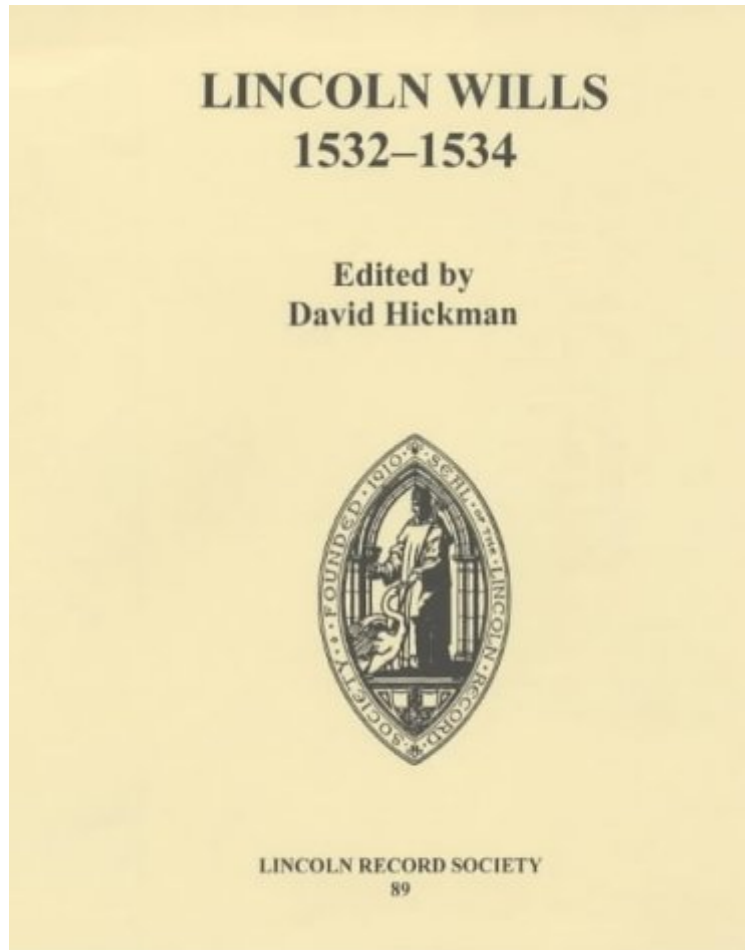


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Lincolnshire has an extensive archive of sixteenth-century probate material, preserved in the registers of the consistory and archdeaconry courts of Lincoln, the peculiar court of the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln Cathedral, and the archdeaconry court of Stow. Unlike the wills proved by the archiepiscopal probate courts of Canterbury and York, those from Lincolnshire reflect a population of lower social status. The overwhelming majority come from the ranks of husbandmen, yeomen, or tradesmen, rather than the gentry. In this respect the wills offer a valuable source for the

cultural and religious preoccupations of the 'middling sort' and those lower in the social spectrum on the eve of the Reformation. Equally, the detailed bequests of property, livestock and land provide an insight into the material culture and prosperity of the testators, as well as extensive genealogical and topographical information of interest to local, regional and family historians.

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