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**Review of The Year Books of Richard II: 1382-1383 by Samuel E. Thorne & George F. Deiser, eds.**

David J. Seipp

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must be grateful to Paul Brand, and to John H. Baker, the literary editor of the Selden Society.

Chicago

Sue Sheridan Walker

YEAR BOOKS OF RICHARD II, 6 Richard II, 1382–1383, ed. for the Ames Foundation by the late S.E. Thorne, in collaboration with M.E. Hager and Margaret MacVeagh Thorne, with a commentary upon the cases by C. Donahue, Jr. [The Ames Foundation Year Books Series, II]. The Ames Foundation, [Cambridge, Mass.] 1996. CCXIII + 344 p.

Of the making of Year Books there is no end. Three scholarly enterprises – the Rolls Series, Selden Society, and Ames Foundation – have undertaken to provide modern editions and translations of medieval English Year Books, the law French reports of oral pleading and judicial dialogue in lawsuits heard in the Common Bench and other common law courts. The present volume fills a gap in the most recent of these efforts, that of the Ames Foundation of Harvard Law School to print the surviving manuscript Year Books of the reign of Richard II (1377–1399). This volume, the sixth year of Richard II, makes good use of all the improvements in Year Book editing pioneered by earlier generations of legal historians. In lieu of any general introduction to the political, social, or legal history of the period, the editors provide an exhaustive explication of the legal content of each reported case.

Modern Year Book editing began in 1863, when Alfred J. Harwood published the first of five volumes of Year Books of Edward I for the Rolls Series, a British Treasury project to publish medieval historical records, charters, and chronicles. Harwood edited 20–22 (1292–1294) and 30–35 Edward I (1302–1307). He used facing-page English translations from the very start, as all succeeding editions have done, but he accepted uncritically the dates inscribed as headings on the few manuscripts he consulted. Luke Owen Pike of the Public Record Office continued Harwood's efforts from 1883 to 1911 by editing the years 11–20 Edward III (1337–1346) in 15 Rolls Series volumes, thereby filling one of the gaps in the series of Year Books printed in the 16th and 17th centuries. Pike's achievement was to identify and print Plea Roll records, the official Latin docket entries of the cases, when these records corrected the Year Book reports.

The Selden Society under its founder and guiding spirit Frederic William Maitland took up the task in 1903, producing a first volume of the Year Books of Edward II. Maitland and fifteen successive editors (most notably William Craddock Bolland) collated all available manuscripts, often printing several versions of the same case, in 27 volumes extending through 1–14 Edward II (1307–20) thus far. They printed more Plea Roll records, tried to perfect the grammar of law French, and appended Tables of Cases to each volume, briefly summarizing each report. The Selden Society also produced two later Year Books, 1 Henry VI (1422) and 10 Edward IV (1470), and recently published *The Earliest English Law Reports*, Year Book material from the reign of Edward I.

The Ames Foundation began its Year Book editing in 1914 with 12 Richard II, the first of that reign ever to be published. Now in seven volumes, nine of the 22 years of the reign, 2 (1378–1379) and 6–13 Richard II (1382–1390), are in print, the work of nine editors. Reports of a few cases still exist in manuscript for nearly every omitted year of the reign of Richard II, and fuller manuscripts for years 16–18 and 21–22 await future editors. Ames volumes follow closely the pattern set by the Selden Society. The present volume advances the standard for careful textual transcription, collation, and

editing, sensitive literal translation, and extensive commentary on procedural and substantive content of the reports. The editors also print and translate all the Plea Roll records that could be matched to the Year Book reports. No effort has been spared to identify every person and place mentioned in the reports.

Not found in this volume is the sort of general introduction that graced so many earlier Rolls, Selden, and Ames volumes. This volume for 1382–1383 marks the restoration of Year Book reporting after the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 butchered a Chief Justice, scattered the lawyers, and burned many of their buildings and records. Court sessions were suspended. While three cases in this volume deal obliquely with some minor legal consequences of the insurrection, the overall impression given by these reports is one of imperturbable continuity and persistence. In place of any general introduction to the lawyers and their times, the excellent Commentary on the Cases by Charles Donahue, Jr. reinforces this impression of continuity by focusing on the particular legal strategies of each case and points of internal doctrinal development.

I regret that this volume omits at least 39 abridged cases credibly ascribed to the sixth year of Richard II and found only in a manuscript at Harvard Law School. Instead of printing all available Year Book material for that year, the editors chose to represent a single text presumably by a single author, as if this were an 'official' report in some sense. The editors acknowledge on the first page that there must have been more than one reporter and more than one manuscript tradition. This makes it all the more curious that the editors chose not to print manuscript remains of dozens of other cases that chanced not to be reported in the single longest manuscript that survives. Year Book authorship was always a collaborative enterprise, as is Year Book editing, and lawyers have never hesitated to gather their evidence from any available sources.

Fifteenth-century Year Books have been characterized as dull, dry exercises, devoid of the personalities and colorful language of the Year Books of Edward II. The present volume demonstrates that Year Books of the 1380's were still quite lively. Just as Chief Justice Bereford was the gruff, sarcastic star of Edward II's bench, Chief Justice Belknap is the dominant personality of this Year Book. 'For God's sake, move on with your better chips!' (*pur dieu passez oultre ove vos melutz chippez*), Belknap would say to a lawyer with a poor argument. It is a pleasure to have and use new texts of Year Books cases. This volume, edited to the highest standards of any in print, will give readers the confidence of Chief Justice Belknap intoning *ieo le ay view aiuge en mez liveres*, 'I have seen it so held in my books'.

Boston

David J. Seipp

J.H. BAKER [with codicological descriptions of the early manuscripts by J.S. RINGROSE], *A Catalogue of English Legal Manuscripts in Cambridge University Library*. The Boydell Press, [Woodbridge 1996]. XC + 828 p.

Ce catalogue est le fruit d'une longue et minutieuse préparation. Le résultat est un instrument de travail répondant aux critères les plus exigeants de la recherche historique. Le Professeur Baker, autorité reconnue de l'histoire du *common law* des origines à l'époque contemporaine (et lui-même un collectionneur réputé de manuscrits juridiques anglais et de *memorabilia* en rapport avec l'histoire du droit anglais), a produit un travail qui permettra aux chercheurs, grâce aux nombreuses identifications et aux références complémentaires à des sources (en particulier, des manuscrits) conservées dans d'autres fonds, d'utiliser ce catalogue comme un véritable point de départ pour des recherches au-delà de la bibliothèque de l'université de Cambridge. Le catalogue décrit avec