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Robert Dunning. *Jocelin of Wells: Bishop, Builder, Courtier.* Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2010. XIII, 202 S. $95.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-84383-556-1.

Reviewed by Allison Fizzard (Campion College)
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A Medieval Bishop and His Hometown

This book brings together a wide-ranging selection of scholarly discussions of the life, career, and legacy of Jocelin of Wells, bishop of Bath and Glastonbury (and subsequently simply bishop of Bath). Jocelin is perhaps best known for his service to the crown during the reigns of King John and King Henry III, and the essays in this book contribute to a growing body of scholarship investigating the diverse activities and interests of English bishops in the thirteenth century. The volume under review is the fruit of a conference held at Wells to commemorate Jocelin's long occupancy of the episcopal throne (1206-42) and contains expanded versions of conference papers as well as some original material. Approximately half the chapters in this book represent the work of historians, while the other half are by specialists in the areas of archaeology, architectural history, and even lichenology.

The first chapter, "Jocelin of Wells: The Making of a Bishop in the Reign of King John," is by Nicholas Vincent and provides a detailed examination of the origins of the man and his family, his network of connections, and his early years in royal service at the court of King John. Vincent creates a portrait of the bishop as a man both grounded in his attachment to the area in which he was born and raised and also immersed in national and ecclesiastical politics at the highest level. His careful examination of the documents produced at the time of Jocelin's election–which occurred during the early thirteenth-century period of vacancy for the archbishopric of Canterbury, when the issue of who had the right to choose the archbishop was much contested–situates the election of Jocelin within the context of royal attempts to exert authority over the choice of archbishops of Canterbury. Vincent's perusal of Pipe Roll evidence from the years right after Jocelin's election unearths some peculiar financial transactions between the new bishop and King John which raises the suspicion that there may have been a whiff of simony about the process by which Jocelin was raised to the episcopate. Vincent acknowledges that there is no firm proof of simony, but he does point to the transactions as evidence of the close cooperation between the bishop and the king at the time. That Jocelin was later to choose to abandon this closeness in favor of an exile which brought him into the sphere of papal interests is seen by Vincent as a confirmation of the idea that there is no easy distinction to be made between the royalist party of bishops and the reform-minded, pro-papal party. As this essay shows, allegiances could shift when personal ambition was added to the mix.

The focus of Jane Sayers's chapter is Jocelin's fulfillment of his duties as bishop of his diocese. Sayers makes the most of this topic, which is a rather challenging one given that no episcopal registers, synodal records, or diocesan statutes from his years as bishop survive. Sayers was able to piece together from other sources evidence of Jocelin carrying out some of the normal functions of a thirteenth-century bishop, such as making a visitation of a religious house and issuing ordinances. An entertaining aspect of Sayers's contribution is the imaginary job ad for a bishop of this period and a corresponding curriculum vitae for Jocelin, crafted as if to be submitted in response to the ad.

Diana Greenway's essay surveys what can be known about Jocelin's relations with the chapter of what was then the collegiate church at Wells, but which, as a result of Jocelin's grooming, was to be restored to the status of a cathedral church after his death. In the course of this investigation, Greenway reveals evidence of Jocelin's devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The main focus of this chapter, however, is who the canons were and Jocelin's reforms of the systems by which deans were elected and canons remunerated. Greenway maintains that Jocelin's actions were intended to improve the standard of worship at Wells by encouraging residence on the

part of the canons, instituting regulations governing the employment of vicars choral, and increasing the incomes of the canons. Whether his high standards of worship were indeed met is probably impossible to know; what is clear from this essay is that the raising of Wells to cathedral status in 1245 occurred in part because of the groundwork laid by Jocelin in assisting the transformation of the chapter into an entity that had the characteristics of a cathedral chapter.

The chapter by Sethina Watson provides a useful survey of the history of Bath and Wells in the contexts of the development of urban governmental structures and economies and changing relations between English episcopal seats and their bishops. Despite the title of the essay–"The Bishop and His Cathedral Cities"–there is in fact little Watson can say on this point due to the sparse nature of the documentation for this topic. For the most part, Watson is restricted to commenting upon Jocelin's efforts to improve his estates, protect the markets over which he had rights, and assist in the creation of a hospital at Wells.

In the section of the book pertaining to the built heritage of Wells from the time of Jocelin's episcopate, Tim Tatton-Brown provides a brief overview of the building of episcopal palaces and residences in England from the late eleventh to the mid-thirteenth centuries. Archaeologist Jerry Sampson examines the physical evidence of building activity at Wells Cathedral and at the bishop's palace during Jocelin's episcopate and reaffirms the likelihood of Jocelin's personal involvement in the creation of the impressive west front of the cathedral and the construction and decoration of the palace.

In the final section of the book there are several detailed reports on analyses of the bishop's palace from different disciplinary perspectives. "Geophysical and Geoarchaeological Survey at the Bishop's Palace, Wells," by Alex Turner, Christopher Gerrard, and Keith Wilkinson, indicates that there may be a medieval building under the existing croquet lawn of the palace, and provides some information on the structure of the great hall of Bishop Robert Burnell's (1275-92) palace, but the relevance of this material to Bishop Jocelin's contributions to the construction of the palace is unclear. Similarly, David J. Hill's investigation into the lichens present on the surviving stonework of the bishop's palace, while raising interesting possibilities for the usage of lichen analysis (lichenometry) to assign a date to the remains of medieval stone architecture, is not able to say much about the stonework of the palace in Bishop Jocelin's time, given that this is, as he admits, "a cursory study" of the existing lichens. Mark Horton, in "The Location of Bishop Jocelin's Palace at Wells," analyzes antiquarian commentaries on the bishop's palace as well as recent archaeological excavations at the site and concludes that the arrangement of the buildings on the site was rather different than the current remains suggest. Matthew M. Reeve, in "Robert Burnell and the Transformation of Bishop Jocelin's Palace," makes convincing points regarding the construction sequence of the palace chapel and great hall and the iconographical importance of crenellation as a symbol of aristocratic status; however, given that the focus of this chapter is on the later thirteenth-century work at the palace carried out during the episcopate of Bishop Burnell, it naturally does not really delve into Bishop Jocelin's contributions in the area of palace-building.

Diverse readers will be drawn to this volume: those who are interested in the history of Wells and of thirteenth-century bishops, as well as those who wish to know more about the archaeology and architectural history of the cathedral and the episcopal palace at Wells. While the title of the book is somewhat misleading, given that not all the chapters in the volume are able to speak much to Jocelin of Wells's contributions as "bishop, builder, or courtier," there is still much of interest here for those who are curious about the aforementioned topics.

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