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Sacramental Token Books of St Saviour, Southwark. Search Site

Héloïse Sénéchal

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Marked carefully as "work in progress," The Parish of St Saviour, Southwark is, in fact, a largely complete, open-access database of documents pertaining to the inhabitants of the Surrey (now South London) parish between 1550 and 1650. William Ingram and Alan H. Nelson's impressive project, partly funded by a University of Michigan grant, is affiliated with the London Metropolitan Archives and the Folger Shakespeare Library and combines meticulous scholarly archivism with both digital and intellectual accessibility. Its creators have published widely on early modern theatre and its urban, economic, and documentary contexts: Ingram is professor emeritus at the University of Michigan, Nelson at the University of California, Berkeley. Their site collates, either directly or through summary, all local extant records that relate to the St. Saviour parish, its members, and its key institutions: the church of St. Saviour (now Southwark Cathedral) and the Southwark free school. Fortunately, a good amount of documentary evidence has survived for the period, certainly relative to adjacent London parishes, and the site incorporates diverse sources, including parochial presentments, wills, the school governors' book, certificates of residence, and vestry minutes, among a significant number of other records. With the exception of wills and lawsuits, where information is summarized, these are presented in their entirety, having been transcribed by Nelson

and Ingram from documents held at the National Archives and the London Metropolitan Archives, along with several local history collections. This makes the site a unique repository of material unavailable beyond the archive, with most documents transcribed and edited for the first time. The geographically specific focus of the dataset further allows for an enriched understanding of how the institutions of community life intersected with one another, and enables the historian to pick out individuals in a variety of contexts and socio-professional networks.

The collections are grouped clearly on the predominantly functional home page as "Parish," "Church," "School," and "Other" hyperlinked documents, this latter category containing various sources, including lay subsidies, musters, and sewer commission presentments, as well as a selected reading list. Editorial aids and explanatory material are found throughout the collection; nested links signpost external sites that may assist with understanding or viewing aspects of the records; there is glossing of unfamiliar or technical terminology; and information about parish boundaries, taxation, and administrative structures is provided. The site's focus on clarity is reflected in the comprehensive home page "Index of Names"; its use of regularized nominal forms is additionally helpful, allowing one to navigate the inevitable proliferation of early modern spelling variants retained *literatim* in the records themselves. Searching for Filcox, for example, pulls up no fewer than twenty-three variants, including Fillcocks, Ffyllcoxe, Filcoxks, Pilcox, and Phylkoxe. Efficient SEO (search engine optimization) retrieves these records through Google as well.

There is a wealth of information to be found via the index, with the single-point identification of multiple record entries allowing the user to view an individual's profile in chronological outline across separate subsets of documents. The affluent, inevitably, have a bigger footprint in the record, but there is a good deal to be pieced together about those without significant property or senior office. Illiterate waterman Thomas Walborn of Boar's Head Alley, for example, is found overseeing the wills of colleagues, living with a wife, servant, and others, and being nominated guardian to a dying neighbour's young relative. Displaying results within the context of people bearing the same surname further enables the identification of potential kinship networks; where familial or social connections are identifiable from documentary evidence within the database, search results link to the relevant source. A number of names well-known to scholars of early modern London and of the

Bankside theatrical scene are to be found, sometimes revealed in less familiar contexts. Theatrical entrepreneur Philip Henslowe, for example, who is widely represented (thirty-seven separate entries), features in predictable capacity as a landlord and as one liable for public repairs near the Rose playhouse, but also as a school governor and as one of the "bargainers" selected to negotiate the purchase of the parish in 1611. Nelson and Ingram's expert palaeographical transcription yields yet further references: one Philip Finchley turns out to have been Hinchley, a variant form of Henslowe.

On penetrating the records themselves, some alternative search and viewing options become available, enabling a straightforward consideration of the documents as datasets, rather than in isolation. Church ministers, "strangers," and schoolmasters can be explored alphabetically or sequentially; baptismal parish register entries can be navigated by the father's profession; one can view "trades and vocations" as clusters of related fields. Chiefly, however, the database is negotiated via alphabetized menus, which are attached to many, but not all, of its sets of documents. Some material is less readily retrievable and can require persistence. Tucked into the site are a number of nested pages containing records not otherwise displayed on the home page or even, sometimes, very prominently on specific site pages. The fascinating "List of Strangers," for example, which reveals the large proportion of Dutch residents of the parish, is only accessible along a pathway through "Lay Subsidies," and "Lawsuits" is gained solely via central index entries for individuals who feature in the case summaries. This is not necessarily a bad thing for a researcher enjoying the experience of uncovering further treasures within a digital Chinese box, and it makes for a tidier home page free of multiple links, but may prove tricker for the amateur genealogist or less experienced student user.

The documents themselves are wonderfully uncomplicated. Structured layout and unobtrusive editing render the material user-friendly, without compromising its early modern flavour. With two diplomatic exceptions ("Views of Inmates" and "Views of New Buildings"), transcriptions feature modernized spelling, the expansion of abbreviated forms, and regularization of u/v, allowing the reader to access material efficiently, and catering for easier Ctrl+F keyword-searching. Cutting and pasting text is equally straightforward. Throughout the site, Ingram and Nelson issue regular prefatory caveats about potential limitations of the data, and outline their methodological approaches to its selection and transcription. The user is in editorially very safe hands;

meticulous acknowledgement of omissions or inconsistencies, and, in the case of the token books, of differences in individual transcription practice, means that there is no obfuscation of the gaps between digital text and original manuscript.

This emphasis on direct presentation of content is reflected in the site's design. Resolutely plain and uncluttered by graphics, its exceptionally clean interface prioritizes the archival material without any fuss. No-nonsense Verdana on an off-white background makes for a direct reader-to-text experience via a series of clearly demarcated electric-blue hyperlinks on the home page. Boxed text serves to identify archival reference numbers and the explanatory notes that preface the records themselves. It is a look some might find unfinished, and there are occasional pages that need a spacing tweak, but the scholarly user at whom this resource is primarily aimed is an information hunter for whom the labour-saving presence of searchable transcriptions trumps any distracting iconography. That said, a map of the parish and its surrounds would have been a helpful inclusion; the site might also be updated to include external links to the 2015 Map of Early Modern London project (MoEML), which features, in addition to the Agas map, several maps showing the parish, and a list of documents mentioning St. Saviour, signposting Ingram and Nelson for parish records en route.[1] One of the many rich troves of material the user can collate from the documents within the St. Saviour database comprises the names and, in some cases, material nature of individual tenements, inns, streets, suspected brothels, and other sites. A future direction for the digital archive might include indexing named locations in the database and linking them to a GUI (graphical user interface) like the MoEML.

A chief source of information about the geography of the parish, and perhaps the jewel in the crown of the St. Saviour project, is the cache of 144 token books that survives from 1571 to 1643. These are records of the Easter communion tokens that it was compulsory for heads of households to purchase for all those living with them who were aged over sixteen. The books record the names of the purchasers, the number of tokens anticipated and bought, and, in some cases, the names or status of other household members. As Ingram and Nelson point out in their excellent explanation of how to interpret entries, the St. Saviour token book collection is unique, both in terms of its extensiveness

1. See Highley.

and as a form of early census. The pages devoted to these records, including a separate home page, feature the same design as and are bidirectionally linked to the main St. Saviour site; both are hosted by the Folger Shakespeare Library. Unlike the other documents in the database, the books have, for the first time, been photographed and can be viewed both directly and in transcription; they can be read chronologically or by reference number, and are name-searchable, not via the main site index, but through a separate engine with extra filtering (trade, status, nationality, family, office). The imaging of manuscripts is a welcome feature of an open-access local history resource; remote researchers seeking to visualize parish documents that illuminate pre-1650 London neighbourhoods are chiefly reliant upon the incomplete image collections of church registers and wills paywalled at Ancestry (ancestry.co.uk), although in the case of St. Saviour there is also much useful manuscript material to be gleaned from the Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project (henslowe-alleyn.org.uk).

The token books are a mine of information about the physical distribution of tenements and the groups of people who inhabited them, with the site's forename/surname search function allowing the researcher to track individuals and their relatives across a number of years. Entries detailing co-inhabitants of the head of household, such as wives, unrelated adults, or servants, enable us to make inferences about family structures, affluence, marriage, and bereavement; these can be collated with other documents in the database, or externally with parish registers, to provide more fulsome biographical identities for St. Saviour residents, although entries in the token books are not hyperlinked to the central index for this purpose. Lives and social networks may be fleshed out further by examining those living in neighbouring dwellings (listed sequentially in the token books), readily visible through transcriptions that include careful notation of the deletions and insertions that indicate deaths, departures, and arrivals. We often find clusters of people who are connected professionally dwelling close together, such as watermen, performers, and those working in the textile industries. Neighbours witness wills for one another, or get into trouble for drinking together during divine service. This is material just waiting for historical network analysis, and a fascinating future direction for the project or its users might be the production of social network graphs like those generated by the Six Degrees of Francis Bacon project (sixdegreesoffrancisbacon.com).

The token books have long been known as a source for the study of theatrical individuals in the parish. It is only now that they have been digitized

and the at times scrappy hands therein transcribed, however, that their full treasures are coming to light. They have recently been drawn on to reveal new insights into the lives of actors and their families living on the South Bank by the site's creators, and, among others, David Kathman, Duncan Salkeld, and the team at Martin Wiggins's Reading Early Plays enterprise (readingearlyplays.com).[2] Yet despite the use scholars are making of the St. Saviour database, the site lacks the wider and more instantly recognizable profile that it deserves. It rarely features on the proliferation of academic and library resource guides the Covid-19 pandemic has generated, and while it has garnered some attention within the chatrooms of the ever-resourceful genealogy community, it remains under-used by students. Is this due to an impoverished social media presence and a lack of dazzling branding? I hope not. There is a world of gossipy local colour to be discovered in these records, be it the trusty family servant Old Anne Cakebread we find in a will, the defiant beard-plucking son of the school governors' records, or the illegal tenant and "fine mynx" who caught an inspecting churchwarden's eye. I, for one, am looking forward to diving back in.

HÉLOÏSE SÉNÉCHAL
Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham
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2. See, for example, Kathman, "John Rice and the Boys of the Jacobean King's Men," and Salkeld, 66–67.