Lancashire Archives: A Guide to Manorial Records

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Introduction

This guide has been produced on behalf of Lancashire Archives as part of a collaborative project, run by The National Archives and Lancaster University, to digitise the Manorial Documents Register for Lancashire. The aim of this project is to raise awareness and encourage the use of manorial records. Parts of this guide have been reproduced from the Cumbrian Manorial Records website, which was created as part of the Cumbrian MDR project in 2006.

[http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/manorialrecords/index.htm](http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/manorialrecords/index.htm)

All the examples in this guide relate to the records of Lancashire manors held in collections at Lancashire Archives.

What are manorial records?

Manorial records are the documents created by landed estates known as manors. 'Manorial documents' were defined by the Manorial Documents Rules, first set down in 1926. They include: 'court rolls, surveys, maps, terriers, documents and books of every description relating to the boundaries, franchises, wastes, customs or courts of a manor'.

The Manorial Documents Rules provide for the statutory protection of these classes of record. The Law of Property Act (1925) had abolished copyhold tenure and, with it, the principal reason for holding manor courts. Since title to former copyhold land was based on an entry in the record of a manor court, it was felt that manorial records required protection, and responsibility for them was placed with the Master of the Rolls, who drew up the Rules and instigated the construction of a Manorial Documents Register (MDR) [http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/mdr/], to identify and locate all surviving manorial records in England and Wales. Only those types of document defined in the Rules as 'manorial documents' are noted in the Manorial Documents Register.

What is a Manor?

The word 'manor' (Latin manerium) is used in two distinct ways: it can refer to the seat of a gentry landowner – a manor house - or it can refer to a landed estate held by the lord of the manor. Large landed estates were divided into more than one manor, each an administrative unit used for accounting and rent-collecting purposes. By the later Middle Ages manors had acquired a third characteristic, which came to define them, distinguishing a manor from other types of landholding: the right of the lord of the manor to hold a manor court, through which he exercised jurisdiction over his tenants who held land in the manor.

Manors varied widely in size. A typical manor consisted of a village and its lands - a territorial unit known as a township in northern England. However a single village
might contain two or more manors, or a manor might cover land in more than one township. The land within a manor fell into two main types:

- **demesne land**: the land farmed directly on behalf of the lord himself as a home farm.
- **tenant land**: land granted out to tenants who farmed it on their own behalf, paying rents and services to the lord in return for their use of the land. Tenants were either freeholders or held land by bond or unfree tenures - the villeins of the Middle Ages who came to be known as copyholders or, in northern England, customary tenants, by the 16th century.

**Manor Courts**

Manor courts were held 'for lord and neighbourhood'. Their principal functions were the preservation of the rights of the lord, and the regulation of relations between tenants. The latter function merged into dealing with breaches of the peace, and a third strand, in the work of the courts leet, was their public role of dealing with criminal affairs and carrying out the various statutory obligations laid on them. This combination of being a branch of the King's judiciary, an arm of the lord of the manor's estate administration, and a forum for the discussion of matters of concern to the community as a whole, is well illustrated by the compilations of byelaws which survive for some manors.

There were two main types of manor court, the **court baron** and the **court leet**, though some early manor court records do not specify the type of court, stating simply that it was the court (Latin *curia*) of the manor in question. On many manors by the late-medieval period courts baron, dealing largely with minor pleas, were held every three or four weeks, while the head court (Latin *curia capitalis*), which was generally a court leet, was held twice each year, in spring and autumn.

Manor courts were a source of income for the lord. Money flowed into the lord's coffers from most aspects of the courts' proceedings, particularly in the form of fines from people infringing byelaws and the lord's rights and entry fines when tenancies changed hands. The three-weekly meetings of courts baron tended to decline across time; sometimes only one court was held each year.

The work of the manor court may be divided into three main areas:

- **providing a record of changes of tenancy** by recording surrenders and admittances to copyhold land. In manors with much copyhold or customary tenantright land, although transfers of such land by death or alienation continued to be recorded on verdict sheets of the manor court, a separate court of dimissions was sometimes held to provide a more formal record of the transfer and of the entry fine paid to the lord.

- **making byelaws and punishing wrongdoers** (orders and presentments). Byelaws (pains) and more specific orders aimed to uphold the lord's privileges and 'good neighbourhood'(neighbourly relations) within the manorial community. Those offending against the orders and byelaws made by the manor court, or breaking
the King's peace or statutes which fell under the jurisdiction of a court leet were amerced (fined).

- **hearing pleas between tenants of the manor** in cases of alleged debt, trespass, etc. These minor civil cases often formed the bulk of business at courts held between the head courts, as the customs of the manor often required tenants to bring such pleas to the manor court rather than any other body.

The principal types of manor court are as follows:

- **Court Baron**: the basic manorial institution, dealing largely with internal matters on the estate, including infringements of the lord’s rights and prerogatives, disputes between tenants and changes of tenancy. At the heart of the court baron's work lay the customs of the manor, which varied from manor to manor and governed the details of how tenants held their land - hence the term 'customary tenure'. Courts baron also had the power to hear civil pleas involving sums of up to 40 shillings. Some courts baron met every three weeks, particularly where pleas formed the core of their business.

- **Court Customary**: a court for customary tenants rather than freeholders. In practice, the term is rarely encountered and customary tenants did suit at the court baron.

- **Court Leet**: some manorial lords also had the right to hold a court leet with view of frankpledge, which was required to meet twice a year and had a wider remit as an arm of royal justice dealing with minor breaches of the peace and public order and administering the provisions of a series of Tudor statutes. The term 'view of frankpledge' (Latin visus franciplegii) harked back to the Anglo-Saxon system of peace-keeping where groups of ten men undertook to be responsible for each other's behaviour. In the context of the court leet, the phrase 'view of frankpledge' was short-hand for the additional judicial rights held by the court. Courts leet upheld the assize of bread and ale by appointing ale-tasters to ensure that standards were maintained, and also had the right to appoint township constables.

- **Court of Dimissions**: a separate court to which customary or copyhold tenants came to surrender their tenancies and be admitted tenant.

- **Court of Survey**: a special meeting of a manor court, called to produce a written survey, listing the tenants, their holdings and the terms of their tenures.

➢ **Subjects of Court Jurisdiction and Enquiry**

Manor courts dealt with a wide range of subjects. They made orders and formulated byelaws. People who infringed them were 'presented' and were subject to a financial penalty. The orders and presentments of the courts can be grouped under the following headings:

- **Public order offences**:
  - breaches of the King's peace, whether fighting (affrays), uproar or hubbub (hubbleshows), drawing blood (blouds; bloodwites), pilfering (petty micherie) or slanders
- potentially inflammatory behaviour, such as eavesdropping or walking by night
- rogues and vagabonds

**Infringement of the lord’s privileges:**
- fishing and hunting without licence. Statutes forbade the keeping of greyhounds and the tracing of hares in the snow.
- cutting timber and underwood without licence
- breaking the lord’s soil (generally by encroaching or making 'intakes' on the manorial waste)
- failing to grind corn at the lord’s mill.

The lord also had a financial interest in several of the concerns included in the following two groupings

**Offences against the stability of the community:**
- allowing houses to fall into decay
- subdividing (taverning) of holdings
- keeping undertenants or inmates (also referred to in northern England as byfires, byholdes or undersetts). This attempt to limit the numbers of the poor in a community was reinforced by statutes which forbade the building of cottages without land, and the harbouring of inmates (1 Eliz I, c.17; 31 Eliz I, c.7).

**Offences against good neighbourhood and common rights:**
- infringements of the customary practices regarding the impounding of stray livestock. These included 'rescues', when an individual attempted to recapture animals when they were being driven to the common pound or pinfold by an officer of the lord; and 'fold breaks', when stock were taken from the pinfold without making the necessary payment to the lord, known as 'pound loose'.
- allowing livestock on the common which had no right there. This could include 'foreign cattle' belonging to people without a right of pasture; 'overstint' by putting on the pastures more animals than an individual had a right to; and bringing livestock into the manor by agistment.
- unneighbourly or inconsiderate livestock management, including driving stock to the common by the wrong route or 'drift'; using the wrong marks on sheep and cattle; putting diseased stock on the common; and hounding the livestock of others.
- failure to maintain fences, walls and gates, and to keep water in its right course.
- breaches of statute. For example, the act of 1540 specified a minimum height for stallions put on to common pastures (32 Hen VIII, c.13); or the legislation controlling the dates on which moorland could be burned (7 Jas. I, c.17)
Manorial Tenants

- **Freehold:** the freeholders or free tenants of a manor held their land for ever; in other words there was no known date by which the tenancy would end. Freehold land was not subject to the customs of the manor.

- **Copyhold:** the form of tenure which descended from the unfree, villein tenures of the middle ages. Copyhold land was defined legally as land held 'by copy of court roll at the will of the lord, according to the customs of the manor.' The precise nature of the tenure, the customs governing payment of entry fines, for example, varied from manor to manor.

- **Customary tenantright:** a form of tenure common throughout the northern counties, which gave the tenant a security akin to a freehold (in that he could devise or sell his property freely) but required the payment of both an entry fine on change of tenant and a general fine on change of lord, as well as other customary dues, such as the payment of a heriot. It was thus a variant of copyhold: tenants were admitted by the manor court and held their land by copy of court roll. The roots of customary tenantright have been much debated. The security that the tenure gave to tenants was fiercely contested by manorial lords in the 16th and early 17th centuries but the royal courts ultimately upheld the tenants' rights.

Manorial Rights

Lordship of a manor carried with it a bundle of rights over land within the manor, even over land that was in the hands of tenants. Manorial records contain much material about these rights, including the lords' rights over the following:

- **Manorial waste:** common land, the unenclosed moorland, fell, mountain or marsh, which remained in its semi-natural state, not appropriated to any individual. By the Statute of Merton of 1236, ownership of such wastes in a manor was vested in the lord of the manor. In practice, the lord's ability to change the use of the waste, by enclosure, was restricted by the common rights of the tenants of the manor which normally included common rights of pasture, turbary and estovers. Tenants often encroached on the waste, by enclosing intakes of land, which were frequently accepted on payment of rent to the lord.

- **Game:** the right to hunt wild animals on the demesne and on the wastes of the manor was generally the lord's privilege. After 1710, lords of manors were required by the Game Acts to register the appointment of gamekeepers with the Clerk to Quarter Sessions. Some of these registers are preserved among the Quarter Sessions records at Lancashire Archives.

- **Fisheries:** the lord of the manor generally retained the right to wild fish (in rivers rather than fishponds) and could demand payment from people fishing in rivers and lakes within his manor.

- **Mills:** the lord of the manor could require his tenants to grind their grain at his mill, extracting from them a mill toll (multure).
- **Minerals**: the lord of the manor retained rights to the minerals under copyhold land. Mineral rights were potentially extremely valuable where the manor lay on a mineral which could be exploited commercially.

- **Woodland**: manorial custom drew a distinction between *timber* (particularly the large and valuable species such as oak and ash) and *underwood*, the scrub and bushes. Tenants usually had the right to take underwood growing on their lands, but lords retained the right to timber growing on copyhold land, as well as the rights to woodland on their demesnes. The lords' timber rights meant that tenants could not fell mature trees on their land, even for use on their holding: instead they had to apply to the manorial officers for licence to fell timber. When copyhold or customary tenantright land was enfranchised, woodland was often valued in detail, since timber rights were one of the rights the tenants were buying from the lord.

**Manorial Records**

Manorial administration generated a wide range of records. These are the ones most commonly found.

- **Account**: the Manorial Documents Register includes financial accounts (Latin *compti*) drawn up by manorial officials, such as reeves (graves) and bailiffs. The division between manorial accounts and estate accounts is somewhat arbitrary. Accounts may usually be classed as manorial if they contain details of income and expenditure relating specifically to manorial administration, such as income from holding manorial courts (the 'pleas and perquisites of courts') or from entry fines and heriots, or expenditure on carrying out a perambulation of the boundaries of the manor. Manorial accounts are generally in Latin. They sometimes contain names of individual people or properties, but the focus is on sums of money.

- **Admittance**: a copy of an entry in a court roll, admitting an individual to a tenancy in the manor, whether by inheritance, on the death of his father, for example, or by 'surrender', where the new tenant had purchased the tenancy and the previous tenant had surrendered his interest to the lord. Tenants were admitted to copyhold and customary tenancies by this process. On some manors separate courts of dimissions were held for recording surrenders and admittances.

- **Call book or call roll**: an attendance register for a manor court, listing the tenants who were required to attend, including free tenants who held their land by 'suit of court'. Some call books were updated year by year, with notes of tenants who had died or sold their land and the names of their successors.

- **Court book**: the formal record of a manor court when written into a volume rather than a parchment roll or loose sheets. Some court books contain only a record of admittances and surrenders, rather than a full record of the sitting of a court.
- **Court roll**: the formal record of a manor court in the form of a parchment or paper roll. The term was sometimes used for manor court records in other formats, including loose sheets of paper.
- **Custumal**: a survey or rental which includes details of the rents, services and customs by which tenants held their land.
- **Enfranchisement papers**: enfranchisement, whereby a tenant bought the freehold interest in their tenancy from the lord gave tenants great security of tenure and severely limited the income a lord could obtain. The process had begun in the 16th century on a few manors but became widespread during the 18th and 19th centuries. It often generated considerable paperwork, including surveys and valuations of tenants' estates, valuations of timber on tenants' land, and financial papers calculating the sum for which the freehold would be bought.
- **Estreats**: a list, extracted from the court roll, detailing the fines and amercements imposed by the court at a particular sitting.
- **Extent**: a valuation of a manor, listing the value of each element from which the lord derived income - demesne lands, mills, woods, tenants' rents and services, etc. Extents give a financial bird's eye view of a manor and are the commonest form of manorial survey in the medieval period.
- **Pain list**: a list of byelaws and orders (pains), breaches of which would result in the imposition of a financial penalty (amercement) by the manor court.
- **Perambulation**: a description of the boundaries of a manor, often recording the boundaries as beaten or perambulated by members of the manor court. Perambulations were sometimes held routinely but often reflect the need to stake a claim in the face of a dispute over manorial rights, especially on waste ground on the margins of a manor. By the 19th century, perambulations had become festive occasions.
- **Petition**: a formal request to the lord of the manor from a tenant or tenants.
- **Rental**: a list of tenants, recording the amount of rent due from each.
- **Steward's papers**: ancillary papers created by the steward of a manor, including memoranda books, correspondence, copies of court papers, etc. In the Manorial Documents Register this description is used to include papers concerning mineral rights, fisheries and the appointment of gamekeepers.
- **Survey**: a written description of a manor or manors, usually giving details of manorial boundaries and customs and detailing each holding of land. By the 16th century some surveys give full field-by-field details of individual farms. Surveys were sometimes drawn up by a specially convened meeting of the manor court, a court of survey.
- **Terrier**: a survey arranged topographically, field by field (or, in the case of open arable fields, strip by strip).
- **Valor**: a summary valuation of a manor, based on information in manorial accounts, and laying out the income and expenses to show how much profit a manor could be expected to provide.
- **Verdict sheet**: the record of decisions made by a manor court jury. This is often the original record made at the time of the court sitting, the substance of which would later be entered as the formal record of the court in a court roll or court book.
Interpreting the Record of a Manor Court

The main elements of the record of a manor court are likely to be as follows, though they will not necessarily be in this order:

The Preamble: This will be in Latin until 1733, except during the interregnum of the 1650s, when some courts used English throughout. The preamble usually consists of a standard phrase:

'Manor of A, Court B of C held at D on E before F.'

A = Name of Manor. Note that a manor did not necessarily cover the same area as a parish or township of the same name. It might contain land in more than one place; or cover only part of a township.
B = Type of Court, usually Court Baron or Court Leet with view of Frankpledge
C = Name of the Lord of the Manor
D = Place where the court was held
E = Date. Medieval court rolls express the date with reference to a saint’s day (e.g. in festo sancti Martini, post/ante festum sancti Martini), followed by the regnal year (e.g. anno regni Regis Henrici sexti vii)
F = Name of the person who presided over the court. This was usually the lord’s steward (Latin seneschallus), rather than the lord himself.

The Call List: a list of all freeholders who owed suit to the court. The letters ap' beside a name record that 'he appeared' (he was present) at the court; es' record that he was 'essoined' (excused for non-appearance).

The Jury: tenants of the manor who corporately made decisions under oath.

The Record of Business Transacted by the Court: this usually consisted of some or all of the following:

- **Admittances**: transfers of copyhold or customary tenantright land in the manor. This might be by inheritance - on death of his father, for example - or by sale (by surrender), where the previous owner surrenders the property to the lord and the purchaser is admitted as the new tenant.
- **Presentments**: members of the community are amerced (fined) for breaches of byelaws and orders previously made by the court.
- **Orders**: acting in the interests of the lord and the whole community of the manor, the jury make specific orders and byelaws to promote communal well-being and to resolve disputes.
- **Appointment of Officers**: the election and swearing-in of manorial officials for the following year. Officers might include: barleyman, constable, hedgelooker; houselooker; moor reeve; moss reeve; pinder or pounder.
- **Pleas**: the hearing of minor civil cases including debt, trespass and 'detinue' (where one person owed goods, rather than money, to another). Manor courts could hear pleas where the damages claimed were not above 40 shillings.
- **Postscript by the Affeerors**: affeerors were appointed by the court to fix and mitigate the penalties dealt out by the jury for proven offences.
Locating Manorial Records

The key to finding out whether manorial records survive for a particular manor and, if so, where they are kept is the Manorial Documents Register (MDR). For those counties which are included on the online version of the Manorial Documents Register, the register will sometimes provide a full reference to individual manorial records but you will usually also need to consult record office lists and catalogues, in order to obtain the full reference. You will then have all the information you need to ask to see an original record.

**Manorial Documents Register (MDR)**

This is the national register of manorial records, maintained by The National Archives at Kew. Originally a card index, this is now being recreated as a searchable, online database. To date all the counties of Wales have been made searchable online, together with the following historic English counties: Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire, the three Ridings of Yorkshire, Shropshire, Isle of Wight, Surrey, Middlesex, Cumberland, Westmorland, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Warwickshire, and Lancashire. The MDR for Lancashire North of the Sands (the Furness area, which has been part of Cumbria since 1974) was completed as part of the Cumbria MDR project, but has been treated on the MDR database as part of Lancashire. For other counties you will need to go to Kew to consult the paper Manorial Documents Register in The National Archives.

The online database is searchable by parish name, so you do not need to know the name of a manor in order to find documents relating to an area in which you are interested. For the counties of Lancashire, Cumberland and Westmorland, 'parish' means the modern civil parish (which in most cases is equivalent to the ancient civil unit of administration - the township) rather than the ancient ecclesiastical parish, many of which were vast territories encompassing many settlements. Where it seemed useful and practicable, the old township name has been included with the civil parish, making the search as complete as possible.

**Record Office Lists and Catalogues**

In order to look at an original manorial document, you will need to request it from the strongroom in the record office or library where it is kept. And to do that, you will need to know its reference number in that repository. You may already have this if you have identified the document using the Manorial Documents Register. However if you don’t have a full reference, you will need to look at the relevant record office or library catalogue.

Some of these archive lists and catalogues are now available online through the Access to Archives - A2A - website: [http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/)

However, many archive catalogues have not yet been published online and will be found as typescript volumes on the shelves of the record office search room.

When using record office catalogues, it is important to understand how archivists arrange and list the collections in their care. Most people are familiar with using
libraries where the author's name, book title, publisher and date of publication are the key elements in finding a printed work. The starting point for archival material is not the author or title of the manuscript but its *provenance*, asking the questions: 'Where did it come from?' or 'Who created it?' When manuscripts have been deposited in a record office, this question translates as 'Which collection is it in?' Most archive repositories contain many collections of archives from different organisations, and a key principle of archive management is to keep archive collections together in their original order.

Within collections, archives are usually arranged into groups or classes, according to how they were created or came to be in the collection. Manorial records often form a class within a large family or estate collection. An archive class may contain thousands of individual documents which are sometimes subdivided into subsets or series, within which each document is usually given an individual item number.

For example, the full MDR reference to a court book of the manor court of Formby (1757-1815) is *LA, DDFO/15/11*

This is a unique reference for this particular record and is made up of the following elements:

*LA*: the standard MDR abbreviation for the repository: Lancashire Archives (Preston)

*DDFO*: the collection, in this case deposited by the Formby family of Formby

*DDFO/15*: documents which relate to Formby manor

*DDFO/15/11*: the item number (11) assigned to this particular record

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**Major Collections of Lancashire Manorial Records**

There are several major collections of Lancashire manorial records held at Lancashire Archives. These include:

- **DDCL**: Clifton of Lytham
- **DDF**: Farington of Worden
- **DDFO**: Formby of Formby
- **DDGE**: Gerard of Garswood
- **DDHE**: Hesketh of Rufford
- **DDHCL**: Honour of Clitheroe
- **DDHO**: de Hoghton of Hoghton
- **DDK**: Stanley, Earls of Derby
- **DDM**: Molyneux, Earls of Sefton
- **DDPT**: Petre of Dunkenhalgh
- **DDTO**: Towneley of Towneley
- **DDTR**: de Trafford of Trafford

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**Superior Lordships in Lancashire**

Manorial records in Lancashire often relate to more than one manor. Records of this type are generally found in two circumstances:

- **Superior lordship**: the structure of medieval lordship in Lancashire created units of overlordship – such as the honour of Clitheroe – which covered extensive
areas of land. The legacy of these baronial estates survived into the post-
medieval period, sometimes as single manors covering several settlements; and
sometimes as a higher level of court, having superior jurisdiction over estates
which were manors in their own right.

- **Estate groups:** where one landowner held several manors, some classes of
  manorial documents, (for example surveys and records of entry fines) may
  contain information about all of them. The archives of the Stanleys, the earls of
  Derby [DDK] and Petre of Dunkenhalgh [DDPT] are cases in point.

There were several baronies and major fees in Lancashire, which had superior
lordship over many manors.¹ They included, for example:

- **Makerfield (or Newton) Barony:** comprising Ashton (in Makerfield), Billinge,
  Golborne, Haydock, Hindley, Kenyon, Lowton, Middleton, Ince (in
  Makerfield), Newton (in Makerfield), Orrell, Pemberton, Poulton, Southworth
  and Croft, Winstanley, Winwick, Woolston.

- **Widnes Barony:**² comprising Astley, Cronton, Eccleston, Little Crosby,
  Cuerdley, Kirkby, Knowsley (with its member manors, Huyton, Roby and
  Tarbock), Maghull, Rainhill, Simonswood, Sutton, Widnes, Little Woolton, and
  Much Woolton.

- **Penwortham Barony:** comprising Adlington, Anderton, Ashton under Lyne,
  Birkdale Bretherton, Brindle, Charnock Richard, Claughton, Clayton le Woods,
  Duxbury, Elston, Elswick, Euxton, Farington, Freckleton, Heath Charnock,
  Hoghton, Hutton, Kirkdale, Leyland, Longton, Mythop, North Meols,
  Penwortham, Preese, Rufford, Shevington, Standish, Ulnes Walton, Barton,
  Welch Whittle, Whittingham, and Whittle le Woods.

- **Manchester Barony:** comprising Allerton, Anglezarke, Aspull, Barton,
  Bradshaw, Childwall, Clayton, Coppull, Dalton, Farnworth, Flixton, Heaton,
  Halliwell, Harwood, Longworth, Lostock, Manchester, Moston, Parbold,
  Pilkington, Rumworth, Sharples, Turton, Westhoughton, Withington, and
  Wrightington.

- **Warrington Barony:** comprising Atherton, Bedford, Bold, Culcheth, Halsall,
  Hesketh with Becconsall, Ince Blundell, Layton, Lydiate, Penketh, Pennington,
  Rixton with Glazebrook, Great Sankey, Tyldesley, Warrington, Westleigh and
  Windle.

The demesne manors of the Honour of Clitheroe included Accrington (including
Haslingden), Chatburn, Colne, Lightenhill, Forest of Pendle, Pendleton, Forest of
Rossendale, Tottington, Forest of Trawden, and Worston.

¹ The extent of these baronies can be seen on W. Farrer’s map of the Lancashire feudal baronage in
The Victoria History of the County of Lancaster, vol 1 (1906).
² Widnes and its member manors formed the Lancashire portion of the Barony of Halton.
Superior Lordship and the Manorial Documents Register

The MDR is a register of documents and a finding aid: it cannot replicate the detail found in archive lists or show the complexities of relationships between individual manors and superior lordships.

- Check the MDR for your manor of interest and the superior manor(s) under which it fell: there may be relevant records listed in each. The same applies if you are interested in a superior manor: look for relevant records listed under its constituent manors.

- Remember that some estates generated records which covered many manors. Use catalogues and hand lists to help identify these.

- Generally, records generated by an honour are entered on the MDR at that level – for example under 'Clitheroe Honour'. However, the same document details are sometimes also entered under the names of the constituent manors to which they relate. This is usually true of court rolls/books and/or verdicts of a superior manor that are known to include the records of courts held for a constituent manor. However it has not been possible to consult every court book and court roll while compiling the MDR. More general administrative papers generated by superior manors – such as rentals, surveys, fines etc. – are usually registered under the superior manor alone.

Manorial Records for Local and Family History

The term 'manorial records' covers a wide range of documents, from the formal records of manor courts to correspondence, maps and plans, and financial records. As archives which record day-to-day transactions in local communities, they bring us close to people in the past and have considerable potential for family and local history research.

Sources for Family History

Manorial records can supplement the more familiar local sources for family history, sometimes shedding valuable additional light on the lives of our ancestors. They are especially important as a source before the introduction of parish registers in 1538. Manorial records may yield the following information:

- **Vital dates.** Though manorial records do not record births, marriages or deaths, they do contain considerable information about individuals, including approximate dates of death. The key records here are those recording changes of tenancy on the death of a tenant: presentments of changes of tenant in a court roll or court book and admittances give the names of the deceased and incoming tenants and their relationships (son, daughter, brother, etc). Call books and call lists are also useful noting 'dead' or mort beside the names of tenants who had died recently. Full calls of tenants were seldom made every year, so that the lists were frequently out of date and the note that a tenant had died was sometimes made several years after the event.
• **Role in the local community.** Manorial records can provide considerable information to flesh out the bald names and dates on a family tree. As records of land holding, they provide details of property held by a tenant of the manor. Surveys and terriers give descriptions of landed property and the names of tenants. However, if you compare the names of tenants of a manor listed in a rental or survey and the names of local inhabitants recorded in a parish register, there is often considerable discrepancy.

Manorial records of landholding deal with those who held their land directly of the lord of the manor and such tenants were not always resident. It is not uncommon to find that successive generations of a family who appear as tenants of a farm turn out to have been merchants in a distant town or city! As such, they would have let their customary estate to an undertenant, who would not appear in the manorial records of landholding but may have been a longstanding member of the local community and prominent in the parish register and other local records.

Where tenants were resident in the manor, much information can be found about the role played by individuals in the local community.

Lists of jury members and of manorial officials (reeve, constable, barleyman, hedgelooker etc) identify those who took a leading role in local affairs.

Presentments and orders give the names of those who offended against local byelaws or committed minor crimes. Presentments concerning slander can give a vivid picture of the insults our ancestors hurled at each other!

Civil pleas, where individuals brought cases of debt and trespass against their neighbours, may shed light on economic links between members of the manorial community.

• **Literacy.** Another area in which manorial records can bring us closer to the lives of our forebears is in providing direct evidence for levels of literacy in local communities. Original presentments and jury verdicts were often written by local people, rather than professional clerks or lawyers. These and other records, such as petitions and enfranchisement papers, sometimes bear signatures or marks. Handwriting can provide vivid evidence of levels of education and familiarity with the written word.

➢ **Sources for the History of the Community**

Manorial records, particularly the records of manor courts, are potentially an extremely rich source for studying the workings of local communities in the past. Being concerned with patterns of power and authority and with disputes within the community (whether breaches of 'good neighbourhood', or minor civil pleas between individuals), the manor court proceedings enable us to view social and economic interactions in a way that few other medieval or early-modern sources can. Among the topics on which manor court records can shed light are:

• **Social structure.** Patterns of economic power through holding land can be traced through records of tenancies (see also Sources for Property History). The big players can be distinguished from the small fry and the operations of the land
market traced across time, as holdings were subdivided or amalgamated. Patterns of power and authority in the local community can be explored by analysing patterns of jury membership and office holding.

- **Social tensions.** Fracture lines within communities can be identified in two main ways: through the structural framework of orders and byelaws, which distinguish between insiders and outsiders (as, for example, in the orders differentiating the rights of landless cottagers from those of the farming community); and from presentments for slanders, affrays and other disorder which provide direct evidence for social tension.

- **Economic relationships.** The pleas heard by the court baron (minor civil cases, where the damages claimed were less than 40 shillings) are a potentially rich source for employer/employee relationships, credit networks and other financial relationships between members of the manorial community. Pleas have received comparatively little attention from historians but they offer huge scope for recreating the economic bonds of community, particularly when used in conjunction with other sources, both manorial (rentals, surveys, and other aspects of manor court records) and non-manorial.

**Sources for Property History**

Many of the records generated by manorial administration concern property, particularly property held as copyhold or by the customary tenant-right tenures. One of the functions of the court baron was to act as a register of changes of tenancy and, on many manors, a wide range of other records was kept to assist the lord and his officials to keep track on who held what and, most importantly, what dues and services were owed to the lord.

Rentals and surveys provide snapshots of landholding at particular points of time, as do the records of general fines, paid on the death of the lord of the manor. Accounts, recording the dues collected by the lord's reeve, sometimes include references to sums paid for individual properties. Details of changes of tenancy are provided by admittances and records of entry fines. The end of customary tenures on a manor is charted in enfranchisement papers.

Again, it is important to remember that a customary tenant was, effectively, the owner of a holding and may well not have been resident in the manor. The people recorded as 'tenant' often had under-tenants who were the people who lived and worked the land.

**Sources for the History of the Local Environment**

Manorial records contain both a wealth of topographical information and important evidence for the ways in which communities engaged with their local environments. Of particular significance are the byelaws and orders (pains) recorded by manor courts. Many of these concern the management of common land, the maintenance of water courses and upkeep of hedges and walls. Surveys often contain details of field names and other minor names, many now long forgotten, and information on land use and buildings. Boundary perambulations also provide lost landscape details and enable us to recapture some of the richness of lost names in the landscape.
Further Reading

The works listed below include some standard works on manorial records as well as publications relating to manorial records in Lancashire.

Manorial Records - general works

Harvey, P D A, Manorial Records (British Records Association, Archives and the User No. 5, revised edition, 1999)


Harrison, Christopher, 'Manor courts and the governance of Tudor England', in Christopher Brooks and Michael Lobban (eds.), Communities and Courts in Britain 1150-1900 (Hambledon Press, 1997) pp 43-59

Hearnshaw, F J C, Leet Jurisdiction in England (Southampton Record Society, 1908)


Stuart, Denis, Manorial Records: An introduction to their transcription and translation ( Phillimore, 1992)


Studies Using Lancashire Manorial Records

Bailey, F A, 'The Court Leet of Prescot', Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire (vol. 84, 1932) pp 63-85

Bailey, F A, 'Coroners' inquests held in the manor of Prescot, 1746-89, Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire (vol. 86, 1934) pp 21-39


Tupling, G H, The Economic History of Rossendale, (Chetham Society new series vol. 86, 1927)


Printed Texts of Lancashire Manorial Records


Earwacker, J P, The Court leet records of the manor of Manchester, from the year 1552 to the year 1686, and from the year 1731 to the year 1846, 9 vols (Blacklock & co, 1884-1890)

Farrer, W, The court rolls of the Honor of Clitheroe in the County of Lancaster, 3 vols (vol. 1 Emmot; vols 2-3 Ballantyne, 1912-1913)

Fishwick, H, The survey of the manor of Rochdale in the county of Lancaster, parcel of the possessions of the rt. worshipful Sir Robert Heath, knt., his majesty's attorney-general, made in 1626 (Chetham Society new series vol. 71, 1913)

Harland, J, Mamecestre: being chapters from the early recorded history of the barony; the lordship or manor; the vill, borough, or town, of Manchester, vols.1-3 (Chetham Society old series vols. 53, 56, 58, 1861-1862)

Harland, J, A volume of court leet records of the manor of Manchester in the sixteenth century [part i], (Chetham Society old series vol. 63, 1864)

Harland, J, Continuation of the court leet records of the manor of Manchester, A.D.1586-1602 [part ii] (Chetham Society old series vol. 65, 1865)

Harland, J, Three Lancashire documents of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, comprising I: The great de Lacy inquisition, Feb.16, 1311 II: The survey of 1320-1346 III: Custom roll and rental of the manor of Ashton-under-Lyne, November 11, 1422’ (Chetham Society old series vol. 84, 1868)

King, W J, The Court Rolls of Prescot 1640-1647 (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire vol. 143, 2008)

de T. Mandley, J G, The Portmote or Court Leet Records of the Borough or Town and Royal Manor of Salford from the Year 1597 to 1669 inclusive, vol.i (Chetham Society new series vol. 46, 1902)

de T. Mandley, J G, The Portmote or Court Leet Records of the Borough or Town and Royal Manor of Salford, vol.ii (Chetham Society new series vol. 48, 1902)


Glossary

**Admittance:** a copy of an entry in a court roll, admitting an individual to a copyhold or customary tenancy in the manor.

**Affeeror:** an officer appointed by the court to fix the actual sum taken from a transgressor by way of amercement. Two affeerors were normally appointed; they often mitigated amercements to a sum much lower than that set by the court.

**Agistment:** right to summer grazing

**Amercement:** the fine imposed by the court for breach of a byelaw or order. In origin the word reflects the fact that the offender was deemed by his offence to have placed himself 'at the lord's mercy', from which the payment of the amercement freed him.

**Assign:** a person to whom property or rights were legally transferred

**Assize of bread and ale:** the statute which regulated the price, weight and quality of bread and beer made and sold.

**Bailiff:** the manorial official in charge of one or more manors, but subordinate to the steward; distinguished from a reeve by being paid a stipend.

**Barleyman:** a byrlaw man, an official appointed by a manor court to uphold the byelaws and orders of the court and to present those breaching them.

**Barony:** type of feudal tenure whereby several manors were held by a landowner directly of the king in return for knight service (the provision of soldiers). Those who held by barony (Latin *per baroniam*) were called barons and were entitled to attend the king's council.

**Call Book:** an attendance register for a manor court, listing the tenants who were required to attend, including free tenants who held their land by 'suit of court'.

**Common rights:** the rights exercised by tenants of a manor on common land within the manor. The rights most frequently encountered are common of pasture, common of turbary and common of estovers.

**Constable:** a public official who formed part of the local government system; responsible for keeping the peace, collecting taxes etc.

**Copyhold:** the form of tenure which descended from the unfree, villein tenures of the middle ages. Copyhold land was defined legally as land held 'by copy of court roll at the will of the lord, according to the custom of the manor'
**Court Baron:** (Latin *curia baronis*) the basic manorial court, held by a manorial lord for his tenants, both free and villein.

**Court Capital:** (Latin *curia capitalis*, literally 'head court') the principal meeting of a court leet, normally held twice a year in spring and autumn.

**Court Leet:** (Latin *curia leta cum visu franciplegii*) a manorial court with the right to deal with a wider range of matters than a court baron, specifically with minor criminal offences. Leet rights included maintaining the quality of bread and ale (assize of bread and ale) and some courts leet continued to appoint ale tasters.

**Court of Dimissions:** a separate court to which tenants came to surrender their tenancies and be admitted tenant.

**Court of Survey:** a special meeting of a manor court, called to produce a written survey, listing the tenants, their holdings and the terms of their tenures.

**Customary tenantright:** a form of tenure akin to copyhold, which gave the tenant a security akin to a freehold (in that he could devise or sell his property freely) but required the payment of both an entry fine, on change of tenant, and a general fine, on change of lord, as well as other customary dues, such as the payment of a heriot.

**Custumal:** a survey or rental which includes details of the rents, services and customs by which tenants held their land.

**Demesne:** the land farmed directly on behalf of the lord himself as a home farm.

**Detinue:** action to recover personal property wrongfully taken.

**Dimissions:** changes of tenancy, recorded by the manor court: see also admittance; court of dimissions; surrender.

**Enfranchisement:** the granting of a freehold interest, specifically the conversion of a customary tenantright tenancy into a freehold. The tenant paid a lump sum based on the value of the property to acquire the freehold.

**Entry fine:** a sum of money paid to the lord by a tenant entering a property. These were of two types: a 'certain fine', which was a fixed sum, usually related to the ancient yearly rent of a property; and the 'arbitrary fine', which was variable, was usually calculated on the basis of the annual rental value of the property.

**Essoined:** excused - where a tenant who owed suit to a court had tendered an apology for absence.

**Estovers:** originally the right to take wood for necessary repairs or fuel, it came to refer to the right to take a variety of vegetation, including bracken, heather or rushes, from the common, for necessary uses such as thatching.
**Estreat:** a list, extracted from the court roll, detailing the fines and amercements imposed by the court at a particular sitting.

**Extent:** a valuation of a manor, listing the value of each element from which the lord derived income: demesne lands, mills, woods, tenants' rents and services, etc. Extents give a financial bird's eye view of a manor and are the commonest form of manorial survey in the medieval period.

**Fee:** land held of an overlord 'in fee' in return for allegiance and service.

**Fine:** a payment to the lord, usually as a condition of tenancy rather than a penalty. See Entry fine; General fine

**Foldbreak:** the act of removing impounded livestock from the manorial pound or pinfold without paying the required due, sometimes called 'pound loose'.

**Frankpledge:** a surety or pledge by a group of freemen. The term originated in the Anglo-Saxon system of tithings, which were groups of ten free men who pledged to be mutually responsible for good behaviour. In manorial records, the term survived in the phrase 'court leet with view of frankpledge', reflecting the peace-keeping role of the court leet. 'View of frankpledge' was shorthand for the franchises enjoyed by courts leet which differentiated them from courts baron.

**Freehold:** land held in fee simple, that is 'for ever', by rendering homage and service to the lord of the manor.

**General fine:** a sum paid by tenants on the death of the lord of the manor. It was one of the characteristics of customary tenantright tenure.

**Grave/greave:** see Reeve

**Halmote:** court of the lord of the manor

**Heriot:** a payment, usually of the best beast, which was due to the lord on the death of a tenant.

**Hedgelooker / Houselooker:** see -looker

-looker (as in fencelooker; houselooker): an official appointed by the manor court jury to oversee the subject in question and to present offenders. The fencelooker ensured that field boundaries were kept in good repair; the houselooker that tenants kept their houses in repair.

**Moor reeve:** an official appointed by the manor court to oversee the exercise of common rights on open moorland.
**Moss reeve:** an official appointed by the manor court to oversee the exercise of turbary rights in a peat moss.

**Multure:** mill toll; a payment for grinding corn at the lord's mill. As tenants were generally bound to take their grain to the manorial mill, multure formed an important part of the lord's income.

**Overlordship:** where land is held of an overlord.

**Pain(e):** (Latin *pena*); used to refer to the orders and byelaws imposed by the manor court. A jury was said to 'lay a pain', i.e. make an order.

**Pannage:** payment for the right to graze pigs in woodland.

**Pasture, common of:** the right to graze livestock on common land, whether this is the open fields and meadows after the crop has been harvested or the common pasture or waste.

**Perambulation:** a description of the boundaries of a manor, often recording the boundaries as beaten or perambulated (walked round) by members of the manor court.

**Perquisites:** profits of the court.

**Pinder/Pounder:** the manorial officer who impounded livestock in the pound or pinfold. By virtue of this, he might also have general oversight of the exercise of pasture rights on the common; see also Moor reeve.

**Pleas:** a court baron had the power to hear civil cases arising from disputes between tenants, where the damages claimed were under 40 shillings. These pleas (plaints) mainly consisted of cases of debt and trespass, though the courts also had the right to hear cases of breach of covenant and detinue (the withholding of goods rather than money).

**Portmote:** court held for a town (eg: the court leet of Salford)

**Pound loose:** a sum paid to reclaim livestock impounded in the manorial pound or pinfold.

**Presentment:** a statement made on oath by the jury or by an officer of the manor court, accusing an individual of breaching a rule or byelaw (paine).

**Receiver:** the lord of the manor's treasurer, to whom the income from each manor was paid.

**Rectory manor:** where a parish church had a substantial endowment of land, this was often administered in the same way as a conventional manor. After the
dissolution of the monasteries the rectories which had been appropriated to monastic houses were granted out to individuals and institutions, so that many rectory manors were in the hands of laymen from the 16th century.

**Reeve:** (Latin *prepositus*) a tenant of the manor chosen, by the lord or from among his fellows, to be responsible for the management of the manor, and to render an account annually. Where the demesne was no longer farmed directly, the reeve became, in effect, the lord's rent collector. In northern England, the vernacular name for the reeve was usually 'greave' or 'grave'. A mossreeve had particular responsibility to oversee turbary rights in a peat moss.

**Rental:** a list of tenants, recording the amount of rent due from each.

**Rescue** (or 'rescous'): the act of physically repossessing livestock being taken to the manorial pound or pinfold. This was a serious offence, punishable by a substantial amercement in the manor court.

**Steward:** (Latin *senescallus*) the lord's officer whose duties included presiding at the sittings of the manor court. By the 16th century most stewards were trained lawyers.

**Suit:** appearance at the manorial court

**Surrender:** when a copyholder or customary tenant sold his property he had to surrender it to the lord, who would then admit the purchaser. This was a technicality which ensured that the entry fine was paid and the change of tenancy recorded.

**Survey:** a written description of a manor or manors, usually giving details of manorial boundaries and customs and detailing each holding of land.

**Terrier:** a survey arranged topographically, field by field or, in the case of open arable fields, strip by strip.

**Turbary:** the right to cut turves and dig peat on the common.

**Valor:** a summary valuation of a manor, laying out the income and expenses with a view to showing how much profit a manor could be expected to provide. Valors were based on information in manorial accounts.

**Verdict:** conclusion of the jury.

**Villein:** 'unfree' tenants who owed various services to the lord of the manor. They may also have had to pay renders in kind. Over time villeins came to be known as customary tenants because they held their land according to the customs of the manor.
Examples

This section provides images of manor court records from around Lancashire. Each image is accompanied, where necessary, by a transcript and/or translation and a commentary. The authors would like to thank the owners and custodians of manorial documents who kindly allowed us to use images of their records for this publication.

1. Accounts
2. Admittance and Surrender Papers
3. Call Books
4. Court Books and Rolls
   4.1 Amercements
   4.2 Appointment of Officers
   4.3 Marks and Signatures
5. Estreats
6. Pains
7. Perambulations
8. Presentments
9. Rentals
10. Steward’s Papers
11. Surveys
12. Verdict Sheets
1. Accounts

Manorial accounts (Latin *compoti*) were drawn up by manorial officials, such as reeves and bailiffs. The division between manorial accounts and estate accounts is somewhat arbitrary: accounts may usually be classed as manorial if they contain details of income and expenditure relating specifically to manorial administration, such as income from holding manorial courts (the ‘pleas and perquisites of courts’) or from entry fines, for example. They sometimes contain names of individual people or properties, but the focus is on sums of money.

*Manor of Upholland, 1429/30*

Lancashire Archives, DDHI Box 35
Commentary:
This receivers’ account for the manor of Upholland, for the accounting year 1429/30, contains some typical components of manorial accounts including:

- Arrears (Latin *arreragium*) denoted by ‘arr’ in the margin
- Rents
- Profits/revenue (Latin *exitus*) from the assets of the manorial demesne; including, in this instance, from the corn mill (Latin *firma molendini*)
- Income from the manor court (Latin *curia*) made up of the fines and amercements levied by the manor court which formed part of the lord’s income.

*Manor of Upholland, 1696*

Commentary:
This later account by the bailiff of Upholland begins with arrears amounting to £2 18s 3½d. There follows a list of the income from the various types of rents owed to the lord of the manor and income from ‘admittances of copyholders’, known as entry fines.

Lancashire Archives, DDK 1553/74
Commentary:
This account was produced by the bailiff of the manor of Bursegh for the period 25th March to 29th September 1697. It deals first with arrears, followed by the rents due. It ends with the income from perquisites of court for the previous year, which amounted to £1 16s 10d.
2. Admittance and Surrender Records

When a copyholder or customary tenant sold his property he had to surrender it to the lord, who would then admit the purchaser as tenant in his place. This was a technicality which ensured that the entry fine was paid and the change of tenancy recorded. The tenant would usually be given a copy of the entry in the court record.

*Manor of Coniston, 1783*

![Document in private ownership](image)

**Commentary:**
This copy of an entry in the Coniston manor court roll, admits Adam Bell to a ‘close of woody ground’ in the manor, which he had bought from William Atkinson.

The ancient yearly rent to the lord of the manor, a notional sum, is given in the right hand margin (2½d)

The entry fine or 'gressum' in the left hand margin (4s 2d)

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3 Lancashire North of the Sands.
3. Call Books

Call books listed the tenants who owed suit at the manor court. They were working documents, annotated in an attempt to keep abreast of changes of tenant.

**Manor of Church, 1835-39**

![Image of a call book from Manor of Church, 1835-39]

**Commentary:**
In this call book for the manor of Church, several names have been crossed out and replaced. Edward Bradley, for example, had presumably died since the previous sitting of the court. His name has therefore been crossed out and replaced by that of his wife, now Widow Bradley.

The second purpose of the call book is illustrated in the columns on the right hand side, which record attendances at the courts held between 1835 and 1839: 'app' or 'a' stands for 'appeared'; 'm' for 'mortuus' (dead); 'ex' for 'excused'. Those who were absent without excuse were marked 'D' for 'default' (see the final line) and were subject to amercement.
4. Court Books and Rolls

Court rolls and books contain a number of different elements. The preamble indicates the type of court being held; who it was being held for, i.e. the name(s) of the lord of the manor; when and where the court was held; the name of the steward who presided.

**Manor of Longton, 1757**

![Image of court record]

Lancashire Archives, DDLA 6/12
Commentary:
This example is from a record of the court baron for the manor of Longton. The court was held on behalf of the lords of the manor, namely Edward Weld, Thomas Hesketh, Richard Clayton, and Robert Moss, on Monday 6th June 1757 at the house of Nathaniel Holme. Thomas Starkie was the steward.

Below the preamble are the names of the sworn jurors, which are followed by the presentments. These begin with a list of suitors who have been amerced for non-appearance. Next to the names of those amerced are the sums for which they have been fined. The initial fine was 13 pence, but this was reduced to 1 shilling in some cases and 6 pence in others. The two affeerors are named at the end.

See page 9 for advice on how to interpret the constituent elements of a typical manor court book or court roll, including the preamble, jury, call list and general court business.

4.1 Court Books and Rolls: Amercements
Amercements were fines imposed for the breach of a byelaw or order. Non-appearance at court, encroachments or failure to maintain waterways and fences were common causes of an amercement being levied.

Manor of Barton, 1679

![Manor of Barton, 1679](Lancashire Archives, DDTR Box 91)

Commentary:
This example is from the combined sitting of court leet and baron for Barton upon Irwell manor. In the first entry, John Birtch and Ralph Torner were amerced for ‘several’ unspecified encroachments. Ralph Knight was then amerced for not ‘pulling up of two Leape Steads’ (mounting blocks), despite previous warning. Thirdly, George Millott and William Bente Junior were amerced for fighting (‘a Tussell or fraye’) at the latter’s house, thereby breaking the peace.
4.2 Court Books and Rolls: Appointment of Officers

The appointment and swearing in of manorial officers was an important aspect of court proceedings, as these officials oversaw different aspects of community life across the following year.

Manor of Hesketh and Becconsall, 1577

![Image of appointment and swore of officers]

Lancashire Archives, DDHE 53/2

Commentary:

In this example from the manor of Hesketh and Becconsall, the officers include ‘Constables’, ‘Byrelawmen’, ‘Pynders’, ‘Mossereves’, ‘Myselayers’, ‘Courte Balyffes’, ‘Overseers of houses harnes and artylery’.

Constables were public officials who formed part of the local government system. They were responsible for keeping the peace, collecting taxes etc.

The ‘Byrelawmen’ or Barleymen were appointed to enforce the byelaws and to present those breaching them. Byelaws often related to stray livestock.

The ‘pynders’ (pinders or pounders) (Latin *imparcatores*) were to drive such animals to the manorial pound.

The ‘mossereves’ were appointed to oversee the exercise of turbary rights in a peat moss, while the ‘Myselayers’ levied the local rates.

The ‘Overseers of houses harnes and artylery’ were, in the first instance, responsible for seeing that houses were in good repair. ‘Harnes and artylery’ refer to the need to ensure that inhabitants could be arrayed for war. The maintenance of archery butts was particularly important and was enforced by statute.\(^4\) Constables were usually responsible for maintaining archery butts and armour.

4.3 Court Books and Rolls: Signatures and Marks

The original signatures of tenants are often found in manorial records. These signatures can shed light on literacy levels. Of the various officers appointed at Longton court baron on 6th June 1757, several could sign their own names, but Richard Loxam, Hugh Bickerstaff and Richard Beardsworth only made their mark.

*Manor of Leyland, 1757*

![Manor of Leyland, 1757](image)

Lancashire Archives, DDLA16/12

In this second extract, from a verdict of Caton court baron dated 1791, the third and fourth names (John Hodgson and Robert Cumberland) are particularly bold and confident, but the last is very unsteady. This may be the result of age or infirmity.

*Manor of Caton, 1791*

![Manor of Caton, 1791](image)

Lancashire Archives, DDGA 20
5. Estreats

An estreat summarised the fines and amercements levied at a sitting of the manor court and authorised the bailiff to gather in the sums due from those who had been amerced.

**Manor of Scarisbrick, 1683**

[Image of the original document]

Lancashire Archives, DDSC 10/33

**Commentary:**
This is a list of the fines and amercements levied at Scarisbrick manor court, held on Monday 24th October 1683. The formulaic preamble, given in Latin, is followed by authorisation from the steward, William Smyth, to the bailiff William Fletcher to collect the fines owed. There follows a long list of those who have been amerced for non-appearance at the court. The first eight named individuals owe 18 pence each, but the rest owe smaller sums.
6. Pains

Pains refer to the orders and byelaws imposed by the manor court. A jury was said to 'lay a pain' (i.e. make an order).

**Manor of Hesketh and Becconsall, 1577**

**Transcription:**

**Imprimis:** that noo personne Tether Anye horse Geldinge or Mare upon the Stubble in the nyght tyme upon payne to forfeyte for every tyme xiid

**Item:** that all personnes shall make there Fences hedges dyches and gutters within the said townes yerely frome henceForth before The laste daye of Aprill upon payne of every one not soo makinge the same <upon warnynge gyven> to forfeyte for every daye after the said laste daye of Aprill yerely that they shall be unmade iiiid

**Item:** that noone shall turne Cattell loose into the towne Felde betwene Thannunciacion of oure Ladye and the gettinge in of the laste Corne in the said Felde upon payne for every tyme xiid

**Item:** that thenhabitauntes of Hesketh and Becansall shall make there Folde yerelye before or upon the vijth daye Aprill upon paine to forfeyte for every daye that the same shall be un made after the said vijth daye of Aprill xiid

**Item:** that the said Inhabitauntes shall make there fences hedges and dyches Betwene the waste and theire severall grounde yerely before the feaste of
thanunciacion of oure Ladye upon payne to forfeyte every one that shall not yerely make his parte thereof before the sayde feaste for every daye that the same shall be unmade after that feaste xiid

Providet allwaies that such Grounde as lyeth within the floude Markes shall be made at the Apointment and by dyscrecion of the Byrelawemen

Item: that noo person growne or Cutte gresse in another persons pytte Balke or other grounde upon payne to forfeyte for every tyme vid

Commentary:
This example from the manor of Hesketh and Becconsall lists some of the ‘paynes’ made by the court on October 1577. Included among them are regulations for the maintenance of fences and ditches, together with restrictions on the grazing of animals.
7. Perambulations

A perambulation is a description of the boundaries of a manor, often recording the boundaries as beaten or perambulated by members of the manor court.

Manor of Ormskirk, 1693

Lancashire Archives, DDHI Box 35
Transcription:
Wee whose names are Subscribed being Jurors sworne this day & haveing walked the Boundaries of the Mannor aforesaid with the Constable and other Inhabitants (some of whom upon their Oathes have been Examined, & whose Names & Ages are hereunder Mentioned) And doe present & Find the said Boundary to be as followeth (viz)

First beginning at Mear Brook Bridge, wee went after the Brook side in the Lane, to the Corner of a Closs Late Daniell Ambrose following the Running ditch or Brooke on the South west side of the said Closes to John Seddons Kiln where a Mear\(^5\) is or hath been, from thence into Seddons Fold & Crossing the Lane into A Close of Ground formerly Inclosed by Richard Moorcroft Vintner, following the Brook or Ditch to a Mear Stone with a small End Lying on the Other side of the Ditch at side of the Copp of a Close belonging to John Heyes thence after the End of Mr Dod & Thomas Greaves Closes into a Rough heathy Close of Caddicks, still following the Ditch through 2 Closes of John Seddons after the South west End into a Close of Thomas Greaves & Over at the Corner into the Lane up to a Slack where is a pit or pool of water, & soe into a Rough Close of Bannesters on the Other side of the Lane, thence betwixt the said Banesters house & Barn to a blew Mear Stone lying South from the Scath Hill thence to 2 other Mear Stones not far distante directly to the South side of the Henn Hill, thence Leaving James Stewarts house on the Left hand & Bartons house on the Right to a Mear Stone, Lying to the back of the Copp within a new Inclosure of Pages about 4 Roods from the North End of the said Pages new house, from thence to a Stone on the East side of the wall that Incloses the Hunsetts. Thence to another Stone within the said Inclosure & Soe Straight to the Cony Green Nook thence down the Lane Straight to the Dark Lane head from thence up the Lane & turning by the East End of a Little Cottage of Thomas Capes through the Garden into a Close of Ground Called Ascroft's Wellhey after the North Side into a Close called the Riding...

\(^5\) ‘Mear’ or ‘mere’ stones were used to mark boundaries.
8. Presentments

A presentment was a statement on oath by the jury or by an officer of the manor court, accusing an individual of breaching a rule or byelaw. Sometimes, as in this example, the original presentment survives, written on a separate of paper, usually attached to the verdict sheet.

**Manor of Upholland, 1737**

![Image of presentment]

Transcription:

Upholland Court 1737

A Presentment made by John Barton one of the Common lookers to the Jury there as follows

First  William Mollyneux & Thomas Smith for trespassing upon the Lords Common

2nd  Ralph Bradshaw & Matthew Tickle for getting Coals upon the Waste

The Jury present all the abovesaid persons in six shillings eighteen eightpence each payable unto ye Lord of this manor

Commentary:

This presentment, made by one of the 'common lookers' of the court of Upholland, has been annotated in a different hand at a later date with a note recording the jury’s verdict.
9. Rentals

Rentals were vital in enabling manorial officials to keep track of the income due from tenants. As shown by the following examples, they rarely give information other than the tenants' names and the amount of rent due.

*Manor of Eccleston with Heskin, 1574*

![Image of rental list]

*Lancashire Archives, DDM 1/3*
10. Steward’s Papers

In the Manorial Documents Register 'Stewards Papers' is a term used to cover a wide range of material produced by or for the steward of a manor.

**Manor of Ightenhill, 1896**

Above is a precept or instruction to the greeve of the manor of Ightenhill to summon tenants to court. Printed forms like this were commonly used in the 19th century.

Public notices of manor courts, such as this one for the manor of Ightenhill in 1896, can also be found among stewards papers.

Lancashire Archives, DDBD Acc.7363
11. Surveys

A manorial survey is a written description of a manor or manors, usually giving details of manorial boundaries and customs and detailing each holding of land.

**Manor of Leyland, 1691**

![Image of the manuscript]

**Lancashire Archives, DDF 120**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Transcription:**

County of Lancaster: A particuler survey of tenants Leases Belonginge to Henery Farington Esq within his Mannour & Lordshipp of Leyland taken this [blank] of April 1691:

**Commentary:**

This survey of leases records the annual value and the type of property (house, barn, garden etc) being leased. It also records the boons and services attached to the lease.

A = tenant’s name and date of the lease  
B = number of lives remaining on the lease and their ages  
C = old rent  
D = boon services and other dues, including capons and hens in this case  
E = acres and roods  
F = annual value (economic rental value)  
G = buildings and property  
H = fines paid (purchase price of the lease)
Commentary:
This is a survey of demesne lands; each field is listed on the left and its acreage is detailed on the right.
12. Verdict sheets

Verdict sheets are the original record of the court proceedings and would have been used to prepare the formal record in a court roll or court book. By the 17th and 18th centuries, verdict sheets often survive as the only record.

*Manor of Caton, 1706*

Lancashire Archives, DDGA 20
Transcription:

Preamble: Manor of Caton, court baron held at Caton, 29th November 1706

Names of Jurors sworn to enquire and present on behalf of the lord of the manor
[13 men named and sworn in]

The jury find and present as follows:

We do here find the common pinfoold to be in decay & doe amerce him the said Raph Massey esq Lord of the Mannour of Caton in 6s 8d except it be put into sufficient repaire att or before the 25th day of march next ensuinge.

We do here order that all & all manner of the Inhabitants in Caton that have any fenses adjoyning to the common that they make or cause to be made in sufficient repaire att or before the 25th day of march next or on default there of we doe amerse him or them in 6s 8d upon each default.

We doe order that noe maner of persons doe delve or dig any torfe or sods belaw the antcient bounders but on default there of we doe amerse him or them in 13s 4.

We do order that noe persons doe put any goods to grass on the Common of Caton not having privelidge soe to doe but doe amerse him or them in 13s 4d upon each default.

We do oerther the noe persons whatsoever doe burne any linge⁶ on the Common of Caton contrary to the statue in the case made & provided but doe amerce him in 3s 4 in each default.

We doe orther that noe persons doe put any scabbed horse <Mare or Gelding> or horses Upon the Common of Caton but doe amerce him in 13s 4d upon each default.

Commentary:

In this example from the manor of Caton, the upper part of the page, in Latin, was prepared in advance; the lower part, containing the presentments and orders, was completed at the court sitting. Often this part contains crossings out and insertions, reflecting editorial changes as the court came to decisions. The verdicts of this manor court were concerned with preventing encroachments on the common.

⁶ Ling = heather
Transcription:
It is presented to this Jury That Elizabeth Carver alias Hardicarr widdowe Hath frequently harboured & entertainned Strangers dangerous Rogues & vagabonds Disbanded Irish Soldiers & Men ill affected to the present Government & dangerous to the Neighbourhood, & now Lately thereby hath Contracted A Great Charge upon this Towne therefore wee doe Amerce her for the same in the sume of 39s

Commentary:
In this example from the manor of Leyland, the jury were concerned with strangers in the neighbourhood and the danger they posed. This was part of the manor court’s responsibility for keeping the peace.
Transcription:
It is presented to this Court That severall Loose Lewd and Idle persons both men and woemen have been Guilty of Bastardy whereby several Great Charges and damages have accrewed to the Inhabitants of this Townshipp and noe Care taken for the due & Legall punishment of such Offenders whereby the like abuses Doe yearly ensue & multiply. And it being Necessary for the Reformation of such Lewdnesse & damages to the Towne that not onely A Good paire of Stocks but alsoe A Rogues post or whipping post shall should alsoe bee well & duely kept in each Townshipp. It is ordered by this Court that the present Constables shall att the Townes charge Imediately Erect A Rogues post or Whipping post neare the Towns Stocks for that purpose.

Commentary:
These pains from the verdict of Leyland manor court reflect, in the first instance, the court’s desire to exclude those thought to be undesirable: ‘strangers dangerous Rogues & vagabonds’, were generally seen as a threat to peace and order. 'Disbanded Irish Soldiers & Men ill affected to the present Government' presumably refers to Jacobites who supported the deposed Catholic King James II against the Protestant King William and Queen Mary. William had defeated James’s forces at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690.

In the second extract, single mothers, and their illegitimate children, posed a potential charge to the township in poor relief. Stocks and whipping posts had long been used by manor courts as a means of punishing those found guilty of petty crimes. The maintenance of stocks and 'rogues posts' was sometimes enshrined in manorial by-laws, and were usually the responsibility of the constable.  

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