

in this volume a rich discussion of interrelated themes, with fresh perspectives on this important group of churchmen in their diverse contexts.

UNIVERSITY OF WALES,
TRINITY SAINT DAVID
(LAMPETER)

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The fabric accounts of St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster, 1292–1396. Edited by Tim Ayers (trans. Maureen Jurkowski). 2 vols. Pp. x+999; ix+1000–523 incl. 2 frontispieces, 7 figs, 15 tables and 4 plans. Woodbridge–Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2020. £150. 978 1 78327 444 4

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This publication is a major contribution to the study of late medieval architecture and art. Its main purpose is to make available practically all of the documentation about the construction of St Stephen's chapel, Westminster, in a current critical edition. The run of documentation begins in 1292 and ends a century later. As presented here, this documentation comprises sixty parts, mostly in the form of rolls. Some of the parts are extensive: the first alone is a suite of seventy-eight *rotuli* sewn together at the head and covering the years between 1292 and 1295, when the project was new and Edward I was able to pump money into it thanks to his Lucchese creditors. Thus, as a piece of scholarship, the reader is presented with something vast, and the form of the publication – two great, continuously paginated volumes the size of telephone books – reflects this. Their bulk and length is due alike to their fullness and the inclusion of facing-page translations of all but a few auxiliary documents. As nearly as possible, these translations are literal ones, in order 'to keep interpretation open' (p. 88). Of course, translations mean a more expensive publication, but many will benefit from them, because, while the Latin of the rolls is grammatically and structurally simple, it is pregnant with special terms relating to building, embellishment, worksite matters and so on. In an age when editors of accounts are sometimes required by cost to provide translations alone, with only samples of the Latin, one is grateful that means were found to reproduce and translate everything. And thank goodness it is all available in print. The thing would be a nightmare to try to deal with as an e-book.

It is extremely unlikely that anyone would buy these books, which cost £150, without knowing what to expect of them. Moreover, it would be stupid to try to encapsulate their contents in a brief review, let alone to try to outline the extremely complex project to which the documents relate. In light of this, perhaps the most sensible thing for the reviewer to do is to say a little about the publication's scope and organisation. The first matter to note is that the editor does not attempt an art historical study of the chapel (see his remark *à propos* on p. 6). One would not normally expect interpretation of anything external in a critical edition of medieval documents, but as the editor is an art historian particularly well qualified to assess the surviving visual evidence in light of the documentation, it may be worth noting this for the avoidance of doubt. What one would certainly expect is a study of the documents *qua* documents, and this is supplied by a long introduction that was apparently calculated to anticipate every question (pp. 1–72). This

introduction starts by reviewing previous attempts to publish the St Stephen's accounts. Special attention is given to the use made of the accounts by scholars before the mid-nineteenth century. The twentieth-century historiography, which might be discussed at length, is more quickly dealt with. The past publication with most bearing on the current edition is the medieval part of the *History of the king's works* (1963), which the editor often cites and occasionally corrects (for example, p. 69 n. 890). Then comes a discussion of the manuscripts, less as physical objects than as types of account whose content and organisation depends on the part they played in the administrative process. The chronology of the documents is marked by changes of structure and scope, introduced for various reasons (including, it seems, the personal choices of clerks about formatting). One is reminded that formally recording such a protracted project was affected by broader changes in bureaucratic methodology, and that how something was accounted for can affect one's view of what the masons etc. did on site.

All of this material is important for one's understanding of the economy of building in its broader sense, that is, as something fundamentally reliant on record-writing and record-keeping as well as on money, men and materials. It was presumably the most taxing part of the introduction to write, but the effort pays off nicely, especially for the reader who is curious about documents. Aspects of the chapel's economy of greater art historical value are considered in two subsequent sections, the first of which looks at the workers employed to build the chapel. These people are examined by type (masons and sculptors, carpenters, metalworkers, painters and glaziers, as well as labourers of various descriptions), places of origin, organisation and other things, the evidence all winkled from the documents and evocative of the bustle and babel of a site where 'hundreds of masons' (p. 37) were gathered. The evidence for the craft of painting, practically all of it dating from the mid-fourteenth century, is 'exceptionally rich' (p. 42). Recruitment (including impressment) and wages are also discussed here. Then comes a section about the materials consumed by the works. These were, as one might expect, costly and various. They included stone from as many as twelve different quarries. Transportation of materials and the various units of measurement used in the accounts are also covered here. Following this, in a final section, the editor steps slightly back from the rolls and tries to give a sense of the building as it rose, and its interior was fitted out, through the various stages (and hiatuses) that are mentioned and implied in the accounts. This digest is a useful point of reference when working one's way through the vast mass of documentation that follows. A historian of medieval art who makes the effort to do so will emerge sadder, wiser and no doubt humbler, for those involved in this huge undertaking have managed to produce something that does justice to the exceptional importance of the lost building that hovers behind it.

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