

WOMEN IN THIRTEENTH-CENTURY LINCOLNSHIRE



Louise J. Wilkinson

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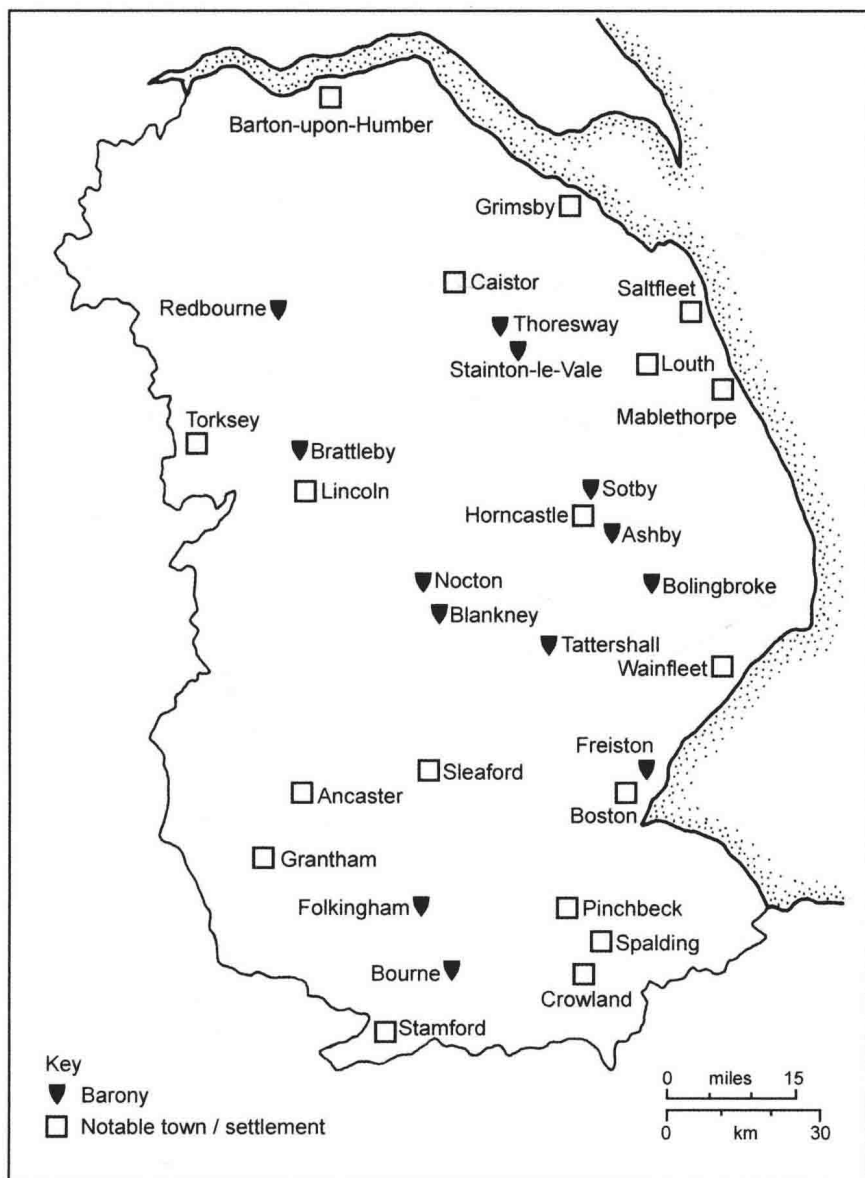
Abbreviations

AHW	<i>The acta of Hugh of Wells, bishop of Lincoln, 1209–1235</i> , ed. D. M. Smith (LRS lxxxviii, 2000)
AM	<i>Annales monastici</i> , ed. H. R. Luard (RS, 1864–9)
BF	<i>Liber feodorum: the book of fees commonly called Testa de Nevill</i> , London 1920–31
BL	British Library
CChR	<i>Calendar of the charter rolls</i> , London 1903–
CEC	<i>The charters of the Anglo-Norman earls of Chester</i> , c. 1071–1237, ed. G. Barraclough (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire cxxvi, 1988)
CIPM	<i>Calendar of inquisitions post mortem</i> , London 1904–
CPR	<i>Calendar of the patent rolls</i> , London 1906–
CR	<i>Close rolls of the reign of Henry III</i> , London 1902–75
CRR	<i>Curia regis rolls of the reigns of Richard I, John and Henry III preserved in the Public Record Office</i> , London 1922–
DD	<i>Documents illustrative of the social and economic history of the Danelaw from various collections</i> , ed. F. M. Stenton, London 1920
EChR	<i>Economic History Review</i>
EEA i	<i>English episcopal acta</i> , I: <i>Lincoln, 1067–1185</i> , ed. D. M. Smith, London 1980
EEA iv	<i>English episcopal acta</i> , IV: <i>Lincoln, 1186–1206</i> , ed. D. M. Smith, London 1986
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
ELAR	<i>The earliest Lincolnshire assize rolls, A.D. 1202–1209</i> , ed. D. M. Stenton (LRS xxii, 1926)
EYC	<i>Early Yorkshire charters</i> , ed. W. Farrer (Edinburgh 1914–16) and C. T. Clay (Yorkshire Archaeological Society record series e.s., 1935–65)
GC	<i>Transcripts of charters relating to the Gilbertine houses of Sixle, Ormsby, Catley, Bullington and Alvingham</i> , ed. F. M. Stenton (LRS xviii, 1922)
HRH	D. Smith and V. C. M. London, <i>The heads of religious houses: England and Wales</i> , II: 1216–1377, Cambridge 2001
HSJ	<i>Haskins Society Journal</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
JLH	<i>Journal of Legal History</i>
JMH	<i>Journal of Medieval History</i>
LAO	Lincolnshire Archives Office
LD	<i>The medieval Lindsey marsh: select documents</i> , ed. A. E. B. Owen (LRS lxxxv, 1996)
LRS	Lincoln Record Society

MA	W. Dugdale, <i>Monasticon anglicanum</i> , ed. J. Caley, H. Ellis and B. Bandinel, London 1817–30
P&P	<i>Past and Present</i>
PR	<i>Patent rolls of the reign of Henry III preserved in the Public Record Office</i> , London 1901–3
Pipe roll	<i>Pipe rolls published by the Pipe Roll Society</i>
PRO	Public Record Office
PRS	Pipe Roll Society
RA	<i>The registrum antiquissimum of the cathedral church of Lincoln</i> , ed. C. W. Foster and K. Major (LRS, 1931–73)
RB	<i>The red book of the exchequer</i> , ed. H. Hall (RS, 1896)
RJE	<i>Rolls of the justices in eyre being the rolls of pleas and assizes for Lincolnshire, 1218–19, and Worcestershire 1221</i> , ed. D. M. Stenton (SS liii, 1934). All references are to the 1218–19 Lincolnshire eyre.
RLC	<i>Rotuli litterarum clausarum in Turri Londinensi asservati</i> , ed. T. D. Hardy (Record Commission, 1833–4)
RLP	<i>Rotuli litterarum patentium in Turri Londinensi asservati</i> , ed. T. D. Hardy (Record Commission, 1835)
ROF	<i>Rotuli de oblatis et finibus in Turri Londinensi asservati, tempore regis Johannis</i> , ed. T. D. Hardy (Record Commission, 1835)
ROS	<i>The rolls and register of Bishop Oliver Sutton, 1280–1299</i> , ed. R. M. T. Hill (LRS, 1948–86)
RHW	<i>Rotuli Hugonis de Welles, episcopi lincolniensis</i> , ed. W. P. W. Phillimore and F. N. Davis (Canterbury and York Society, 1907–9)
RRGrave	<i>Rotuli Ricardi Gravesend, diocesis lincolniensis</i> , ed. F. N. Davis (Canterbury and York Society, 1925)
RRGross	<i>Rotuli Roberti Grosseteste, episcopi lincolniensis</i> , ed. F. N. Davis (Canterbury and York Society, 1913)
RS	Rolls Series
SS	Selden Society
TC	<i>The Thurgarton cartulary</i> , ed. T. Foulds, Stamford 1994
TNA	The National Archives
TRHS	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>



Map 1. The wapentakes of medieval Lincolnshire



Map 2. The baronies of thirteenth-century Lincolnshire



Map 3. The religious houses of medieval Lincolnshire

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Introduction

The last twenty years have witnessed a revolution in women's history and gender studies, and the emergence of these disciplines as important fields of academic inquiry. The pioneering works of scholars such as Judith Bennett, P. J. P. Goldberg, Barbara Hanawalt, Susan Johns and Pauline Stafford have illuminated for the first time the gendered structures which governed the lives of medieval women.¹ Hitherto much of this endeavour has focused on the eleventh and twelfth or the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, while the lives of thirteenth-century women have attracted relatively little interest. Although widows' property rights in this period have provoked debate,² women below the level of queens remain curiously neglected.³ This book is the first regional survey of women in thirteenth-century England. It combines a detailed local study of women in Lincolnshire with reflections on much wider issues relating to gender and female identity. A good starting point for the types of question posed here is Pauline Stafford's research into women in Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman England. Stafford has asked

¹ See J. M. Bennett, *Women in the medieval English countryside: gender and household in Brigstock before the plague*, Oxford 1987, and *Ale, beer and brewsters: women's work in a changing world, 1300–1600*, Oxford 1996, repr. 1999; P. J. P. Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle in a medieval economy: women in York and Yorkshire, c. 1300–1520*, Oxford 1992, repr. 1996; B. A. Hanawalt, *The ties that bound: peasant families in medieval England*, Oxford 1986; S. M. Johns, *Noblewomen, aristocracy and power in the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman realm*, Manchester 2003; P. Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: queenship and women's power in eleventh-century England*, Oxford 1997. See also H. Leyser, *Medieval women: a social history of women in England, 450–1500*, London 1995.

² J. S. Loengard, '“Of the gift of her husband”: English dower and its consequences in the year 1200', in J. Kirshner and S. F. Wemple (eds), *Women of the medieval world: essays in honour of John H. Mundy*, Oxford 1985, 215–55; J. Biancalana, 'Widows at common law: the development of common law dower', *The Irish Jurist* n.s. xxiii (1988), 255–329; J. S. Loengard, '“Rationabilis dos”: Magna Carta and the widow's “fair share” in the earlier thirteenth century', and S. S. Walker, 'Litigation as personal quest: suing for dower in the royal courts, circa 1272–1350', in S. S. Walker (ed.), *Wife and widow in medieval England*, Ann Arbor 1993, 59–80, 81–108; P. Dobrowolski, 'Women and their dower in the long thirteenth century, 1265–1329', in M. Prestwich, R. H. Britnell and R. Frame (eds), *Thirteenth century England*, VI: *Proceedings of the Durham conference, 1995*, Woodbridge 1997, 157–64; P. A. Brand, '“Deserving” and “undeserving” wives: earning and forfeiting dower in medieval England', *JLH* xxii/1 (2001), 1–20. See also R. M. Smith, 'Women's property rights under customary law: some developments in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries', *TRHS* 5th ser. xxxvi (1986), 165–94.

³ An exception is L. E. Mitchell, *Portraits of medieval women: family, marriage and politics in England, 1225–1350*, Basingstoke 2003.

whether it is appropriate to treat medieval women as a single and cohesive group. In particular, she has highlighted how the position of women might be very different, depending on their status.⁴ It is for this reason that this assessment looks at women from four distinct groups, namely noblewomen, gentlewomen, townswomen and peasant women, in order to explore how gender interacted with social status and the female life-cycle.

The standing of women in thirteenth-century Lincolnshire can be investigated from various angles. Rather than simply asking whether women were dominated by or enjoyed any independence from men, this study asks how far women played a role alongside men and were, in a sense, equal partners, especially within the family. The advantage of this approach is that it does not consider women in isolation and focuses closely on relations between the sexes. It raises the question of how far the family itself was gendered. Judith Bennett argued that the conjugal peasant households of the Northamptonshire manor of Brigstock before the Black Death 'reinforced gender stereotypes by encouraging the authority of husbands and the dependency of their wives'; men were publicly-active 'householders' who attended and litigated in the manor court, while women were publicly passive 'dependants'.⁵ Did the households of the thirteenth-century Lincolnshire nobility, gentry, townsfolk and peasantry buttress female subordination, and how was this reflected in patterns of male and female criminal behaviour?

The structures which governed the lives of women in thirteenth-century England permit no simple answers to the questions posed above. They both constricted and, to an extent, empowered women. The interplay of personalities was obviously instrumental in shaping relations between men and women, but these personalities were articulated in the knowledge of certain religious and biological ideas about gender difference. Attitudes towards women in daily life were heavily influenced by the Church's teachings on sexual inequality. Ideas about female fallibility and inferiority had biblical origins in the original sin when Eve, who had been made out of the rib of Adam, led Adam into temptation with the consequence that the couple was expelled from the Garden of Eden. St Paul instructed wives to submit themselves to their husbands: 'For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church' (Ephesians v.22-3). Twelfth- and thirteenth-century churchmen believed that women were the heiresses of Eve and that the flawed female sex should be subject to rational male authority, guidance, governance and discipline. In part three of his *Communiloquium*, the friar John of Wales instructed women to be subservient to men, subdued rather than talkative and, above all, modest and chaste.⁶ The movement for church

⁴ P. Stafford, 'Women and the Norman Conquest', *TRHS* 6th ser. iv (1994), 221-49 at p. 230.

⁵ Bennett, *Women*, 177.

⁶ J. Swanson, *John of Wales: a study of the works and ideas of a thirteenth-century friar*, Cambridge 1989, 125-6.