

Anglo Saxon Charters

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It is thirty years since Peter Sawyer published his groundbreaking *Anglo-Saxon Charters: and Annotated List and Bibliography*,¹ and it is still the first point of reference for any scholar working on Anglo-Saxon charters, or related subjects such as onomastics or prosopography. Nevertheless, much has happened in Anglo-Saxon scholarship since 1968, some of the fruits of which are reviewed here.

An atlas of Attestations in Anglo-Saxon Charters c. 670-1066, edited by Simon Keynes² provides a comprehensive tabulation of the witness lists of every extant Anglo-Saxon charter. Some of this work has been presented previously, in the invaluable tables at the end of his book on the diplomas of Ethelred 'The Unready' and in his more recent article on Cnut's earls.³

The Atlas is broken down initially by kingdom, and then, from the early tenth century, by reign. Within each reign, there are separate tables for the athelings, bishops, abbots, ealdormen/earls, thegns, and, where appropriate, king's priests and stallers. The tables themselves are presented in a very straightforward manner, with the names of witnesses to charters down the vertical axis, and the charters, identified by Sawyer and Birch (*Cartularium Saxonicum*)⁴ numbers in chronological order across the horizontal axis. Each column represents the attestations in a particular charter, and the witness are listed by their position within the attestations. They are, though, packed with detail. The archival provenance of each charter is listed, as is whether it belongs to any identifiable groups of charters (for instance, the 'Alliterative Charters', or those of 'Athelstan A' and 'Edgar A').

Beneficiaries of charters are also included, and where possible, all of the ecclesiastical witnesses have been identified: where the identification is uncertain, it is followed by a question mark. Keynes has also attempted to distinguish between witnesses with the same name, for instance, between the three thegns named Elfsige who subscribed the charters of Edgar. This is perhaps the weakest part of the Atlas, since we are entirely dependent on Dr. Keynes' insights into the structure of witness lists. The tables for Ethelred's reign are particularly detailed, and the thegns are split into the groups in which they occurred through this king's long reign.

This volume is clearly laid out and straightforward to use, and is of immense use to anyone whose research involves Anglo-Saxon charters in any way. The layout of the atlas lends itself to several uses: one can search the attestations of particular groups of charters, or look for the relative position of a particular witness in a variety of different charters. The Atlas's use is not just confined to those whose interests are purely diplomatic or onomastic; anyone working on Anglo-Saxon politics, or the Anglo-Saxon church will find this of great use. There is, in the final analysis, no substitute for looking up each individual charter, but this Atlas saves a significant amount of time in the initial search.

Returning to Sawyer's handlist, it is fair to say that in two areas, at least, this book is now a little long in the tooth: its bibliography and in the comments on individual charters. It is

therefore extremely useful now to have a new edition of Sawyer, revised by Susan Kelly and Simon Keynes. Much work has been done since 1968, not least under the Auspices of the British Academy/Royal Historical Society Anglo-Saxon Charters project,⁵ and this revision of Sawyer's work brings it right up to date, with an augmented bibliography, and the latest comments on charters added to the entries. Charters which came to light after 1968, or were not included in Sawyers' original handlist for some reason are included here, usually with the suffix 'a' so as not to disrupt Sawyer's initial numbering scheme, which the revisers otherwise follow. Kelly and Keynes have gone one step further than Sawyer in adding their own, often very useful, comments on charters where they have particular expertise (for instance, see Kelly's comments on charters from S. Augustin's Canterbury, Shaftesbury and Abingdon). This new edition also adds the archival provenance of each charter, in itself a great boon to diplomatists, amongst others. Otherwise, this edition follows the familiar layout of its 1968 forbear, with a brief description of the document, its manuscript references, any editions and then comments. Sawyers' original handlist is still indispensable, but Kelly and Keynes's work makes it of even greater use.

We are still some way from having modern editions of all the surviving Anglo-Saxon charters, but these two volumes should not only aid the process, but also provide the Anglo-Saxon scholar with extremely useful and time-saving research tools.

Copies of the Atlas are at Cambridge University Library, the Institute of Historical Research (London), and will shortly be available at the Bodleian Library (Oxford), and Biblioteca del Dipartimento di Paleografia e Neoliteoistica, University of Bologna. Individuals can purchase a copy for £25 from Dr. S. Keynes (Trinity College, Cambridge, England). The 'revised' Sawyer handlist will be on the web in late 1998 (<http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk>), and will be published in 2000.

NOTES

¹ P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: an Annotated List and Bibliography*, Royal Historical Society; Guides and Handbooks 8 (London, 1968).

² S. D. Keynes, *An Atlas of Attestations in Anglo-Saxon Charters, c. 670-1066* (Cambridge, Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, 1993).

³ S. D. Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Ethelred 'the Unready' 978-1016: a Study in their Use as Historical Evidence* (Cambridge, 1980); idem, 'Cnut's Earls', A. Rumble ed., *The Reign of Cnut: King of England, Denmark and Norway* (Leicester, 1994), pp. 43-88.

⁴ *Cartularium Saxonicum*, ed. W. de Grey Birch, 3 vols (London, 1885-99).

⁵ *Anglo-Saxon Charters I: The Charters of Rochester*, ed. A. Campbell (Oxford, 1972); *Anglo-Saxon Charters II: The Charters of Burton Abbey*, ed. P.H. Sawyer (Oxford, 1979); *Anglo-Saxon Charters III: The Charters of Sherborne*, ed. M.A. Donovan (Oxford, 1988); *Anglo-Saxon Charters*

IV: The Charters of St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, ed. S.E. Kelly (Oxford, 1995); Anglo-Saxon Charters V: The Charters of Shaftesbury Abbey, ed. S.E. Kelly (Oxford, 1996).