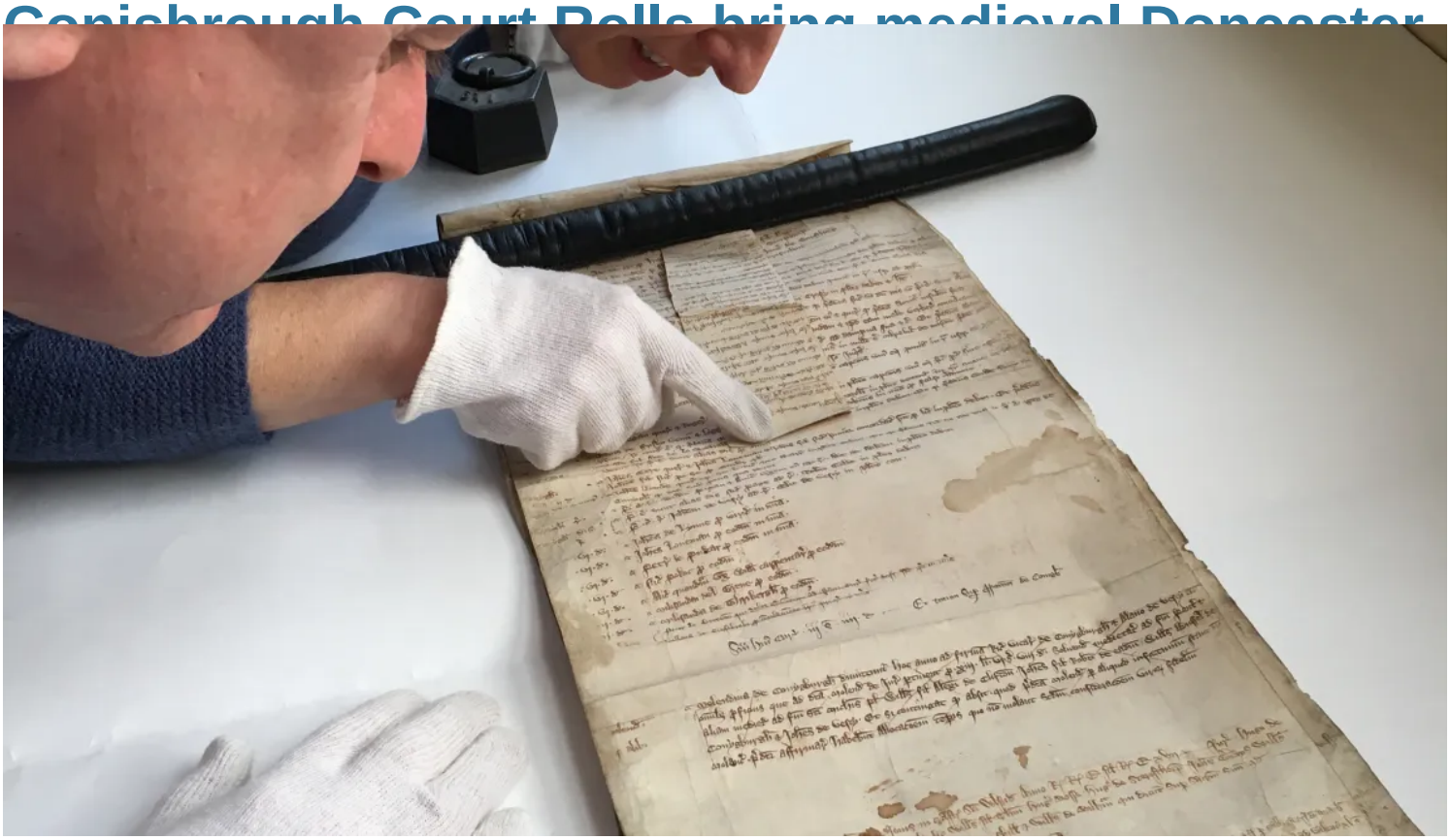
Conisbrough Court Rolls bring medieval Doncaster



Archivists examining the Court Rolls

Fights, marriages, illegal baking – medieval Doncaster had the lot. Now, thanks to National Lottery players, Doncaster Council will be able to shine a light on the lives of ordinary people in South Yorkshire over the last 900 years.

The Council's Heritage Service have acquired the Conisbrough Manorial Court Rolls, which date from 1265 to 1935 and offer a unique insight into the medieval past. Currently owned by the present Lord of Conisbrough, they have been described as 'nationally significant' by The National Archives.

They are an incredibly important survival from Doncaster's medieval past, recording the decisions and actions of the manorial court for Conisbrough and the Soke of Conisbrough.

[quote=David Renwick, Head of HLF Yorkshire & the Humber]"... from bootlegging beer and fighting in the street to the loves and losses of local families, the Conisbrough Court Rolls provide an intriguing window into life in medieval Doncaster."[/quote]

The manorial court was where all the small crimes were assessed as well as the ongoing business of the manor – so the Rolls are a fabulous record of the lives of ordinary Doncastrians, giving us information that we can get nowhere else.

In them people are convicted of letting their animals trample crops, illegally brewing ale and baking bread, getting into fights and committing petty thefts. As well as this you get a glimpse into the feudal world with a pair of sisters purchasing the right to marry who they want from the lord of the manor as marriage of villeins on the estate required permission and the payment of a small fine.

Only 166 Court Rolls, eight Suit Rolls and four other documents survive and currently only a small number are transcribed and available online.

This project aims to build upon the good work of the ‘Lives and Livelihoods in Conisbrough Manor Project' to make more Rolls available online, some transcribed and some available for ‘crowd transcription’. The project will also feature events, talks and living history events – and even training for those who want to try their hand at transcribing one of the Rolls!

David Renwick, Head of HLF Yorkshire and the Humber, said: “from bootlegging beer and fighting in the street to the loves and losses of local families, the Conisbrough Court Rolls provide an intriguing, and perhaps quite familiar window into life in medieval Doncaster. This project will unearth the stories in these amazing documents, paint a picture of the community throughout the ages, and give people the chance to explore the rolls for themselves, and we are delighted that National Lottery players can help make this happen”.

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