The Paston Letters: An Introduction for Teachers

It was as a teacher, not a student or historian, that I first came to the Paston letters and so my mind was full of teacherly questions – what can the students learn from these letters, do I need to cut/modernise them, is there time to fit them in to an already crowded course? And that functional approach stayed with me through the first time or two I tried using them. But then something else started happening – I began hearing the people who wrote those letters. I knew their names but, as I listened to them talking to each other, they became more than names. They became people.

That was sometime in the early 1980s. Back then I just had Gairdner's 4 volume edition from 1910 on my shelf and HS Bennett's *The Pastons and their England*, published in 1922. Nowadays there's not just an extensive literature but you can find the work of the Heritage Lottery-funded Paston600 project on-line at https://thisispaston.co.uk/paston_letters.html

At the core of the 1000-plus documents known collectively as the Paston letters are the letters written between members of the Paston family of Norfolk between c.1420 and c.1500, the majority between 1440 and 1480 when the family was enmeshed in disputes over their ownership of their estates. However the documents also include family wills, miscellaneous documents such as John II's list of the books he owned and numerous letters that were sent to family members by friends, servants, lawyers, ecclesiastics and noblemen conveying gossipy chatter, business communications and the political news of the moment.

Historians have used this treasure-trove to explore every kind of question – about national politics, how rapidly political news spread and how much people knew about it, about local politics and justice, about transport, communications, medical treatments, clothes, marriage, about people's emotions, friendships, loves and sorrows. The writer whose letters survive in greatest number (over 100) was Margaret, giving us an unusually detailed view of the life and thoughts of a fifteenth century woman. Margaret's eldest sons, John II and John III also wrote a good deal to each other, enabling us to hear their relationship as they joked, worried, planned and brought each other up to date on their experiences. No other source allows us to eavesdrop on late medieval people in such intimate depth. A handful of other letter collections have survived but even the largest contains only a quarter of the documents the Pastons have left us.

© Ian Dawson

This introduction is therefore for all those teachers who have heard of the Pastons but never had the time to get started on reading – and for all the other teachers who have never heard of the Pastons until now! As you can see from the headings below, I have set out an outline history of the family, a guide to resources and reading, some initial thoughts about the use of the letters in the classroom (and a link to teaching resources on the HA website) and provided a short set of PowerPoint slides which I hope will be useful.

As the Pastons would have said:

> 'Gode spede yow in alle youre werkes'

Related Material

This document continues with the following:

- The Paston family c1420-c1500 (starts p.3)
- Reading and on-line resources (starts p.9)
- The Pastons in the classroom (starts p.12)

In addition, there is:

- PowerPoint support

  Slides in the PowerPoint include a family tree, map, photographs of Paston churches etc

© Ian Dawson

The Paston Family (c1420-c1500)

This outline of the Pastons' story is built around the family members who figure most prominently in the letters. I've tried to give a sense of each individual by starting with a set of adjectives beneath his or her name but, of course, they're only my views and the letters can't reveal everything about each person, everyone changes over time and historians do differ on how they view each individual.

The letters date from c.1420 to c.1500; by far the greater number were written between 1440 and 1480 by two generations of the Pastons:

> John I and his wife, Margaret and John I's siblings – born 1421-1442. They were the children of Judge William and Agnes.
>
> John I and Margaret's children - John II, John III, Margery and their siblings – born 1441-1459.

Margaret's letters survive in greatest numbers (over 100 letters); the letters of John II and John III also survive in good numbers, many of them to each other.

The accompanying PowerPoint slides include a family tree, photographs of churches linked to the Pastons and other items including a map – Paston is a small village very near the coast of north-eastern Norfolk.

The Rise to Gentry Status

William Paston 1378-1444

intelligent ambitious successful wealthy powerful bullying

William was the son of Beatrice (d.1409) and Clement (d.1419) who owned a small amount of land. William's uncle, a lawyer, contributed to the cost of his education at a grammar school and training in London as a lawyer. William had a highly successful career, becoming a royal judge in 1429, and used his resulting wealth to buy estates in Norfolk. William's new lands moved the family up amongst the gentry of Norfolk though it normally took two generations at least for that status to be consolidated.

William delayed marrying until he was in his 40s when he married Agnes Berry, a 'good' marriage as Agnes came from an influential East Anglian family and brought more land to William as part of

© Ian Dawson

the marriage agreement. Agnes, around twenty years William's junior, had five children but William's late marriage meant that, when he died, his eldest son was only 23 and inevitably lacked his father's experience and contacts. This opened up opportunities for the Pastons' rivals to try to take over some of the family's lands.

The Struggle to Maintain the Family's Lands

John Paston I 1421-1466

stubborn	hard-working	determined	pig-headed
anxious	did not trust people	disappointed	worn-down

John I inherited the leadership of the family aged 23 but was less wealthy than his father because much of the family wealth remained in his long-lived mother's hands (Agnes out-lived John, dying in 1479) and other estates had been left to his younger brothers to provide them with an income. This was just one of the factors that handicapped John when rivals challenged the legality of the Pastons' ownership of some of their estates. His task was also made far harder by his own inexperience, by the failure of King Henry VI to exert control over the nobility and gentry and by the Pastons' lack of a 'good lord', a powerful nobleman whose support would protect them against rivals. Thus Lord Moleyns was able to seize control of the Pastons' estates at Gresham without punishment. John spent the rest of his life battling though the law courts in London to hold onto the family lands.

John's problems multiplied when Sir John Fastolf died in 1459. Fastolf had profited from his military career during the wars in France, buying Caister castle among other properties. John claimed that Fastolf had said on his deathbed that he wanted John to be his heir but there was no written will to prove this. Initially John had allies but his distrust turned them against him, leaving him almost friendless. Compromise was possible but John refused to make concessions. In 1465 he was even imprisoned in London, accused of having villein ancestors which made it illegal for him to be lord of manors and have the right to hold manor courts. In the end anxiety may have killed John – long before any of the disputes were to be settled. There seem to have been few glimmers of pleasure in his last years although a poem he wrote to Margaret after she'd visited him in London provides a sense of the young man who'd married Margaret.

© Ian Dawson

Margaret Paston 1421/2-1484

brave loyal constantly busy a worrier independent
loving sometimes unforgiving nagging

Margaret married John in 1440. Her family, the Mautbys, were a wealthy Norfolk family and as their only child Margaret inherited nine manors, increasing the Pastons' wealth. Her early letters to John are affectionate and they seem to have had a loving marriage despite the strains created by the long-running disputes over lands. As John was away from home a great deal, Margaret carried a wide range of responsibilities, like most women of her class. She defended their lands, sometimes against armed attack, while also running the household and its finances and trying to maintain good relationships with influential families .

Her relationships with her children varied – Walter was probably her favourite but she took a long time to forgive Margery (if she ever did) after their quarrel over Margery's marriage to Richard Calle, the family's steward. Although sometimes angry with her eldest son, John II, she defended him when he was criticised by his father and wanted him to come back to live in Norfolk, which he never did. Late in life and widowed she lived in her home village of Mautby and was buried there.

Elizabeth Paston 1429-1488

Elizabeth was John I's younger sister. Relatively little is known about Elizabeth except about her two marriages, both of which ended in political violence. Elizabeth's first major appearance in the letters was occasioned by her arguments with her mother Agnes because of her refusal to accept the husband her family wanted her to marry. She eventually married Sir Robert Poynings in 1459 but two years later he was killed at the second battle of St Albans, not long after their son was born. Her second husband, Sir George Browne, was executed in 1483 after rebelling against Richard III. Her will is fascinating in its detail, full of information about her clothes and possessions.

William Paston II 1436-1496

William seems to take after his father, Judge William, more so than his elder brother, John. William was also educated as a lawyer and had a successful career in London, was a JP in Norfolk and an MP. He quarrelled with his brother John because he did not think that he had been given a fair share of the family estates in their father's will and arguments continued into the 1470s with John's sons.

© Ian Dawson

Most intriguingly (for me, anyway) William married a daughter of Edmund, Duke of Somerset, Henry VI's chief councillor, who had been killed at the Battle of St. Albans in 1455. This marriage brought together the grandson of Clement Paston, the owner of a small amount of land in northern Norfolk, with the great-grand-daughter of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, one of the most powerful noblemen in fourteenth century Europe and son of King Edward III.

The Second Generation: Continuing Struggles

John I and Margaret had seven children, two of whom were called John – hence John II and John III. This surfeit of Johns doesn't seem to have confused the family even it does seem strange today. There's no definite evidence explaining why two sons were called John – the most likely explanation is that their chief godfathers were both called John.

Sir John Paston II 1442-1479

light-hearted romantic imaginative fashionable a jouster

good company generous debonair

Sir John spent much of his adult life at Edward IV's court where his family expected him to win influential support for the family's fight to keep its lands. However court life was very expensive and John II rarely had enough money to make an impact at court. Even so his father was often angry with his expenditure, believing his son was wasting the money he'd been given. John II did eventually make good connections, partly because of his personality, partly because of his skill at jousting. He took part in tournaments at court, including a famous three-man tournament against the best jousters from Burgundy. John also spent time as a member of the English garrison of Calais and attended the marriage of King Edward's sister to the Duke of Burgundy.

Even when John II did make powerful friends he was unfortunate that the timing of the political changes of the Wars of the Roses stopped these friends helping the Pastons. Despite his service to Edward IV in the 1460s John fought against King Edward at the battle of Barnet (1471) because of his loyalty to the earl of Oxford, the East Anglian nobleman who was the Pastons' most natural lord. Unfortunately for John he was on the losing side at Barnet but his long-standing links to the King meant he was pardoned and returned to court. He died, probably from plague, in 1479, the same year as his grandmother, Agnes, and one of his brothers. He probably never married although

© Ian Dawson

he did have a long engagement to Anne Haute, a cousin of Queen Elizabeth (Woodville) and at least one historian has suggested they did marry. John also had a daughter by Cecily Reynforth.

Margery Paston b.c1450

Margery appears in the letters chiefly because of the fierce family dispute over her marriage. Her family, particularly her mother, Margaret, were deeply angry when she fell in love with the intelligent and efficient Richard Calle. The trouble was that Richard was the family's steward, running their estates. To the Pastons, very sensitive about their gentry status, Margery's marriage to a servant who was the son of a shopkeeper seemed to give ammunition to their rivals who were challenging their status. Margery's brother, John III, wrote angrily that he'd never allow his sister to end up selling candles and mustard in Framlingham though John II reacted more calmly.

Margery and Richard married secretly in 1469 and refused to give each other up although they were put under great pressure. They were questioned individually in detail by the bishop of Norwich about whether they were truly married but they convinced the bishop of the validity of their marriage and their love. Even so, Margery and her husband were cut off from the family although, in time, Richard returned to work for them - good and loyal administrators were hard to find. Margery may never have been forgiven by her mother, Margaret, although Margaret did leave money in her will to Margery's sons.

Success: Status Assured

John Paston III 1444-1504

loyal intelligent careful fashionably-dressed joking

diligent cheerful

John III appears to be the stay-at-home brother because he spent much of his time in Norfolk while his older brother was at the King's court and in London. John took on the main burden of defending the family's lands after his father's death including leading the defence of Caister castle against armed attack in 1469. However he also visited Burgundy for the marriage of the King's sister and spent time in the garrison at Calais.

John was wounded at the battle of Barnet (1471) when he fought alongside his brother in the losing army against Edward IV but was pardoned after the battle. In 1485 he was summoned by the Duke

© Ian Dawson

of Norfolk to fight for Richard III at Bosworth but did not go – a good decision as both Norfolk and Richard III were killed. After Bosworth the earl of Oxford returned to power in east Anglia and as a supporter of Oxford, John III's local influence and security increased. Then came his greatest success – he fought alongside Oxford at the battle of Stoke in 1487 and was knighted on the battlefield by Henry VII. John became a powerful figure in East Anglia and this ensured the Pastons kept control of their lands and finally cemented their position amongst the gentry.

The letters written between John II and John III show they got on well. They discussed and joked about fashions, books and marriage possibilities. John III also received the earliest valentine to have survived, from his future wife, Margery Brews. Margery also wrote to John on one occasion

> 'I pray you if you tarry long at London that it will please you to send for me for I think long since I lay in your arms.'

The Pastons after 1500: and the Saving of the Letters

Now securely established amongst the East Anglian gentry, the Pastons prospered until the late 1600s. Then, in quick succession, the family was rewarded for its loyalty to the Stuarts when Sir Robert Paston was made Lord Paston, then Viscount Yarmouth and finally Earl of Yarmouth in 1679. However, Robert's son, William, chose to support the cause of James II which led to the family's impoverishment. When William died in 1732 there was no male heir to continue the line. It seemed the family would be quietly forgotten.

It was 1735 before anyone worked their way through the contents of the muniment room at Oxnead hall, the Pastons' residence. Sackfuls of financial documents and other estate papers appear to have been burnt but local historian Francis Blomefield (author of a history of Norfolk) examined the family papers and helped preserve the letters. They became scattered, however, in the hands of various local historians and unknown to the wider world until John Fenn (1739–1794), another Norfolk antiquarian, published a selection of the Paston letters in four volumes between 1787 and 1789. The first volume was a publishing sensation. 'I think them one of the richest treasures in the English language; my attention is captivated; they cause me to forget to eat and to sleep' wrote William Hutton, another eminent antiquarian, to Fenn. Readers have been agreeing with Hutton ever since.

© Ian Dawson

Reading and On-line Resources

The Paston 600 website www.paston600.co.uk

The focal point for information and resources about the Pastons. This is the website of the Heritage Lottery-funded Paston Footprints project, a collaboration between the University of East Anglia, the Paston Heritage Society and the Norfolk Record Office. Website content will include 3D recreations of the major buildings linked to the Pastons and a gateway to the letters database.

Starter Pack

Helen Castor, *Blood and Roses* (2004) is the classic account of the Pastons, telling the family's story and also placing it in the context of national politics and the Wars of the Roses. Helen Castor is a highly regarded historian whose research has focused on this period so this is much more than 'popular history' – but it does help to have an outline of events to refer to when the story gets complicated!

Roger Virgoe, *Illustrated Letters of the Paston Family* (1989). Dr Virgoe was a historian at UEA and does a fine job helping newcomers to the Pastons. There are lists of key dates, mini-biographies of the main letter writers and short essays on a variety of aspects of 15thC life plus it's a beautifully illustrated book. The core of the book is his account of the Pastons' story built around a wide selection from the letters with modernised text - whereas Castor and Barber (see below) generally use shorter extracts within their own text. This book is out of print but readily and cheaply available.

DVD: Helen Castor's three excellent television programmes (originally shown on BBC4)

Medieval Lives: Births, Deaths and Marriages have been published on DVD.

The Letters Themselves

Norman Davis (ed.), *The Paston Letters: a selection in modern spelling* (2008).

Davis was the editor of the academic edition – see below. This version has about 140 of the letters – a lot of the spelling is modernised but you will need to make extensive use of the glossary.

© Ian Dawson

Diana Watt (ed.), ***The Paston Women: Selected Letters*** (2004).

Containing modernized text of 92 letters, all written by or on behalf of women who were part of or linked to the Paston family. There are also two informative essays on the writers, the processes of composition etc.

N. Davis et al. (eds.), ***Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*** (1971-2005).

The academic collection of the letters, this 3 volume edition provides full text and notes with original spelling and punctuation. Vol 1 contains letters by members of the family, grouped by author; Vol 2 contains letters to the family. Vol 3 contains additional letters and other related papers. Given the problems of dating some of the letters there's plenty of discussion in Castor and Richmond (below) about alternative dates for letters.

Other Reading

Richard Barber, ***A Family in the Wars of the Roses***, (1981, new ed. 2004) – very like Helen Castor's book in approach but at 200 pages quite a lot shorter. Barber is another highly-regarded medievalist.

Colin Richmond, ***The Paston family in the fifteenth century, 3 volumes*** (1990-2000). The most complex discussion of the Pastons - hugely detailed, often delightful, sometimes eccentric, frequently enchanting, occasionally really hard going! But delightful wins out – this would be my desert island pick but it's not the place to start.

H S Bennett, ***The Pastons and their England*** (1922) – a different structure and still well-worth reading, the chapters explore aspects of society as exemplified by the letters e.g. marriage, women's life, parents and children, roads and bridges.

Dictionary of National Biography: accessible on-line through many local authority library cards.

For children: Martyn Whittock, ***The Pastons in medieval Britain*** (1993)

And …

There's obviously a far more extensive literature, to be found in the bibliographies of the books above.

© Ian Dawson

On-line Resources

1. 'This is the Pastons' website: contains lots of valuable material including letters in original and modern spelling, images of the model of Paston hall etc

https://www.thisispaston.co.uk/footprints01.html

2. Digitised images of the letters on British Library site plus an introduction to the letters which also shows how varied the styles of writing are in the letters.

http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/digitisedmanuscripts/2015/04/the-paston-letters-go-live.html

3. On-line transcripts of the letters sent by members of the Paston family. These are taken from volume 1 of the main academic collection edited by Norman Davis (see above).

http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cme/Paston/1:10.7?rgn=div2;view=toc

This provides only the letters written **by** the family, not those they received **from** non-family members which are in vol 2 of Davis but not in this on-line collection.

4. The transcript of James Gairdner's 6 volume 1904 edition. Superceded by Davis's edition but it does include the letters **from** non-family members:

http://fiftywordsforsnow.com/ebooks/paston/

5. A brief sound recording of an actress reading a letter by Margaret Paston in 15thC dialect (the 'play recording' button is quite small on the left side of the screen):

http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/stella/readings/Middle/PASTON.HTM

© Ian Dawson

The Pastons in the Classroom

For such a rich source, I didn't immediately find the Paston letters easy to use in the classroom. This wasn't because of the language but because I didn't know the letters well enough - and it took me ages to work out what I wanted students to learn from them. What follows are suggestions about how the letters might contribute to students' understanding of the Middle Ages, with some links to places where I have used the letters in the ways described.

The Related PowerPoint

Most of the slides don't need an explanation apart from:

> Slide 3 is a version of the family tree that omits major individuals. If you want students to get to know the family you could ask them to fill in this version, thus having to work out who was who. Creating a family tree using students as the individuals and explaining their links to each other will also help greatly.
>
> Slide 5 is a chart shows where the gentry fit into the broader pattern of society. The Pastons wanted to be secure within the gentry band, not hovering at the bottom, at risk of losing gentry status.
>
> Slides 11-13 provide a copy of an original letter from Agnes to William Paston in April 1440, followed by a transcript showing original spelling etc, followed by a modernised version.

Reading Aloud: Story-telling

There's nothing as captivating as a well-told story and reading the letters aloud will help students of all ages; it will not just interest them but help them develop deeper insights into the period and people they are studying. Reading them in role as the letter-writer, you can help students appreciate the situation of that writer, prompt them to ask questions (what happened next, what might the reply say etc), think about the options facing an individual as well as what we as historians can learn from that letter. Reading a newsletter breathlessly recounting the latest news from 1455 is as worthwhile with A level students as reading to KS3 students John III's instructions to his mother about where to pick up his black and red hose in London. So don't just leave the letters on paper – bring them and their authors alive by reading them aloud.

© Ian Dawson

KS3: HA Resources

Rachel Brown, one of the teachers on the HA Teacher Fellowship on the later middle ages, created resources based around three questions:

1. How did the Paston family rise from being farmers to knights?
2. What can we learn from the Paston family's letters?
3. How much had life changed by the end of the fifteenth century?

You can find Rachel's work on the HA website (link below), including the text of a number of letters. It's open-access therefore free to all.

https://www.history.org.uk/secondary/categories/872/module/8662/the-later-middle-ages-teacher-fellowship-programm/8871/the-pastons-and-social-life-in-the-middle-ages-ke

KS3: Understanding Aspects of the Work That Historians Do

https://thinkinghistory.co.uk/MedievalArticles/downloads/ETMHSources.pdf

Much work on sources at KS3 is generic i.e. not specific to an individual period. As I've argued in the above PDF it's important to give students a sense of the changing nature of sources over time and of the skills that historians need when using the sources from a particular period. The letters can contribute to both these areas. For example, show students a picture of one of the letters (such as slide 11 in the PowerPoint sequence) and challenge them:

> *How would you describe the handwriting in this letter? Neat? Scruffy? Better or worse than yours? Can you read it? Let's have a closer look – who's going to be the first to decipher a word?*
>
> *Why is this writing difficult to understand? What skills does a historian need to use this source?*

KS3: What can the Letters Tell us About 15th Century People?

Having introduced the letters, don't immediately look at individual letters but ask students

a) what they expect to learn from letters written by a fifteenth-century family?

b) What might historians want to know?

© Ian Dawson

Students will ultimately learn more if you begin by asking them to predict what historians might learn from letters? This kind of predictive thinking about the possible value of a source (or type of source) is really helpful in focussing students' ideas before they start to read the letters. (For more on the value of this kind of work see:

https://thinkinghistory.co.uk/ActivityBase/HelpingStudentsWithProvenance.html

The letters provide much valuable evidence about everyday life, as Rachel Brown's work (above) exemplifies. In addition, the letters open up aspects of the Middle Ages too often neglected at KS3, aspects I'll summarise as 'what was in people's minds?' This includes emotions and feelings and also attitudes, principles and what mattered to people – family, respect, religion, loyalty and many other things, most of which have mattered to people in every period of history. To my mind understanding these aspects of humanity, common across time, should be integral to any work on the Middle Ages. For examples of this approach see chapters 2 and 3 of Medieval Lives Mattered:

https://thinkinghistory.co.uk/Medieval/MAResources.html

and the series of articles on teaching about the Middle Ages:

https://thinkinghistory.co.uk/Medieval/MAArticles.html

A level: The Wars of the Roses

A level specifications are dominated by high politics and thus individual documents from the Paston collection, especially the newsletters sent from London, are often used to illustrate those political events. As teaching time is so limited, doing more with the Paston letters is difficult but the notes below offer possibilities.

a) Human starters: as you move into a new topic it's often a good idea to start with an intriguing moment, not at the outset of events but from later on. What was happening? What lay behind this? How did x get into this situation? Two examples:

1. the letter written by John II to his mother Margaret on 18 April 1471 after the battle of Barnet, telling her that John and his brother John III had survived the battle but that John III had an arrow wound in his arm and then going onto give other news. This would make a

good start to studying the sequence of events between 1469 and 1471 – who's fighting whom at Barnet? Why is there more fighting? Was this the first battle since 1464? Go and read and find some answers!

2. the two lines written by Sir George Browne to John III, which says simply

Loyawlte Ayme. Hyt schal newyr cum howte for me.

Browne was the husband of John's aunt, Elizabeth. These lines were presumably written in the late summer/early autumn of 1483 when Browne joined the rebellion against Richard III. The second part of his message suggests he knew that the rebellion was failing. Shortly afterwards he was captured and executed. Therefore start work on the rebellion with this - before you even mention the rebellion get students thinking about these lines: how does Browne sound? Happy? Sad? Desperate? What can they hypothesise about why he wrote this letter? Then cover the rebellion in your normal way but keep going back to this letter – how might it be explained by what students are learning about the events?

b) Challenging students' assumptions – students will come to a course on the Wars of the rRses with preconceived ideas, even if they struggle to articulate them or explain where exactly their ideas come from. These ideas are likely to include the following, which can be challenged by information from the letters:

- nobles and gentry were engaged in constant warfare (but members of the Paston family only fought at two battles – Barnet and Stoke)

- there was great eagerness to fight (but John III did not answer the Duke of Norfolk's summons in August 1485)

- everyone was ambitious, eager to depose the king (but a letter from Edmund Clere in January 1455 shows joy at the recovery of Henry VI, poor king though he was)

- everyone was focussed on national politics (but in the summer and early autumn of 1469 when Warwick rebelled against Edward IV, the Pastons were involved in their own quite different struggle to defend Caister castle from the Duke of Norfolk AND were at least equally focussed on trying to stop Margery from marrying Richard Calle, a servant.)

© Ian Dawson

For the story of Margery and Richard see:

https://thinkinghistory.co.uk/MedievalBase/ReadMargeryPaston.html

c) creating a sense of humanity – this could have come under (b) but is worth separating. I think it's important at the beginning of a course that students should get the chance to see the people they are studying as fellow human beings, not just as names in a book. Many examples can be found in the letters – Margaret's oblique references to her pregnancies, Margery Brews' valentine to John III, John III's love of fashion and care over his hats and red hose, John II's jousting and list of books, Margaret wanting to see more of her son, John II, when he was away from home so often.

For more ideas and examples in KS3 material and an approach which could be adapted for A level see 'Were medieval people very different from us?'

https://thinkinghistory.co.uk/MedievalBase/Section2.html

And the accompanying chapter 'What really mattered to people in the Middle Ages?'

d) Understanding aspects of the work that historians do - It's not in the specifications but give students the chance to look at the original letters and try their hand at reading and transcription – see notes in KS3 section above.

e) Use an outline story of the Pastons (based on p.3-8 of this document) with students at the beginning of their course:

What do students think really mattered to the Pastons?

Can students identify the pattern of kings? Who were the other important political figures?

What evidence is there of warfare and how frequent was it?

Were there lives dominated by warfare?

For another example of using an overview of an individual's life to help students develop a sense of the pattern of events and of what mattered to people see this resource on Anne Herbert:

https://thinkinghistory.co.uk/ActivityBase/AnneHerbert.html

© Ian Dawson