the site.<sup>55</sup> Sophie Ambler's essay on the Fine Roll for 1226 - 27 considers the

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<sup>51</sup> <http://www.poms.ac.uk/feature/index.html> accessed 25 April 2012.

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.poms.ac.uk/ebook/index.html> accessed 25 April 2012.

<sup>53</sup> Roper, 'Medieval history'.

<sup>54</sup> <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/month/fm-03-2008.html>;  
<http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/month/fm-09-2008.html>;  
<http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/month/fm-01-2009.html>; all accessed 25 April 2012.

<sup>55</sup> Paul Dryburgh, 'The Language of Making Fine'  
<http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/month/fm-06-2007.html> accessed 25 April 2012, currently referenced in a footnote to the Project Information page.

charters issued by Henry III that year, but also provides a helpful 'walk-through' the fine roll for one regnal year, and is ideal for someone new to this type of record.<sup>56</sup>

The Fine of the Month feature demonstrates the project's commitment to involving as many people as possible in research since all users are invited to contribute to the series, and Fines of the Month are provided by users outside the project team.<sup>57</sup>

Perhaps the best indication of the rolls having been democratised comes from the Fine of the Month submitted by the villagers of Nunney, who intend to use evidence from the rolls to resist encroachment by their district council.<sup>58</sup>

### **Social Media**

Further willingness to welcome all users into the fold of the Fine Rolls Project is found in the blog. A later addition to the website, from August 2010, it too welcomes contributions from any users, who are invited to follow the project on Twitter. The blog's informal style belies the serious scholarship which undergirds it. Henry III's blog for 1261 and 1257 conveys in detailed account the broad sweep of chronological history covered by the entire project.<sup>59</sup> The blog acts as a forum for those seeking assistance with research, and provides a diary of the activities of project members. Reports of attendance at local history societies, accounts of visits to the National Archives, and many photographs (some more gruesome than others), combine to

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<sup>56</sup> Sophie Ambler, 'The fine roll of Henry III, 28 October 1226 – 27 October 1227' <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/month/fm-12-2007.html> accessed 25 April 2012.

<sup>57</sup> Jeremy Ashbee, 'Gloriette in Corfe Castle in 1260' <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/month/fm-07-2011.html>; Adam Chambers, 'The Bordesley charter: a window on Chancery procedure?' <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/month/fm-09-2011.html>; Huw Ridgway, 'The exploits of two Dorset knights at the Battle of Lewes and on the fine roll' <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/redist/pdf/fm-01-2012.pdf>; all accessed 4 May 2012.

<sup>58</sup> Ken Lloyd, '750 years on: the Fine Rolls and the Nunney charter' <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/month/fm-08-2010.html> accessed 25 April 2012.

<sup>59</sup> <http://blog.frh3.org.uk/?m=201201> accessed 24 April 2012.

document flourishing, inclusive research.<sup>60</sup> This is evidence of how the rolls continue to be democratised, even though funding has ended.

## Recommendations

Omissions from the project include a glossary, provided by PASE and PoMS, but not by CIRCLE or the Gascon Rolls. The PoMS glossary succinctly explains many terms, and is invaluable for any user new to the period.<sup>61</sup> The PASE glossary lacks the clarity of PoMS, and appears to assume a degree of prior knowledge on the part of the user.<sup>62</sup> A further omission from the Fine Rolls Project is any provision for schools. The lack of suggestions on how the material might be used in classrooms, or of a dedicated pathway leading to specific resources is unfortunate. Currently, Magna Carta is one of the A Level curriculum modules, and as the Fines of the Month demonstrate, the rolls shed light on the impact of the charter in the years following 1215.<sup>63</sup> PoMS appears to have worked closely with schools in Scotland on how their site might be used in a classroom setting.<sup>64</sup> The material need not be confined to secondary school use either; I have been fortunate enough to use the material with primary school children, and have been encouraged by the enthusiasm with which they embraced using a modern technical source (the Internet) to see at first hand the very evidence from the past (the facsimile images of the rolls being the

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<sup>60</sup> <http://blog.frh3.org.uk/?m=201203> accessed 20 April 2012.

<sup>61</sup> <http://www.poms.ac.uk/glossaryterms.html> <http://www.poms.ac.uk/about/news.html> accessed 25 April 2012.

<sup>62</sup> See *lector, exorcista, geneat*, <http://www.pase.ac.uk/reference/glossary.html> accessed 25 April 2012.

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/month/fm-09-2009.html>;  
<http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/month/fm-10-2009.html>;  
<http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/month/fm-11-2010.html>; all accessed 25 April 2012.

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.poms.ac.uk/about/news.html>; <http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Paradox-of-Medieval-Scotland-1093-1286/196897367023413>; accessed 4 May 2012.

superb contrast here).<sup>65</sup> Workshops focussed on the nature of the rolls themselves; the search for entries for a specific place; and creative writing arising from one particularly colourful entry.<sup>66</sup> The National Archives already host a number of educational resources on their website, and liaison might facilitate the production of suitable material for the Fine Rolls Project site.<sup>67</sup>

It is apparent, therefore, that the Fine Rolls Project has succeeded in its aims. Apart from uncertainty about future book publication and extension of the search engine, little has failed to be achieved on the basis of the project's own criteria for democratisation. The fruits of the project team's scholarship are made available to all, and the website demonstrates an inclusivity unique to online resources of this kind. One final suggestion is a reflection of the longevity of the research project: in this Jubilee year, it might now be appropriate to amend the description on the website of Henry III as England's third longest reigning sovereign.<sup>68</sup>

### **Katherine Bailey**

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<sup>65</sup> Discussions and workshops undertaken March- June 2012. I am grateful to Nicola Dudley and Year 6 of St Paul's CE Primary School, London NW7 for their support and participation.

<sup>66</sup> Calendar of fine rolls 1218-19, no.360  
[http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll\\_011.html](http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_011.html) accessed 25 April 2012.

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/medieval.htm> accessed 4 May 2012.

<sup>68</sup> [http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/commentary/reign\\_intro.html](http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/commentary/reign_intro.html) accessed 24 April 2012.

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