



Press Release

20 July 2005

Sex, Lies and one mile of sheepskin

Forced marriage, murder and student revelry have always been on the agenda in Parliament it seems - even in the 14th century.

In the parliament of 1305, the University of Oxford was angry about frolics between students and prostitutes. It petitioned the Crown for the right to arrest prostitutes who had already been convicted of plying their trade to the students of the university and evicted from the town, but who were now said to be taking up residence over the river and slipping into the town at night to find drunk and willing students. The university was given the right to arrest the prostitutes whenever they caught them within the boundaries of the town.

The records of Parliament were originally written on stretched sheepskin called parchment. About 1000 sheepskins would have been used for the original rolls which would cover a mile if laid out from end to end.

The rolls have now been translated into modern English and are available on a single CD-ROM called PROME (Parliament Rolls Of Medieval England). It is fully searchable.

The newly released CD-ROM is a new edition of the official records of the English Parliament from the time when systematic records of its proceedings first began to be kept in 1275 until the early sixteenth century (1504).

The original rolls kept at The National Archives at Kew contain nearly four million words and together with the translation, introductions and appendices, the present edition runs to nearly nine million words.

The Leverhulme Trust funded the project which will be launched at the Houses of Parliament on Wednesday 20 July 2005.

Note to editors:

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Samples of PROME can be found at www.sd-editions.com/PROME and you can purchase the CD-ROM from The National Archives by phoning 020 8876 3444

The General Editor of PROME is Professor Chris Given-Wilson of the University of St Andrews.

The volume editors are Dr. Paul Brand (All Souls College, Oxford), Professor Anne Curry (University of Southampton), Dr. Rosemary Horrox (Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge), Professor Geoffrey Martin (Former Keeper of the Public Records), Professor Mark Ormrod (University of York) and Professor Seymour Phillips (University College Dublin).

The PROME project was funded by a major grant from the Leverhulme Trust and sponsored by The National Archives at Kew, and by the History of Parliament Trust. The CD-Rom of PROME is published by Scholarly Digital Editions; hard copy will be published by Boydell and Brewer.