

**Medium Ævum Research Travel Bursary Report: some smaller Midlands Libraries, 6th-8th
December 2018**

Thanks to my research travel bursary from the Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature I was able to visit some smaller Midlands library collections in order to survey their early Middle English holdings and complete the research necessary for completing the manuscripts of my book, *Reading Practice in Early Middle English*. In particular, the bursary allowed me to visit Worcester Cathedral, Dean and Chapter Library, Nottingham University Library, and Leicester, New Walk Museum. Much of the work for this project draws on my doctoral thesis, however in my book I hope to provide a comprehensive account of the reading and use of early Middle English literature, and this grant has allowed me to move forward my survey of all extant examples of early Middle English.

My book proposes that reading in early Middle English is a practice that was both grounded in and created multiplicity. I show that the variety of (literal and metaphorical) significations given to the verb *reden* in early Middle English literatures are reflected by a reading practice that is equally variegated. In each chapter I focus on a different way that readers might come into contact with writing English. Accordingly, on my trip I focussed on materials that preserved English in a number of ways. I spent a day in the Dean and Chapter Library at Worcester Cathedral, where I confirmed the presence of English verses within several manuscripts of Latin sermons. Reading through these books also revealed the presence of several uncatalogued or partially catalogued marginal additions. I then spent a further two days at Nottingham University Library, and Leicester, New Walk Museum, where I reconstructed the routes of preservation taken by a number of fragments from two similar copies of the *South English Legendary*. The slow close reading needed to do this proved particularly fruitful, and along with a reconstituted manuscript from Worcester Cathedral these fragments will become the primary material for a case study in the final chapter of my book.

Since only one of these manuscripts I saw is digitized, and photographs are not allowed in these collections, this trip was essential to completing the survey of extant materials needed to ensure my monograph is comprehensive. Indeed, much of the work I do, which focuses on the material production and preservation of books and fragments, hinges on observations that it is not possible to make using a digital surrogate. This trip, then, particularly as I leave the UK to take up a position in Canada, will allow for more timely completion of the book, and has led my thinking in several new directions. I thank the Society for providing such an opportunity.

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