



Palaeography for Family and Local Historians

Hilary Marshall

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Family and local historians frequently encounter the challenge posed by the writing, and sometimes the translation, of the records which might most enable them to make further progress with their research. Many pamphlets, booklets and even books have been produced over the past century to help with old handwriting and abbreviations, but this new work, written by an author who has for years run courses on the subject, is the most practical and comprehensive yet for family and local historians. Based on some fifty facsimile reproductions of documents of graduated difficulty, culled from many useful sources, it provides transcripts, and translations where appropriate, together with advice on methods of transcribing. The alphabet, with commentary, of the numerous types of letter to be found in the examples (many being in the secretary and court hands which so often cause problems), and illustrations of forms of abbreviation will greatly help to unravel the difficulties of reading. Many documents before 1733 were written in Latin and the author includes an outline of the differences between classical and medieval usage and a vocabulary to cover the section in Latin. There are examples, from the 1400s to the 1700s, of a wide range of hands found in the most usual categories of record used by family historians, such as parish registers, wills and court rolls, and in many others which disclose helpful information on families and localities. Those who use this book will not need to be persuaded of the great enjoyment to be derived from pursuing research into family or local history and the pleasures of piecing together evidence to throw new light on old times. They may also find great enjoyment in the deciphering of documents, the means to that end. For the solitary searcher or a member of a class or local society, this will be the standard work upon which to rely for many decades to come.

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