

Materials for history? Publishing records as an historical practice in eighteenth- and
nineteenth-century England

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Abstract

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a large number of historical records were published in a wide variety of forms, most of which can be described as being part of wider historical and antiquarian practices. Taking the publishing of record editions as itself an historical practice, this essay surveys the varying people, practices and purposes involved before discussing a number of continuities and changes in the practice across two centuries. It will show how records publications were not only access driven, but also concerned with the preservation of records, and that they influenced archival practices, changing the way that archival collections were ordered and arranged. The essay will also argue that the place of record publications in wider historical practice changed from being one amongst a wide variety of practices used to engage with the past to a much more restricted role as an auxiliary practice making sources available to narrative historians.

Introduction

By the start of the eighteenth century there was already a long and rich tradition of editing and publishing records in England dating back to the 1560s when Archbishop Matthew Parker turned to publishing Anglo-Saxon texts in an attempt to prove that the Elizabethan Church of England was merely reviving the ancient English church before it had been ‘corrupted’ by Rome.¹ Parker was adopting a technique that had been used by ecclesiastical

¹ May McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 26-49.

historians dating back to Eusebius to provide documentation to support their polemical claims.² In the seventeenth century it had been taken up not only by church historians, but also by legal and constitutional historians as a polemical weapon. But in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the purposes to which publishing records was put broadened out into a range of historical uses.

This essay will study the publication of records as an historical practice over two centuries, and in describing it as an *historical* practice a deliberately broad, and occasionally anachronistic, definition is adopted, in part because precisely what constituted ‘history’ changed considerably across these two centuries. As we shall see, Thomas Madox writing at the beginning of the eighteenth century and William Stubbs a century and a half later produced books that have remarkable similarities, yet his contemporaries regarded Stubbs as the pre-eminent historian of his day, while Madox’s (and indeed, Madox himself) did not consider him to be writing history at all. Indeed, much of the records publications in the eighteenth century falls within the antiquarian tradition.

English antiquarianism has tended to be regarded as divided into two strands, broadly defined as a chorographical tradition mostly interested in the material remains of the past, and a philological tradition mostly interested in the textual remains. It is certainly true that by 1900 these two strands had formally divided with archaeologists and curators on one side, and historians, librarians and archivists on the other, but we should remember that most antiquaries were interested in a wide variety of interests that defy easy classification.³ For example, though we shall meet Thomas Hearne only as an editor of texts, he was also greatly

² See, for example, Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (London: Faber & Faber, 1997), 148-189

³ See, for example, David Douglas, *English Scholars, 1660-1730* (2nd ed., London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1951); Graham Parry, *The Trophies of Time: English Antiquarians of The Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Daniel Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture 1500-1730* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004)

interested in Oxfordshire churches and spent much time trying to interpret the recently discovered Roman pavement at Stonesfield.⁴

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the practices of the philological antiquarians began to be adopted by narrative historians – a succession of whom including David Hume, Edward Gibbon, Sharon Turner, John Lingard and George Grote are often cited – until by the second half of the nineteenth century self-proclaimed ‘scientific’ historians such as William Stubbs and EA Freeman were producing narrative histories based on the evidence of primary sources which they cited in footnotes and discussed in appendices.⁵

This is often associated with a ‘professionalization’ of history in the mid-nineteenth century. But from a sociological perspective it is difficult to find anything that looks like a genuine historical profession in England before the beginning of the twentieth century. It is instructive to note that both William Stubbs, the most ‘professional’ appearing historian of the nineteenth century, and Mandell Creighton, the inaugural editor of the ‘professional’ *English Historical Review*, both ended their lives not as professors but as bishops. Indeed, most studies have tended to equate professionalization with the increasing adoption of a ‘scientific’ methodology and, though widely used, terms such as amateur and professional therefore seem problematic in this period.⁶ Instead of using such labels, the essay will focus on practices, defined in one recent paper as ‘techniques, materials, and methods’, to explore how

⁴ Hearne’s full antiquarian interests are discussed in Theodor Harmsen, *Antiquarianism in the Augustan Age: Thomas Hearne 1678-1735* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2000)

⁵ See, for example, Arnaldo Momigliano, *Studies in Historiography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), 40-55; Grafton, *Footnote*; James Turner, *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014)

⁶ See for example, Doris S Goldstein, “The Professionalisation of History in Britain in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” *Storia della Storiografia* 3 (1983): 3-27; Rosemary Jann, “From Amateur to Professional: The Case of the Oxbridge Historians,” *Journal of British Studies* 22:2 (1983): 122-147; Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archæologists in Victorian England, 1838-1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Ian Hesketh, *The Science of History in Victorian Britain* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011)

and why a wide variety of (mostly) men, some of whom called themselves historians, engaged with studying the past.⁷

We shall also touch on archival practices. There has recently been a significant increase of historical studies of archives, mostly of institutional, and often state, archives. They have tended to focus on access to the records, particularly from political and social perspectives, though a few have also analyzed the organization and cataloguing of the records.⁸ The records that will be referred to in this essay, which again adopts a broad definition, do include the institutional records of various departments of the state, but also of towns and their guilds, of the church and monasteries, and of universities and colleges. Furthermore, they also include estate records, family papers and correspondence, as well as medieval chronicles, histories and literature.

The essay will begin with a survey of records publication which will show how it outgrew its earliest use as a polemical device and was put to a great variety of purposes aimed at differing audiences. We will look further at the motivations of not only the editors but also the purchasers of record editions, before discussing how the practice of editing records for publication influenced archival practice. The final section explores how editing records came to be relegated from being itself a form of historical practice to being merely an auxiliary practice which provided the historian with the materials for his work.

⁷ For some recent articles focusing on practices see Michael Worboys, "Practice and the Science of Medicine in the Nineteenth Century," *Isis* 102:1 (2011): 109-115 (the quotation is from p.112); Lorraine Daston and Glenn W Most, "History of Science and History of Philologies," *Isis* 106:2 (2015): 378-390; and the papers in the special issue, Pieter Huistra, Herman Paul and Jo Tollebeek (eds.), "Historians in the Archive: Changing Historiographical Practices in the Nineteenth Century," *History of the Human Sciences* 26:4 (2013)

⁸ See for example, Jacob Soll, *The Information Master* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009); Kathryn Burns, *Into the Archive* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010); and the papers in the special issue, Randolph Head (ed.), "Archival Knowledge Cultures in Europe, 1400-1900," *Archival Science* 10:3 (2010). For works that also study cataloguing systems see Randolph Head, "Knowing Like a State: The Transformation of Political Knowledge in Swiss Archives, 1450-1770," *Journal of Modern History* 75:4 (2003): 745-782; Filippo De Vivo, "Heart of the State, Site of Tension: The Archival Turn Viewed from Venice, ca. 1400-1700," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 68 (2013): 699-728; Michael Riordan, "The King's Library of Manuscripts": The State Paper Office as Archive and Library," *Information and Culture* 48:2 (2013): 181-193

Antiquarian editions in the eighteenth century

The seventeenth century had seen some astounding works of scholarship, none more so, perhaps, than the '*Monasticon Anglicanum*' of Roger Dodsworth and William Dugdale, which firmly established the importance of charters as historical records for the first time.⁹ The tradition which the '*Monasticon*' helped to create continued through the first decades of the eighteenth century with such works as the '*Formulare Anglicanum*' and the '*Concilia*'. The '*Formulare Anglicanum*' of 1702, perhaps the greatest work of English Diplomatic, was compiled by Thomas Madox, a clerk in the Augmentations Office,¹⁰ where he found 'a Vast collection of Ancient Original Charters' which, supplemented by charters from a few other archives, form the bulk of his work.¹¹ The work begins with his 'Dissertation Concerning Ancient Charters and Instruments', which analyses the charters which follow, before printing in full 783 charters including grants, leases, final concords and wills. The charters are all arranged by type so that it was possible to study how the mechanics of land conveyance had changed over time. He followed this, nine years later, with his History of the Exchequer in which, as an appendix, he published for the first time, the twelfth-century '*Dialogus de Scaccario*', effectively a manual for the working of the medieval Exchequer.¹² Madox's work was technically superior to all that had gone before: he had collated all but one extant manuscript of the 'Dialogue', and whereas Dugdale had often worked from cartularies for the '*Monasticon*', Madox in the '*Formulare*' worked only from the charters themselves. There was one exception: the pipe rolls¹³ which Madox considered 'being very Curious and Stately

⁹ Parry, *Trophies of Time*, 217-248; Douglas, *English Scholars*, 30-51.

¹⁰ A department of the Exchequer which had managed the lands seized by the Crown on the Dissolution of the Monasteries during the Reformation.

¹¹ Thomas Madox, *Formulare Anglicanum* (London: Jacob Tonson and Robert Knaplock, 1702); Preface sections II, VI

¹² Thomas Madox, *The History and Antiquities of the Exchequer of the Kings of England* (London: John Matthews and Robert Knaplock, 1711).

¹³ The pipe rolls, which begin in 1130, were the earliest continuous financial records of the English state.

Records, the Enrollments therein contained may, I conceive, be accounted of an authority equal to That of Original Charters.’¹⁴

The ‘*Concilia*’ of 1737 was not, perhaps, of quite such a high standard of accuracy, but it nevertheless stands as another significant work of scholarship. It had its origins in the 1630s when Sir Henry Spelman attempted to document every church council held in Britain or attended by British representatives. The new edition, a century later, was the idea of William Wake, archbishop of Canterbury from 1715 to his death in 1737. He had himself amassed large amounts of relevant documents and he employed his librarian, David Wilkins, to seek out further manuscript material, which involved Wilkins working in archives across the country. It was Wilkins who would ultimately edit the ‘*Concilia*’ and it is his name that appears on the title page, though he collated the records that he found with both Spelman’s edition and Wake’s notes. Much of what he prints comes from Bishops’ Registers, particularly for the later medieval period, but there are also items from the various rolls which formed the principal records of medieval English government and were kept at the numerous government record repositories around Westminster, and some narrative accounts taken from chronicles.¹⁵

It is hard to see, at first glance, how either the ‘*Formulare*’ or the ‘*Concilia*’ can be regarded as anything other than examples of formidably learned and rather dry works of scholarship, but in fact both were compiled, in part, for polemic purposes. Both had their inspiration in the seventeenth century which saw civil war culminating in the execution of a king, and the Glorious Revolution of 1688 when the Catholic king James II had fled the country and been

¹⁴ Madox, *Formulare Anglicanum*, Preface section VI. For Madox see Charlotte Harrison, “Thomas Madox and the Origins of English Diplomatic Scholarship,” *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 29:2 (2008): 147-169; Douglas, *English Scholars*, 234-243; Joseph M Levine, *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the August Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 367-373.

¹⁵ David Wilkins, *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae* (London: R. Gosling, F. Gyles, T. Woodward and C. Davis, 1737). For Wilkins see Parry, *Trophies of Time*, 167-173; Douglas, *English Scholars*, 215-221; E.F. Jacob, “Wilkins’s *Concilia* and the Fifteenth Century,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 15 (1932): 91-131.

replaced by his Protestant daughter and her Dutch husband. What's more, the archbishop of Canterbury and a considerable number of his clergy refused to take the Oath of Supremacy to the new king and queen and, henceforth known as the non-jurors, went into schism from the legally established Church of England. These issues were still very much alive in the early eighteenth century, particularly when Queen Anne died without issue in 1714 and the king of Hanover became King George I of Great Britain¹⁶ despite the existence of the 'Old Pretender', the son of James II who failed to overthrow his Hanoverian rival in the Jacobite uprising of 1715.

The key issues, therefore, were still, as they had been a century before, the relationships between king and people, and between church and state, and these issues dominated the historical and antiquarian work of the period.¹⁷ Thus the '*Concilia*' was part of a debate about the latter, while Madox's work on feudalism plays into the former. Arguably, both had their origins in Spelman's researches in the early seventeenth century. Wilkins's link to Spelman was more direct, using Spelman's '*Concilia*' as a source for his own work, but the immediate stimulus for the eighteenth century '*Concilia*' was the collections made by Wilkins's patron, Archbishop Wake, for his 'State of the Church and Clergy of England' of 1703, written to prove that the English king had the right not to summon the Church's Convocation.¹⁸ The relationship between Church and State was therefore at the heart of the '*Concilia*' which aimed to provide an authoritative history of English canon law which would verify the Church's legal status and protect it against Catholics, Dissenters, Non-jurors and even its own High Church members.

¹⁶ Over fifty people had a better claim to the throne than the Hanoverian, but he was the closest in the line of succession to be a Protestant.

¹⁷ Douglas, *English Scholars*; Philip Hicks, *Neoclassical History and English Culture: From Clarendon to Hume* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996)

¹⁸ William Wake, *The State of the church and clergy of England, in their councils, synods, convocations, conventions* (London: R Sare, 1703); Douglas, *English Scholars*, 202-217.

Madox's debt to Spelman was more indirect, but drew on Spelman's interest in the history of the Common Law. The *Formulare* is often discussed as a work of diplomatic, but Madox was interested not in the charters themselves, but in what a study of their language revealed about the development of the common law.¹⁹ He argued that

the Law of *England*, as it stands at This day, is supposed to be founded, for the Principles and Substance of it, on the Ancient Customs and Usages of the Same Realm: For That reason, it may seem proper for those who desire to have a Just Comprehension of the Laws and Usages of *England* to inspect the Ancient Monuments of their Countrey: From which, joined with other helps, they may be enabled to judg probably, whether the Accounts ordinarily given of the Ancient Constitution and Laws of *England* be Just and Well-grounded.²⁰

In other words, to understand the present Constitution and therefore to determine whether the Glorious Revolution was justified (Madox is writing just fourteen years later), one must understand how the Common Law was formed. Though Madox declared that he was compiling 'Materials' for history and explicitly rejected the idea that he was writing history,²¹ he and Wilkins were nevertheless engaging in urgent political and ecclesiastical debates whose participants were forming their arguments around theories about the past. Madox and Wilkins intended the records that they published to act as a foundation on which the particular historical narratives that they favoured could rest, while denying any validity to those of their opponents.

This combination of scholarship and polemic can also be seen in the work of Thomas Hearne, a staunch and out-spoken non-juror who lived his entire adult life at Oxford, even after he

¹⁹ Harrison, "Madox," discusses the *Formulare* in this context, but fails to connect it to the political controversies of the time.

²⁰ Madox, *Forumlare Anglicanum*, Preface section VIIIbis

²¹ Madox, *Firma Burgi* (London: William Bowyer, 1726), Preface section IX

was expelled from his job at the Bodleian in 1716 for refusing to take the Oath to George I, the locks on the door actually being changed to keep him out.²² Hearne, around this time, moved from publishing classical works to editing a large array of English narrative records, mostly medieval chronicles, but also republishing the works of sixteenth and seventeenth century antiquaries. His motives were certainly scholarly and antiquarian, but also, being unable to work in Oxford and yet unwilling to leave the city, he needed to earn a living. This he did very successfully, having over a thousand pounds at his death.²³ This success is in large part due to his large base of loyal subscribers; about 700 people subscribed to one or more of his publications, and because of his fervent views, even his enemies had to acquire his books in order to keep an eye on what he was up to.²⁴

Indeed, his outspokenness was part of his appeal to many of his readers, and a large proportion of what he called his ‘perpetual subscribers’ who bought each new publication after publication were non-jurors or at least sympathisers.²⁵ Hearne’s choice of text, though limited by his unwillingness to leave Oxford to those manuscripts or transcripts which his friends were willing to give or lend him, was often made with politics in mind. For example, Hearne frequently published documents relating to the Stewarts, being particularly keen to rescue the reputation of Mary, Queen of Scots, and had to be persuaded by friends that a publication in 1719 based around the visit to Spain in 1623 by the future Charles I was far too politically incendiary so soon after the failed Jacobite rebellion of 1715.²⁶ Perhaps most interestingly is his printing of the Anglo-Saxon poem on the battle of Maldon, in part because he regarded its hero Byrhtnoth, the ealdorman of Essex who dies at Maldon, failing to stop a Viking invasion of England, as a kind of proto-non-juror who, had he survived, would have

²² The fullest study of Hearne is Harmsen, *Antiquarianism*, though a useful introduction to him can be found in Douglas, *English Scholars*, 178-194

²³ Thomas Hearne, *The Life of Mr. Thomas Hearne* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1772), 33

²⁴ Harmsen, *Antiquarianism*, 69, 227.

²⁵ Harmsen, *Antiquarianism*, 227.

²⁶ Harmsen, *Antiquarianism*, 272-284.

had to come to the same kind of understanding with the Danes as Hearne himself did with the Hanoverians.²⁷

It is instructive to note that the Battle of Maldon is printed by Hearne as an appendix to his edition of the mid-fourteenth century chronicle of John of Glastonbury, included because it illustrates a discussion in the preface regarding territorial divisions in Anglo-Saxon England and the defensive duties of an ealdorman.²⁸ This is typical of Hearne's publications which normally consisted of a lengthy preface, the main text and then a long appendix to the preface consisting of shorter texts like the Battle of Maldon.²⁹

For example, in 1724, in two volumes, Hearne published the thirteenth century English metrical chronicle known as that of Robert of Gloucester.³⁰ Unlike W.A. Wright in his edition for the Rolls Series³¹ in 1887 which prints an edition of the text with an introduction limited to a discussion of the manuscripts, the author and his sources, and which might be described as a proto-professional academic publication,³² Hearne's edition is clearly antiquarian. In a seventy-seven page preface, Hearne puts Robert aside for the first twenty-five pages, instead discussing an old French roll containing pictures of early English kings, the 1541 English Bible, the Nuremberg Chronicle and the sixteenth century chronicler, Raphael Holinshed. These are all clearly matters which have recently come to Hearne's attention, many of them through correspondence with his friends from which he quotes at length.

²⁷ Harmsen, *Antiquarianism*, 254-255; Kathryn Sutherland, "Byrhtnoth's Eighteenth-Century Context," in *The Battle of Maldon AD 991*, ed. D.G. Scragg (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991): 189-192.

²⁸ Thomas Hearne, *Johannis, confratris & monachi Glastoniensis, Chronica sive Historia de rebus Glastoninensibus* (Oxford: Sheldonian Theatre, 1726).

²⁹ Hearne's publications are all listed in Harmsen, *Antiquarianism*, 305-314.

³⁰ Thomas Hearne, *Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle* (Oxford: Sheldonian Theatre, 1724).

³¹ For the Rolls Series, see below.

³² W.A. Wright, *The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester* (London: H.M.S.O., 1887) iv-xlvi.

When Hearne does turn to Robert of Gloucester he uses the discussion of Robert and his chronicle as a peg for introducing related matters, some of which are short texts he has been saving to print when an opportunity arises (such as the manuscript of the visit of Charles I to Spain, dropped in 1719 but finally published ten years later because Hearne could draw a comparison between the ‘martyred’ kings Richard II and Charles I), and others which continue discussions from other publications. Thus, when he notes that Robert of Gloucester has referred to a book about the Marvels of Britain, Hearne states that he has recently found a tract on the four Great Roman Ways which are among them, and so he publishes this in the appendix. Further on, Hearne remarks that a copy of Robert’s chronicle in the Heralds Office has some verses added, which he believes to be by the fourteenth-century poet Robert Mannyng, and noting that Mannyng was quoted by the sixteenth-century antiquary John Stow in his ‘Annals’ this leads Hearne on to observe that he has recently read the preface to one of Stow’s works which proves a conjecture that Hearne had made in his edition of Hemming’s Cartulary published the previous year. This preface is therefore also printed in the appendix. Hearne’s edition of the chronicle therefore consists of two volumes in which a significant part of the first volume is made up of a preface which touches on many matters beyond Robert of Gloucester, and half of the second volume is made up of an appendix of six miscellaneous items and a glossary.

Hearne was not writing history, but nor was he simply providing the source material for other historians to use, as the Rolls Series did with the same texts a century and a half later.

Instead, in the best antiquarian tradition he was making better known the remains of the past which he considers ‘curious’ just as in the same way that meetings of the Society of Antiquaries would discuss ‘curious’ historical artefacts which members brought with them. It was this sense of presenting the texts that shaped his editorial policy; he rarely provided much commentary on the texts but, like Madox, he aimed to create as accurate an edition as

possible, collating as many manuscripts as he could acquire and placing onto the printed page exactly what he found on the manuscript, being much criticised and mocked for his refusal to ‘correct’ the texts. And though his books were structured round a longer narrative work, often a medieval chronicle, the shorter documents in the appendix – which included charters, verses, essays, narratives and much else besides – were just as significant, and many of his most loyal ‘perpetual subscribers’ bought his publications primarily for the prefaces and appendices rather than the supposed star attraction. The prefaces and appendices also allowed Hearne to make some polemical points, though this was never as central to his work as it was to that of Madox and Wilkins.³³

By the second half of the eighteenth century, despite the renewed Jacobite threat in 1745, much of the heat had gone out of the political issues which had carried over from the seventeenth century and it was Hearne’s antiquarianism which was more typical than his polemic.³⁴ There were some editions of texts, like the earl of Hardwicke’s ‘Miscellaneous State Papers From 1501 to 1726’ published in 1778 in which the reader ‘will be better prepared for his future entertainment, if he pleases to consider the work before him as an historical picture gallery, where the different modes and fashions of upwards of two centuries are exhibited in regular succession.’³⁵ Though this clearly uses the language of the Enlightenment narrative of the history of manners, it is worth remembering that the study of customs and rites had long been a central antiquarian interest.³⁶ But such editions were rare and in most cases records were published as small contributions to much larger works, the most common of which were the topographical studies.

³³ Hearne’s editorial policy is discussed in much greater detail in Harmsen, *Antiquarianism*, 231-251

³⁴ This, to a large extent, is why David Douglas ends his study of *English Scholars* in 1730.

³⁵ Philip Yorke, earl of Hardwicke, *Miscellaneous State Papers. From 1501 to 1726* (London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1778), i v.

³⁶ See, for example, Hicks, *Neoclassical History*, 33-34, Parry, *Trophies of Time*, 12-13, Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 26-27

Some of these, such as Philip Morant's 'The history and antiquities of the county of Essex. Compiled from the best and most ancient historians; From Domesday-Book, Inquisitiones post Mortem, and other the most valuable Records and MSS.' of 1768, only occasionally reproduced records, but gave full references to them in footnotes.³⁷ Others, like Edward Hasted's 'The history and topographical survey of the county of Kent.: Containing the antient and present state of it, civil and ecclesiastical; collected from public records, and other the best authorities, both manuscript and printed: and illustrated with maps, and views of antiquities, seats of the nobility and gentry, &c.' actually printed extracts from the relevant records.³⁸ The extracts from records, often charters, that were included were not intended as evidence on which to build an argument in the way that Madox and Wilkins had used them, but were instead part of a description of the town or county and were included in just the same way that the authors might also include drawings of distinctive features of the landscape, local monuments and the family tree of prominent families. The fact that such extracts were included not as textual evidence, but as parts of a visual description helps explain why when John Nichols came to publish John Hutchins' history of Dorset, he developed a new 'Record type' which faithfully reproduced the script of Domesday Book³⁹ with all its particular signs, suspensions and contractions. It proved so successful that it was later to be used for the official printing of Domesday Book and for the publications of the Record Commission, and continued to be used for editions of Domesday Book through the twentieth century.⁴⁰

³⁷ Philip Morant, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex* (London: T. Osborne, J. Whiston, S. Baker, L. Davis and C. Reymers, 1768).

³⁸ Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent* (Canterbury: Simmons and Kirkby, 1778-1799).

³⁹ William the Conqueror's great survey of England of 1086, kept in the Exchequer Record Office at Westminster Abbey.

⁴⁰ John Hutchins, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset* (London: W. Bowyer and J. Nichols, 1774); Albert H. Smith, "John Nichols and Hutchins' *History and Antiquities of Dorset*," *The Library* 5th ser. X.2 (1960): 88-89.

Editions of state records in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

The printing of Domesday Book, was the last of three projects which were officially sponsored by, and paid for, by the state.⁴¹ The first of these projects began in the last years of the seventeenth century and seems to have been suggested by some of the leading members of the Whig Junto who governed England under William III. Thomas Rymer, the Historiographer Royal, a largely undefined position, was appointed in 1693 to

transcribe and publish all the leagues, treaties, alliances, capitulations, and confederacies, which have at any time been made between the Crown of England and any other kingdoms, princes, and states.⁴²

What emerged, over a decade later in 1704 was the first volume of '*Fædera, Conventiones, Litteræ, et cujuscunque generis acta publica, inter Reges Angliæ et alios quosvis Impertores, Reges, Pontifices, Principes vel Communitates*'.⁴³ Modelled to a great extent on the '*Codex Juris Gentium Diplomaticus*' of Leibnitz, with whom Rymer corresponded, it aimed to publish all treaties and diplomatic acts that England had entered into from the beginning of the twelfth century onwards. Rymer was established in a room off the Chapter House of Westminster Abbey, one of the principal record offices of the Exchequer, where he was permitted to keep as many records as he could transcribe in a week, which were then replaced the following week with another batch. Indentures of receipt were drawn up for each bundle, many of which still survive.⁴⁴ However, as the years went on, Rymer shifted further from his

⁴¹ All three are described in detail in M.M. Condon and Elizabeth M. Hallam, "Government Printing of the Public Records in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 7:6 (1984): 348-88.

⁴² Thomas Duffus Hardy, *Syllabus (in English) of the Documents Relating to England and other Kingdoms Contained in the Collections Known as "Rymer's Fædera* (London: Longman's and Green, 1869-1885), xxvi-xxvii. Hardy's introduction remains the best account of Rymer's work.

⁴³ Thomas Rymer, *Fædera, Conventiones, Litteræ, et cujuscunque generis acta publica, inter Reges Angliæ et alios quosvis Impertores, Reges, Pontifices, Principes vel Communitates* (London: A. and J. Churchill, 1704-1735).

⁴⁴ Hardy, *Syllabus*, xxx. The first of the indentures of receipt is published in Hardy's appendix, *Syllabus*, cxvi-cxvii.

original premise by adding increasing numbers of domestic records, so that by the time he died in 1713 his work had grown into fifteen volumes and he had nearly completed a sixteenth. This was completed by his assistant, Robert Sanderson who then published another four, which also became increasingly miscellaneous.

Despite the varying quality of the work, it deserves its place alongside Madox and Wilkins, but it gained a greater value, economically, from its scarcity. Only two hundred and fifty copies were printed and these were all set aside either for government offices, including the major records repositories, or as gifts for members and friends of the government. Even Madox, who succeeded Rymer as Historiographer Royal, seems not to have owned a copy, and most antiquaries could consult it only by visiting the records offices.⁴⁵

A similar pattern was followed when, in 1742, the House of Commons decided to print its Journals from their beginning in the mid-sixteenth century, and in 1767 when the House of Lords printed the Parliament Rolls as the '*Rotuli Parliamentorum*'. As with the '*Foedera*', these were not for private sale. The '*Rotuli*' was to be presented to 224 temporal peers, the bishops in their capacity as lords spiritual, parliamentary officials, and anyone in receipt of a warrant from the secretaries of state. Such limited distribution no doubt explains why there were over fourteen hundred volumes still in stock in 1825 which were eventually taken on by the Record Commission who formally published them for the first time in 1832.⁴⁶

When Domesday Book was printed by order of the House of Lords in 1783, although it was not actually published and put on sale, copies were sent to many more institutions than had received the '*Foedera*' or the '*Rotuli*' so it was therefore more widely available to antiquaries. It had originally been intended to create a facsimile edition but the two options

⁴⁵ Hardy, *Syllabus*, liii.

⁴⁶ Condon and Hallam, "Government Printing," 363-373.

considered, a new facsimile type or an engraving of every page, were both so expensive that eventually a compromise was reached by using John Nichols's Record Type.⁴⁷

All three projects had been ordered either by the government or by parliament and were intended primarily for official use. Moreover, the records printed in the '*Foedera*' and the '*Rotuli*' were technically private records, part of the *arcana imperii*. Domesday Book, however, was part of the public records, available to any citizen to inspect for a fee. Its printing was a sign that parliament was becoming more aware of the importance of records and their use, leading in 1800 to a select committee of the House of Commons which reported on the shocking state of the public records. It made five recommendations, the last of which was

The most essential of all these Measures, for the Purpose of laying open to the Public a full Knowledge of the Contents of these various and extensive Repositories would be, unquestionably, to PRINT some of the principal CALENDARS and INDEXES, and also such of the ORIGINAL RECORDS hitherto unpublished, as are the most important in their Nature, and the most perfect in their Kind.⁴⁸

In response a royal commission was created and there were to be six successive Record Commissions between 1800 and 1837 until the death of William IV closed down the last of them amidst so much controversy that no new commission was established by his successor, Queen Victoria.⁴⁹ In that time the six Commissions published thirty-eight works, most in multiple volumes, some of which were calendars and some full editions.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Condon and Hallam, "Government Printing," 376-381; Smith, "Nichols," 88-89.

⁴⁸ *Reports from the Select Committee, Appointed to Inquire into the State of the Public Records of the Kingdom, &c. Ordered by The House of Commons to be Printed, 4th July 1800* (London: Luke Hansard, 1800), 13.

⁴⁹ A royal commission, taking its authority directly from the monarch, must necessarily lapse on the death of that monarch.

⁵⁰ Peter Walne, "The Record Commissions, 1800-37," ed. Felicity Ranger, *Prisca Munimenta* (London: University of London Press, 1973), 9-18.

The Record Commission came under heavy criticism in the 1830s, partly because of the varied quality of its publications, but also because vast amounts of public money had been spent producing volumes that no one was buying. At one point the Commission had actually sold sixteen tons of its own publications for waste paper.⁵¹ But what angered people most was that the Commission had focused on publishing records because it was easier than reforming the vested interests in the record repositories. The Commission's fiercest critic, Nicholas Harris Nicolas, complained, for example, that the major failing of the 'Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem' published by the Commission was that the information for which they were

most frequently consulted, the name and age of the heir, and which might in every instance have been expressed in two lines, is omitted. The motive for this is sufficiently obvious, because if those statements had occurred, it would not be so frequently necessary to consult the originals, and hence divers sixteen shillings and eightpences would have been lost to the keeper.⁵²

To make matters worse, the keepers were often also the editors, thus profiting twice from their unsatisfactory catalogues. This reveals a tension which helps to explain why so few of the public records were published in the eighteenth century (the *Formulare* and Domesday Book stand as exceptions), for the keepers of the various record offices relied upon the fees paid for carrying out searches and providing transcriptions for researchers and if editions of the records were publicly available they would lose their income. A whole new archival administration would be required before the public records could be published.

⁵¹ Walne, "Record Commissions," 17.

⁵² Nicholas Harris Nicolas, *Observations on the State of Historical Literature* (London: William Pickering, 1830), 84.

And so, out of the ashes of the Record Commission rose the Public Record Office Act which merged all the record repositories into one office under the supervision of the Master of Rolls and the management of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records.⁵³ The new regime learned the lesson of the Record Commission and published nothing but calendars of records. Here they had the model of the State Paper Commission, established in 1825 for the purpose of publishing calendars of State Papers, though by the time the first volume was published in 1856, the State Paper Office had been merged into the Public Record Office.⁵⁴ Sir Francis Palgrave, the first Deputy Keeper, considered it to be a ‘national duty’ to produce ‘the means of ascertaining the contents of public literary repositories, through the means of Catalogues’ and his successor agreed because ‘the greater number of the readers who will consult and value these works can have little or no opportunity of visiting the Record Office, in which these papers are deposited.’⁵⁵ The first calendar to be published, covering domestic state papers from 1547 to 1580, failed in this respect, producing summaries so slight that the editor himself admitted that ‘for the fully satisfying the purposes of study recourse must be had to the originals’,⁵⁶ but later volumes succeeded better and this series continued through into the twentieth century and continues to be of great value today.

Editions of non-governmental records in the nineteenth century

In 1857, Lord Romilly, the Master of the Rolls, was persuaded to instigate another series, officially called ‘The Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages’ but which has been always known instead as the Rolls Series. Despite the name, the series did not publish any of the long series of medieval rolls in the Public Record

⁵³ John D. Cantwell, *The Public Record Office 1838-1958* (London: H.M.S.O., 1991), 1-12.

⁵⁴ Cantwell, *Public Record Office*, 163.

⁵⁵ Public Record Office, *The Seventeenth Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records* (London: H.M.S.O., 1856), 23; Public Record Office, *The Twenty-third Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records* (London: H.M.S.O., 1862), 25.

⁵⁶ Robert Lemon, *State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reigns of Edward VI., Mary, Elizabeth, 1547-1580* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longman’s, and Roberts, 1856), xi.

Office which were the subject of the Office's calendars, but instead focused mainly on the medieval chronicles, many of which Hearne had published over a century earlier.⁵⁷ But Romilly's motivation was very different from Hearne's antiquarian interests. In part he was inspired by '*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*' to create a set of national historical texts, what he regarded as 'materials for the History of this Country from the Invasion of the Romans to the Reign of Henry VIII' and which the government officially approved as 'this important national object.'⁵⁸ But it was also aimed, like the calendars of the Public Record Office at 'students' of various subjects and the Rolls Series therefore aimed to provide accurate editions of records which could be used by historians.

Accuracy was considered to be the key concept of the series, and Romilly insisted that each edition should be an *editio princeps*; indeed, several publications were cancelled at a late stage when Romilly could not be convinced that the manuscripts had been properly collated and accurately edited. Before fifteen years was up, a hundred volumes had been printed and though the pace slowed, it continued throughout the latter half of the century. The standard could be mixed (it should be remembered that few of the editors can be genuinely described as professional) and there were a few disasters, but at its best – the nineteen volumes edited by William Stubbs for example – it has yet to be superseded.⁵⁹

As the Record Commission had been coming under attack in the 1830s and it seemed that government publication of records was coming to an end, perhaps forever, a number of individuals acted to adopt a form of society that had recently been tried in Scotland. Just south of the Scottish border in Durham in 1834, James Raine and a few friends founded the

⁵⁷ The name derives from the fact that they were published under the authority of the Master of the Rolls.

⁵⁸ These are both quoted in the Master of the Rolls' preface printed at the start of every volume of the series. For other examples of similar national projects see Daniela Saxer, "Monumental Undertakings: Source Publications for the Nation," (ed.) Ilaria Porciani and Jo Tollebeek, *Setting the Standards: Institutions, Networks and Communities of National Historiography* (Basingtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 47-69.

⁵⁹ David Knowles, *Great Historical Enterprises* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1963), 114-117.

Surtees Society which had ‘for its object the Publication of inedited Manuscripts, illustrative of the intellectual, the moral, the religious, and the social condition of ... [the] region which constituted the Ancient Kingdom of Northumberland’. It was followed by the Camden Society, founded in 1838 ‘to perpetuate, and render accessible, whatever is valuable, but at present little known, amongst the materials for the Civil, Ecclesiastical, or Literary History of the United Kingdom’, and in 1844 by the Chetham Society for the publication of ‘remains historical and literary connected with the Palatine Counties of Lancashire and Cheshire’. More continued to be established throughout the century, such as the Oxford Historical Society, founded in 1884 to ‘publish materials of every sort for a picture of Oxford at every age’, and the Worcestershire Historical Society, begun in 1893 for the ‘collection and publication of materials for compiling a History of the County of Worcester’.⁶⁰ By the end of the century there were ten national publishing societies, most of which had a thematic interest, and fourteen local societies.

The success of these societies helped to publicise the importance of records kept in private hands, and in the second half of the nineteenth century there was increased concern to preserve and make public these records. This led, in 1869, to the creation of the Historical Manuscripts Commission which, according to its Royal Warrant, would carry out a survey of those ‘papers and MSS. belonging to private families and institutions ... which would be of utility in the illustration of history, constitutional law, science, and general literature’, though excluding everything of a private nature or relating to ownership of property. Two inspectors, both barristers, were appointed, and the first nine volumes were the results of their surveys of over five hundred collections of family papers. These were summaries rather than calendars,

⁶⁰ Abraham Hume, *The Learned Societies and Printing Clubs of the United Kingdom* (London: Spottiswoode and Shaw, 1847), 250-251, 256; James Tait, “The Chetham Society: A Retrospect,” Chetham Society, *Chetham Miscellanies, New Series, Volume VII* (Manchester: Chetham Society n.s. 100, 1939), 2; Oxford Historical Society, *Prospectus* (Oxford: Oxford Historical Society, 1883), 15; Worcestershire Historical Society, *Report of Editorial Committee, Rules and List of Members for the Year 1893* (Oxford: James Parker and Co., 1893), 1.

noting interesting documents, but without any attempt to arrange them. In 1883, however, the Commission adopted a new approach and started to issue calendars like those produced by the Public Record Office, beginning with the papers of the Marquess of Salisbury, whose ancestors had been ministers to Elizabeth I and James I. It continued to publish a further seven or eight volumes a year throughout the remaining years of the century and beyond.⁶¹

Motivations for record publishing

This brief survey of the practice of record publishing, though admittedly practiced in different forms throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, has shown how it was used as a tool to fulfil a variety of historical and antiquarian purposes as diverse as supporting polemical theses to providing the materials for writing national history. However, in order to understand still further the place of record publishing in wider historical practice, we might look at some of the motivations for undertaking the practice that are present throughout the period.

One was clearly local interest. When, for example, Lionel Charlton published his history of Whitby in 1779 he did so ‘to oblige my neighbours the inhabitants of Whitby’.⁶² There was a strong tradition of chorographical publication in England dating back to Camden’s ‘*Britannia*’ and Lambarde’s ‘*A Perambulation of Kent*’, with Dugdale’s ‘*The Antiquities of Warwickshire*’ of 1656 being particularly admired.⁶³ The county and city histories of the late eighteenth century were in this tradition. Hasted’s ‘*The History and Topographical Survey of the County Kent*’, for example, divides the county up into its hundreds and within each

⁶¹ Roger H. Ellis, “The Historical Manuscripts Commission 1869-1969,” *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 2:6 (1962): 233-235.

⁶² Lionel Charlton, *The History of Whitby and of Whitby Abbey* (York: A. Ward, 1779), xiii.

⁶³ William Camden, *Britannia siue Florentissimorum regnorum, Angliae, Scotiae, Hiberniae* (London: Ralph Newbery, 1586); William Lambarde, *A perambulation of Kent* (London: Ralph Newbery, 1576); William Dugdale, *The antiquities of Warwickshire illustrated* (London: Thomas Warren, 1656). See Stan A.E. Mendyk, “*Speculum Britanniae*”: regional study, antiquarianism, and science in Britain to 1700 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989)

hundred by parish. It gives a topographical description of the parish before discussing its history and the history of its great families, occasionally quoting from records, particularly Domesday Book. This tradition culminated in the 'Victoria History of the Counties of England' (known colloquially as the 'Victoria County History') which began publishing at the beginning of the twentieth century and continues to this day.

However, the fourteen local printing societies of the nineteenth century, like the Surtees Society and the Oxford Historical Society, which focussed on particular geographical areas are not in this tradition. They are little interested in topography, concentrating on publishing records relating to what the Surtees Society described as 'the intellectual, the moral, the religious, and the social condition' of their region.⁶⁴ Yet local interest, even local pride, was clearly a significant reason why people contributed to, and bought, these publications. One member of the Chetham Society on being presented with a copy of the 'Coucher Book of Whalley Abbey' exclaimed 'what in the world do they mean by printing such stuff as this', suggesting that he had joined for reasons other than an interest in medieval records.⁶⁵

Records were also published to make them more accessible. Exactly what this means shifts across the two centuries. Hearne published the chronicles and Hardwicke his state papers because they were curious texts which would interest and entertain their readers. Lionel Charlton translated all his Whitby charters into English in order 'to suit myself to the capacity of the Vulgar'.⁶⁶ These were aimed at an educated but not professional readership and the same is true of some of the earlier publications of the printing societies such as the 'Towneley Mysteries' published by the Surtees Society in 1836 or the political songs of medieval England published by the Camden Society in 1839, which still retain a patina of antiquarianism. But others like the 'Coucher Book of Whalley Abbey' or the publications of

⁶⁴ Hume, *Learned Societies*, 250

⁶⁵ Tait, "Chetham Society," 4.

⁶⁶ Charlton, *Whitby*, xiii-xiv.

the Rolls Series were intended for a specialist, proto-professional audience, and the Calendars of State Papers were directed at ‘the student, whether of history, biography, genealogy, or general literature’ and aimed to make the records ‘more available to the advancement of English history’.⁶⁷ They were essentially a means to an end; they provided the ‘authorities’ from which ‘scientific’ works would be composed.

But preservation was also an issue. The fire that devastated the Cottonian Library in 1731 brought home to antiquaries how fragile records were. The sole manuscript of the ‘Battle of Maldon’ was destroyed that day so that Hearne’s edition of it, published five years earlier, has in fact replaced the manuscript as the primary source of the poem.⁶⁸ Preservation had long been regarded as one of the principal duties of the antiquary; indeed, Hearne’s own epitaph for himself was ‘Thomas Hearne who studied and preserved antiquities’.⁶⁹ For Hearne, and many others, publication of a text was a self-conscious act of preservation and this element of antiquarianism was accepted by the nineteenth century editors too. When Thomas Stapleton published the ‘Plumpton Correspondence’ for the Camden Society in 1839 it was with the dual aim ‘to preserve and make known such remains’. On producing ‘Some municipal records of the city of Carlisle’ for the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society in 1887, R.S. Ferguson and W. Nanson felt that ‘the question may be asked – why we have not first published the charters of Carlisle and then followed up with the laws etc of the guilds? The answer to that is, the charters are in safe custody, and can be published at any time; the records of the guilds are not’. Similarly, Canon Raine’s edition of the wills and inventories from the north of England for the Surtees Society in 1835 ensured

⁶⁷ James Raine, *The Towneley Mysteries* (Surtees Society 3, London: J. B. Nichols and Son, 1836); Thomas Wright, *The Political Songs of England: from the Reign of John to that of Edward II* (Camden Society 6, London: J.B. Nichols, 1839); William Adam Hulton, *The Coucher Book or Chartulary of Whalley Abbey* (Chetham Society 10, Manchester: Chetham Society, 1847); Lemon, *State Papers*, ix, xi.

⁶⁸ Sutherland, “Byrhtnoth,” 183.

⁶⁹ Parry, *Trophies of Time*, 222, 364-5; Woolf, *Social Circulation*, 157-8; Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 277-307. For Hearne’s epitaph see Douglas, *English Scholars*, 228.

that they ‘are now ... secure against the attacks of time and accident’.⁷⁰ These acts of ‘preservation’ also demonstrate that there was a widening sense in the second half of the nineteenth century of what documents needed to be permanently preserved and perhaps, therefore, a widening sense of what counted as a record.

Record editions and archives

But if publication is preservation, then it implies that it is only the content of the record that matters. It also means that, in a sense, the editors are the custodians of the records, and the editors of the printing societies used their volumes to form their own virtual archives. For example, George Ornsby, preparing a volume for the Surtees Society in 1869 noted that ‘the collection of papers, illustrative of the life of Bishop Cosin ... has been gathered from various sources’, as were the medieval political songs that Thomas Wright edited for the Camden Society in 1839 which ‘have been brought together from scattered sources’. A typical example is J.R. Bloxam’s ‘Magdalen College and King James II’, published by the Oxford Historical Society in 1886, which brings together every record he could find relating to the crisis at Magdalen in the short reign of James II, including records from Magdalen’s own archive, the British Museum, the Bodleian, and some held in private hands.⁷¹

This is important because it means that these publications, indeed one might call them virtual archives, all break the archival principle of *respect des fonds*, as yet unknown in England, but being developed in France at this very time. A twenty-first century version of, say, Bloxam’s edition would certainly extract records from different repositories, but by citing where the

⁷⁰ Thomas Stapleton, *Plumpton Correspondence* (Camden Society 4, London: J.B. Nichols and Son, 1839), 11; R.S. Ferguson and W. Nanson, *Some Municipal Records of the City of Carlisle* (Publications of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, Extra Series 4, Carlisle: C. Thurnam and Sons and London: George Bell and Sons, 1887), viii; James Raine, *Testamenta Eboracensia, or, Wills Registered at York* (Surtees Society 2, London: J.B. Nichols and Son, 1835), viii.

⁷¹ George Ornsby, *The Correspondence of John Cosin, D.D., Lord Bishop of Durham* (Surtees Society 52, Durham: Andrews and Co., 1869), v; Wright, *Political Songs*, xiv; J.R. Bloxam, *Magdalen College and King James II, 1686-1688: a Series of Documents* (Oxford Historical Society 6, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886).

original record could be found it preserves information about the provenance of the record. By excluding this information the nineteenth century editions therefore prejudiced the content of the record over that most important archival quality of context. In fact, the publishing of records had long encouraged the privileging of the content of records over context, from Hearne's throwing together of miscellaneous documents in his appendices, and the local antiquaries plucking out individual charters to print, through to the mass virtual rearrangements of the printing societies. And this came to influence how the actual, physical records were kept.

Surprisingly, there were few archivists involved in records publication; Madox, at the start of our period, was a notable exception. Only in the works of the Record Commission were the records frequently edited by their custodians, and even just some of the Public Record Office calendars were edited by record keepers such as Robert Lemon, while many were edited by people like J.S. Brewer and Mary Anne Everett Green who were employed by the Public Record Office specifically and solely to work on the published calendars. But archivists were certainly well aware of record editions and as they rearranged their collections and prepared new inventories in the nineteenth century, the record editions inspired and influenced them. Two factors were important. First, the record editions, as we have seen, were part of a tradition that privileged the content of the records over their context. Secondly, printing demands a linear way of thinking about records. This is not a problem for a chronicle or a roll, which are already arranged in linear fashion, but how do you arrange a bundle of state papers or the contents of a drawer in a press so that they can be placed into a linear calendar? Both of these thought processes encouraged archivists to break up bundles and keep and list records in long chronological sequences.

To give one example:⁷² in the eighteenth century it is clear that the State Papers, the records of what is now the Home and Foreign Secretaries, were arranged in bundles, probably the same bundles in which they first arrived at the State Paper Office. Thus, in the late eighteenth century inventory there are three separate entries for ‘Seven volumes of Original Letters between England and Spain, 1558-1620’, ‘Sixty four Bundles of Original Letters bet England and Spain, 1558-1623’ and ‘Letters etc Between England Spain & Portugal 49 Bundles, 1575-1650’.⁷³ However, after 1800 these bundles were split up, mixed together and arranged chronologically. It is thus now impossible to know, from either the physical arrangement or the published calendar, from which bundle a particular letter came or what contextual information might have been lost in the process.⁷⁴

Record editions and the practice of history

It is tempting to make a sweeping judgement and to classify the wide variety of purposes to which records editions were put in the eighteenth century as antiquarian, while gradually giving way to proto-professional academic history in the nineteenth, following the well-established narrative of the historians adopting the antiquaries’ methodology. But in fact, apart from its scale, William Stubbs’s ‘The Constitutional History of England’, first published between 1874 and 1878 and regarded by contemporaries as the greatest work of nineteenth century ‘scientific’ history, looks very similar to Thomas Madox’s ‘*Firma Burgi*’, his 1726 essay on the constitutional development of towns. Moreover, Stubbs would no doubt heartily agree with Madox’s methodology for a historian:

⁷² There are not yet enough studies of the reorganization of archives in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to determine quite how widespread such practices were.

⁷³ National Archives, SP 130/1 ff.65-8.

⁷⁴ I have discussed this in more detail in Michael Riordan, “Printing, Selection and the Cataloguing of Oxford Archives, c.1850-1950,” *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 32:1 (2011): 51-62, and Robin Darwall-Smith and Michael Riordan, “‘Bad and Dangerous Work’: Lessons from Nineteenth- and Early-Twentieth-Century Oxford Archives,” *Archivaria* 74 (2012): 93-118

Let him collect as great a Treasure as he can of Records and Authenticks, Let him connect them and digest them into Historical Discourse, Let him explain compare and illustrate them with Candour and Judgment, Let him use them for Proofs and testimonies to support what he writes.⁷⁵

It is, therefore, too simple to say that a new historical methodology developed around 1800, but it is perhaps fair to say that in 1700 there were different audiences for different types of historical discourse.⁷⁶

Thus, a reader of Madox might not also be a reader of Hearne; a reader of Hearne might not be interested in a history of Dorset; and a topographical historian might not read a narrative historian such as David Hume. As Madox observed,

All Men have not a Like genius or a Disposition to the Same kind of Studies.

However, we need not go about to undervalue all other Studies besides those to which we our selves are bent; or seek to advance the Value of that sort of Learning which we profess to know, by depressing the Value of That of other kinds.⁷⁷

But by the end of the nineteenth century it had become expected that a work of history – particularly one that hoped to sell – had to please several different audiences at once. E.A. Freeman, recognised this when he observed that on writing his epic ‘The History of the Norman Conquest of England’ in 1868, he would have ‘to make for my text a narrative which I hope may be intelligible to girls and curates, and in an appendix to discuss the evidence for each point in a way which I hope may be satisfactory to Gneist and Stubbs.’⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Madox, *Firma Burgi*, Preface section IX.

⁷⁶ For a wide range of historical genres in the eighteenth century see Mark Salber Phillips, *Society and Sentiment: Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740-1820* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000)

⁷⁷ Madox, *Formulare*, Preface section VIIIbis

⁷⁸ Bodleian Library, Misc. Eng. Lett. d.74, f. 107r

Yet though the ‘scientific’ historians of the nineteenth century accepted the need to base their narratives on what they called the ‘original authorities’, they rarely handled the records themselves. There were perhaps only three men in successive generations – Kemble, Stubbs and Maitland – who can be considered to be serious editors as well as serious historians, and J.A. Froude was exceptional not only in the amount of time he spent in archives – in England and on the continent – and the number of documents he read, but also in the number he reproduced in his histories, albeit often heavily paraphrased; indeed, his perpetual critic Freeman complained that Froude’s history was marred by ‘whole chapters which look like a Calendar of State Papers with editorial comments interspersed’.⁷⁹ Freeman himself was more typical, finding it difficult to work anywhere other than his own house; his friend J.R. Green summed up the attitude of many when he wrote that ‘bore as it is, one must work at the “Rolls”’. Even William Stubbs, the most influential English historian of the nineteenth century, believed that ‘no man may be obliged to keep all his ideas in chronic effervescence and all his hopeful discoveries in a state of tantalizing suspension, in the hope that once a year he can visit the Bodleian or the British Museum’.⁸⁰ Therefore, given that these historians generally disliked actually visiting archives, they needed other people to produce their sources for them.

Freeman complained that though

the local historian who does not raise his eyes to general history is undoubtedly a very poor creature ... the facts gathered together by the local antiquary may at least be put

⁷⁹ E.A. Freeman, “Froude’s Reign of Elizabeth,” *Saturday Review* 17:429 (1864), 81.

⁸⁰ W.R. Stephens, *The Life and Letters of Edward A. Freeman* (London: Macmillan, 1895), ii 471-472; Leslie Stephen, *Letters of John Richard Green* (London: Macmillan, 1901), 150; William Stubbs, *Seventeen Lectures on the Study of Mediaeval and Modern History* (3rd ed., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900), 14. Note that Stubbs, the Regius Professor of History at Oxford, still seems to expect that most history will be written in gentlemen’s studies rather than in university libraries.

to some use by those who know better than himself how to array them in their due place and order.⁸¹

Stubbs put it a little more generously when he said that

The mere archaeologist, the mere genealogist, the mere antiquary, are not the parasites of historical study, as they are too often regarded by men who find it easier to borrow than to estimate the results of their researches; they are working bees in the hive of historic knowledge.⁸²

This was, though, a rather back-handed compliment, and it is clear that worthy though their work might be, the antiquary, the archivist and the other editors of records were practitioners of what was now regarded as a subsidiary and auxiliary form of historical practice, preparing the materials that the true historian can then put to genuine use.

Conclusion

The publishing of record editions throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was, in one form or another, constantly performed as an historical practice, though done so to fulfil a wide variety of purposes: Madox, Wilkins and Hearne were in part polemical, Hearne and Hardwicke hoped to entertain and inform the curious, the county studies contributed to topography and encouraged local pride, and the government-sponsored publications served political and bureaucratic ends. In the nineteenth century, though many of these motives continued, record editions became increasingly linked to a proto-professional academic history. Moreover, they were increasingly published within existing frameworks as part of a series like the Rolls Series or the PRO calendars, or under the auspices of the printing societies such as the Camden and the Surtees.

⁸¹ E.A. Freeman, "Address to the Historical Section of the Annual Meeting of the Institute held at Cardiff," *The Archaeological Journal* 28 (1871): 180.

⁸² Stubbs, *Seventeen Lectures*, 87.

But the record editions were also, despite the lack of involvement of many archivists, seen as quasi-archival collections. Publishing was often an act of preservation in which the published record superseded the original and this process was both influenced by and itself encouraged a tendency to privilege the content of records over their context. This helped create an interdependence between editions and archives (and a similar argument could be made between historian and archivists) in which the archive provides the source material for the edition, while the edition influences the way in which the archive is organized.

Madox, at the start of our period argued that record editions ‘are not History; but Materials for it.’⁸³ Stubbs and Freeman, at the end of our period, would have agreed. Yet one can argue that Madox’s methodology was just one form of historical practice, and that the work of Hearne and Rymer, of Hutchins and Hasted, the contributors to the Camden and Surtees societies, and the editors, including Stubbs himself, of the Rolls Series, were all equally valid forms of historical practice. But the growing expectation that historical practice must result in a narrative form backed up by references to sources, ensured that by the end of the nineteenth century Madox’s methodology had become dominant and that the editors of records – and, indeed, archivists too – had been reduced to the practitioners of a subsidiary and auxiliary discipline.

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⁸³ Madox, *Firma Burgi*, Preface section IX.

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