Court of Chivalry 1634-1641

Richard Cust and Andy Hopper

Dr Richard Cust and Dr Andrew Hopper conducted a three year AHRC research project to calendar the records of the High Court of Chivalry.

They have transcribed or calendared all surviving material and are currently in the process of editing and preparing each of the 750 cases for publication. A volume of fully referenced case summaries was published by the Harleian Society next year, and a website including more detailed transcriptions of documents, amounting to approximately one million words, was be published by the University of Birmingham in conjunction with the College of Arms.

Charles I reinvigorated the High Court of Chivalry to avoid the shedding of noble blood in wasteful duels and to channel aristocratic notions of honour into establishing a harmonious elite of pure-blooded courtier knights that would accept him as the divine fount of all honour. The heralds used the court to punish false claims to gentility, but more frequently, the gentry utilised it to punish plebeians that had insulted them. The court records are so useful because they illustrate the range of strategies that the gentry employed to defend their honour. They shed light on the nature of qualification for gentry status and reveal the continued importance attached to policing plebeian speech.

- **www.court-of-chivalry.bham.ac.uk**

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