

Anglo- Saxon England 23



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The study of Anglo-Saxon England is founded essentially on the accurate analysis of primary sources and materials, whether literary, historical, palaeographical or archaeological in nature. If the subject is to flourish and grow, however, such analysis must continually be responsive to wider concerns which are currently being discussed in related modern disciplines. Only through awareness of these concerns will Anglo-Saxon studies be able to appeal to a wider audience of medieval scholars. The present volume of *Anglo-Saxon England* contains essays which break new ground in the analysis of primary sources; at the same time, a number of essays address issues currently under debate by cultural historians, such as the representation of women, the literacy of the laity and the perception of social class.

One of the most important primary sources for our knowledge of Anglo-Saxon England is the charters and manuscripts which survive from the period before 1066. In the present volume, two ground-breaking but complementary essays treat the charters of mid-tenth-century English kings, bringing previously unknown documents to light, establishing the circumstances in which they were produced, and demonstrating that changes in practice in the royal chancery had far-reaching effect on all aspects of Anglo-Saxon script and book-production. A tiny fragment of a hitherto unknown liturgical manuscript helps us to understand the structure of the mass in late-eleventh-century England, and a host of previously undeciphered dry-point glosses in a fragmentary manuscript of Aldhelm reveals the intensity with which that author was studied in tenth-century Anglo-Saxon schools. A masterly analysis of the language of an early-tenth-century legal document shows the astonishing level of literacy which could be achieved by an educated Anglo-Saxon nobleman.

Several essays apply traditional methods of

(continued on back flap)

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Her mon mæg giet gesion hiora swæð

ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

23

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