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Review of Wiltshire Gaol Delivery and Trailbaston Trials, 1275-1306

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RALPH B. PUGH, ed., *Wiltshire Gaol Delivery and Trailbaston Trials, 1275–1306.* (Wiltshire Record Society, 33, for the year 1977.) Devizes, Eng.: Wiltshire Record Society, 1978. Pp. x, 271. £7. Order from M. J. Lansdown, 53 Clarendon Road, Trowbridge, Wilts.

RALPH B. PUGH'S handsome edition of Wiltshire gaol delivery and trailbaston trial rolls for the reign of Edward I provides a valuable resource for scholars of medieval crime and criminal law. The period covered bridges the era of the infrequent general eyres and that of the frequent circuits to try those being held on criminal charges. This transition period saw the development of various institutions and procedures designed to deal with a decline in social stability and an increase in criminal activity. To date, most scholarship has focused either on the workings of the mid-thirteenth-century eyre or on the crisis of law and order in the following century. If we are to know something of the evolution of the criminal law, we must pay close attention to the intervening decades and the path marked out by the documents Dr. Pugh has put before us.

Pugh's introduction is a careful, lucid, and learned short course in criminal law and procedure for the student who, schooled upon C. A. F. Meekings's classic introduction to the *Crown Pleas of the Wiltshire Eyre, 1249,* seeks entry into the more varied and more complex records of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The editor's brief commentary is usefully keyed to selected examples from the documents. Like that of the late Mr. Meekings, Pugh's introduction is more than a primer: the most experienced scholars will find enlightening discussion of almost every vexing problem of Edwardian criminal procedure. Especially significant are Pugh's remarks

on indictments (pp. 12–14), selection of site venue (pp. 18–19), and punishment for misdemeanor (pp. 24–25).

The documents are produced only in translation, in abstracted form. The editor has aimed "only to give the substance of the entries." Abbreviations are also employed to save space; they are simple and do not detract from the flow of the entries. It is especially good to have the trailbaston rolls, which are rich in detail and illustrate procedure in trespass as well as in felony. Dr. Pugh's decision to print many different kinds of interrelated records was fortunate: few editions of medieval trial rolls so effectively illuminate so much of the administration of the criminal law.

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