

knowledge about the Stationers' Company, its practices, and its relationship to government undermines what otherwise might be convincing arguments about "media" and early Stuart government.

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KEVIN COSTELLO. *The Court of Admiralty of Ireland, 1575–1893*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011. Pp. 313. \$74.50 (cloth).
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Kevin Costello's latest book, *The Court of Admiralty of Ireland, 1575–1893*, is an ambitious analysis of the civil and criminal roles of the Court of Admiralty of Ireland from its beginnings to its dissolution. In addition to providing the reader with an analysis of the various business of Ireland's admiralty court, the author wades into the complicated array of competing courts and jurisdictions. He also furnishes concise examinations of the court's diverse judges in this well-researched institutional history.

Costello demonstrates that throughout the court's existence, attempts to expand its powers and jurisdiction were characterized by fits and starts, and it faced competition from a number of other courts; in addition, the Irish court of admiralty had to contend with London's dominance. The author adeptly navigates the dizzying array of competitors vying with the court for power and demonstrates that rivalries abounded, whether from vice-admiralty courts in the provinces or from private manorial lords and/or corporations that had been granted rights to exercise admiralty jurisdiction. Even small fishing towns tried to assert their "rights" at the expense of the Court of Admiralty. Furthermore, litigants could pursue maritime cases in courts of chancery and common law, so there were numerous challengers for the right to deal with maritime litigation. Tracking the ebbs and flows of the Irish admiralty court's shifting areas of jurisdiction is no mean feat, especially given that Costello's examination covers the early modern period and a generous portion of the modern era.

The author details the array of business before the court. Given the association between Ireland and piracy in the earlier part of the period under examination, we might expect that many of the cases would involve the criminal prosecution of piracy. However, Costello demonstrates that civil cases were by far the most common matters before the court. In fact, his discussion of criminal cases warrants only a very brief chapter near the end of the book. As Costello shows, there were numerous obstacles and legal and jurisdictional entanglements in the way of the court's persecution of piracy even though it was a prevalent crime. Part of the problem was that there were a number of avenues by which to bring pirates to justice besides the admiralty court. Furthermore, receivers of stolen goods had to be tried by civil law. Such rivals and complication meant the court lacked the ability to effectively prosecute pirates and their enablers.

Much of the court's business involved wage disputes between seamen and their employers. In addition to this, the court dealt with everything from fishing licences to anchorage and beaconage, maritime wrecks, ferriage, bottomry bonds, and adjudicating claims to "royal fish." Yet, like its responsibilities, its revenue stream was spotty. In fact, the court frequently found itself wanting for business—a situation bemoaned by a number of its judges. Judges in the late seventeenth century, for example, had "a demoralizingly low caseload" (52). This would change: court business would pick up in the mid-eighteenth century and by so doing "managed to provoke every interest group connected with the court" (110). The experience of some of the earlier judges contrasts mightily with three shameful decades under the now-salaried judge Jonah Barrington in the early nineteenth century, who enjoyed £1000 per

year for living in luxury in Paris much of the time while relying on underlings to conduct the work of the court before he was eventually removed from office in 1830 for corruption.

While Barrington's scandalous conduct did not help the reputation of the court, ultimately, lack of business would bring about its demise. The reasons for its dissolution can be traced to larger developments in the later part of its existence: Ireland, like England, enjoyed a steady increase in its volume of shipping while corresponding maritime litigation was decreasing. London's court had many advantages over its Irish counterpart, so it could compensate, notably with its large jurisdiction over shipping insurance claims locally and abroad (including Ireland). As a result of its final decline in the nineteenth century, Ireland's court of the admiralty was absorbed into the High Court in 1893, ending its long struggle to carve a niche for itself.

Costello's discussion of the individuals on the bench is brief but important given that early modern institutions were marked by the personalities and prejudices of those in positions of authority. Certainly, those who were involved with the court were a diverse group. Some brought the court into disrepute with their practices while others fought tenaciously to protect the court's jurisdiction and even expand it, whether to benefit Irish interests or their own self-interest. Studies such as this reveal much about the nature of early modern institutions and their survival and/or dissolution in the modern age. In the case of Ireland's admiralty court, its early modern existence was typical of several structures of the time: it was characterized by its ad hoc nature, which changed according to the personalities at the top and the circumstances of the times.

Kevin Costello's *The Court of Admiralty of Ireland, 1575–1893* covers a lot of ground in under three hundred pages. This volume is aimed at an academic audience, or at least those with a decided interest in legal and institutional studies. It is meticulously documented and based largely on a number of primary sources (although the bibliography only contains selected sources). It contains a brief glossary of legal terms for the uninitiated and a sparse index. It would, however, have benefitted from an introductory chapter and a conclusion summing up some of the author's major findings. Overall, it is an illuminating work that adds to our knowledge of a significant aspect of the Irish and British legal and maritime worlds.

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JOHN CROOK. *English Medieval Shrines*. Boydell Studies in Medieval Art and Architecture. Woodbridge: Boydell, 2011. Pp. 320. \$70.00 (cloth).
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The subject of this book is the history of the shrines of Christian saints in medieval England, from the arrival of Roman missionaries in Kent in the late sixth century to the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1540s during the reforms of Henry VIII. While there is a vast literature on the cults of English saints in the Middle Ages, this volume stands apart due to its particular focus on the monuments built to house their holy remains. The book begins with two chapters on the cult of relics and the physical setting of their commemoration in the late antique world before turning to the evidence from medieval England. There follow eight chapters that trace the development of this specialized kind of ecclesiastical architecture over the course of a millennium. The author's approach is strictly chronological, and the geographical scope of the book is limited to England, with occasional comparisons to evidence from the Continent and a digression on the cult of Saint David in Wales.

Crook begins the book with the thankless task of summarizing more than a century's worth of scholarship on the cult of relics in late antique and early medieval Christianity in order to provide the context for his discussion of England. These first two chapters offer a serviceable