



'The Register of Simon Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1375–1381', Book Review.

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## History

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***The Register of Simon Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1375-1381.*** Edited by F. Donald Logan. Boydell & Brewer, 2020. xxi + 369pp. £35.00.

Archbishop Simon Sudbury is probably best remembered as the chancellor who, having responsibility for the imposition of the unpopular poll tax, was beheaded on Tower Hill during the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. His archiepiscopal register is preserved in Lambeth Palace Library and contains over eight hundred entries dating from his translation to Canterbury in May 1375 (he had been bishop of London) until six days before his death in June 1381.

F. Donald Logan's edition is volume 110 in The Canterbury and York Society's series of medieval ecclesiastical records, and he makes it clear that this is a calendar edition, an English-language summary of each item in the archbishop's register, and not a transcription and translation. The register is divided into five sections, namely Memoranda, Testaments, Institutions, Ordinations and Royal Writs.

Logan's introduction includes a description and history of the manuscript, as well as a brief account of Sudbury's life, his archiepiscopal career and how he dealt with issues of the day such as the propositions for reform promulgated by John Wyclif. The editor also considers Sudbury's relations with the papacy including the implications of the Great Schism of 1378 which saw two rival popes, Urban VI in Rome and Clement VII in Avignon. An analysis of the visitations, convocations, institutions, ordinations, wills, and writs recorded in the register follows.

Institutions make up more than a quarter of the entries, not only institutions in the strict sense and collations (where the archbishop was the patron) but exchanges of benefices too. How did a rector in Kent know about the desire of a rector in

Northumberland to exchange, Logan asks, suggesting that there were brokers, middlemen, at work. Twenty-seven ordination ceremonies are recorded, Sudbury having been present at all but one, and the archbishop held seven convocations, all but one of which concerned subsidies to support the war with France. There is no evidence that Sudbury ever attempted a metropolitan visitation, but he did perform a visitation of the prior and chapter of Christ Church, Canterbury, giving them five weeks' notice before interviewing the forty-six monks separately. The archbishop's subsequent report contained twenty-seven articles, based on the interviews and his own observations. Amongst the articles were stipulations that Latin should more frequently be used in conversation, the monks should refrain from arguments, and no monk should have clothing made for himself in the town, nor should he eat there. Fifty-four wills are recorded (for the most part written in Latin for the Crown and the clergy, and in Anglo-Norman for the aristocracy and knightly class) which detail some fascinating bequests, including those of Edward III and the Black Prince, and the bishops of St Asaph and Durham. The royal writs include summonses to parliament, and to the coronation of Richard II, as well as mandates to collect subsidies, and an order for prayers to be said 'for success against the malice of the French'. The 'Memoranda', comprising a little over the first half of the one hundred and fifty folios of the register, evidence the day-to-day administration of the church, including significations for the arrest of excommunicates, the granting of indulgences, commissions to the official of the Court of Arches and/or dean of the Arches, the commission of a keeper of the spiritualities when a bishopric became vacant, as well as *acta* of the vicar general when the archbishop was absent (as he was for five months negotiating a final Anglo-French peace treaty, in Bruges, albeit in vain).

Logan has preserved every place name and every personal name as well as every date, and provides detailed indices of People and Places, and Subjects, which are essential

for navigating the eight hundred plus entries. His edition is a tremendous undertaking, and a very welcome addition to the corpus of printed medieval ecclesiastical records, allowing scholars to explore in greater detail than ever before a fascinating period of the fourteenth century.

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