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Manuscripts & Special Collections

Dating documents

The different dating conventions employed in historical documents can cause problems for even the most seasoned of researchers.

Early documents, such as medieval deeds, for example, may be dated by reference to a day of the week, a nearby religious feast day and the year of the reigning monarch - a system which has little in common with the current method of noting day, month and calendar year. Furthermore, even where a recognisable date is provided, it may not always be what it at first appears.

The information provided within this skills unit aims to identify and explain some of the most common difficulties and pitfalls and to provide sources of assistance.

Throughout the unit, illustrative images are taken from the collections held by Manuscripts and Special Collections at the University of Nottingham.

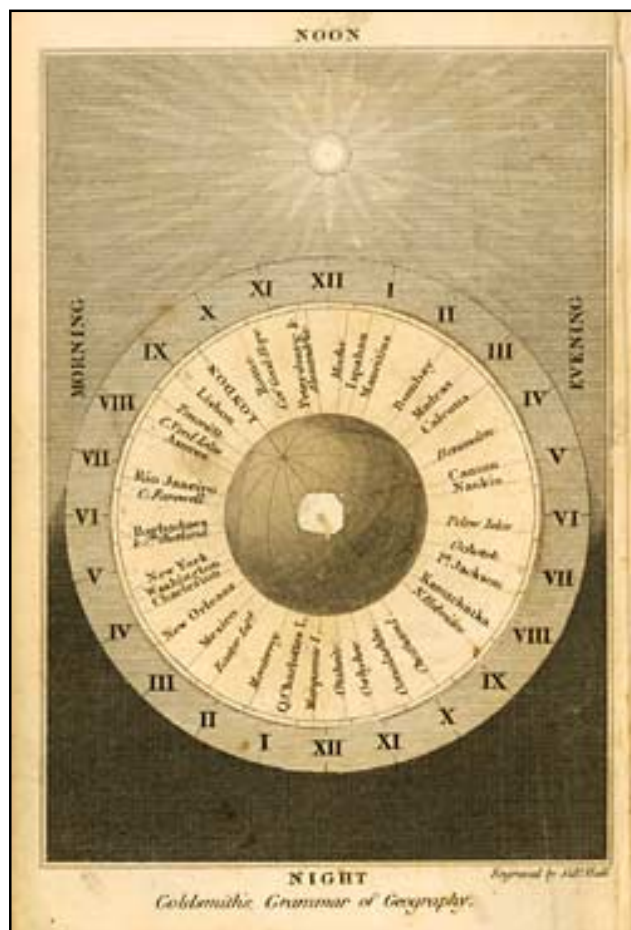This unit was written in September 2005.

Next page: Regnal Years

Diagram showing time zones and major cities set around a globe, [1834-1839] (LT 210.G/P4)

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Regnal Years

From ancient times, even to the present day, it has been common practice to date some documents not according to the anno domini system, but according to the year of the presiding monarch. The regnal year is normally calculated from the date of the accession of a particular monarch, with the number changing on the anniversary of the accession. In order to interpret such dates, therefore, the user must know the date on which a monarch acceded to the throne. There are resources available to assist with this - in particular, Cheyney's Handbook of Dates. For details, see the Bibliography.

As an example, then, Henry V acceded to the throne on 21 March 1413. This means that his first regnal year (written 1 Henry V) began on 21 March 1413 and ended on 20 March 1414.

To illustrate the point in context, the deed provided here dates from the reign of Henry V. It is an agreement, written in French, between Lady Joan de Cromwell and Ralph de Cromwell. The date on the document ('le secunde jour de maii l'an du regne le Roy Henri quint puis le conqueste quinti') translates as the 2nd May, 5 Henry V. This means that the agreement is dated 2nd May 1417.
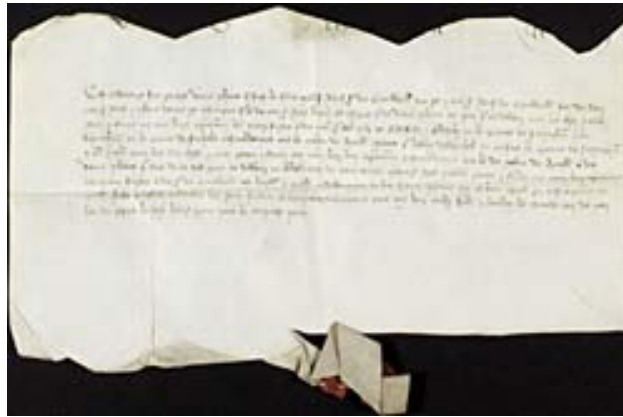
Agreement, 1417 (Ne D 742) with detail below
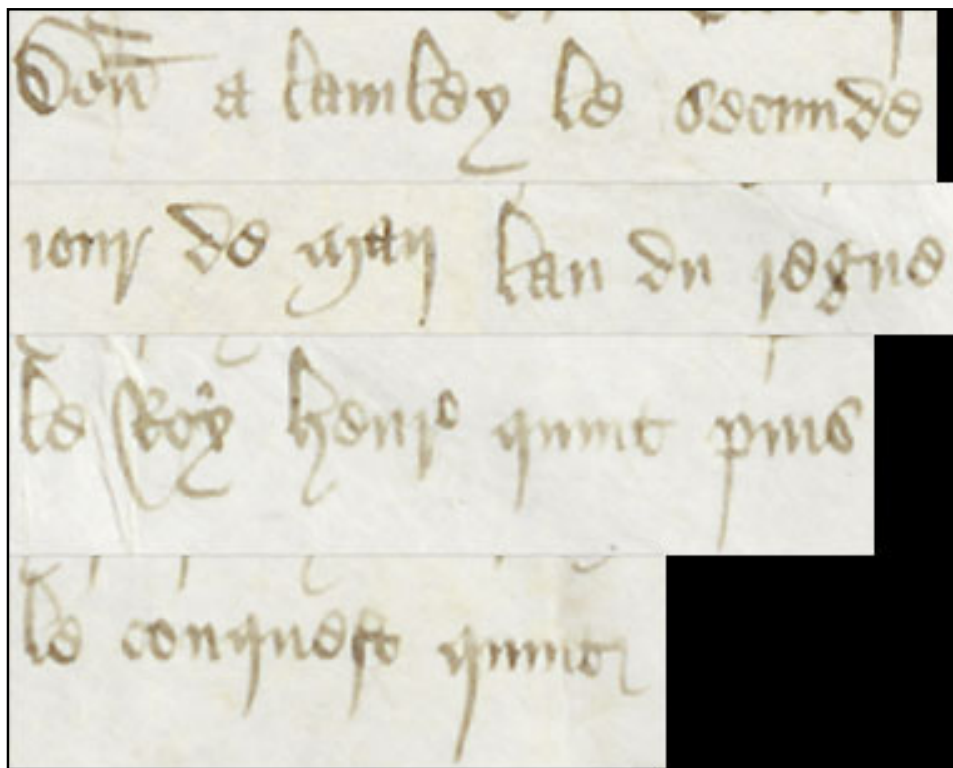
Users beware!

The regnal years of some monarchs present particular difficulties. For example, King John's regnal year was reckoned as beginning on the date of his coronation, not his accession. Unfortunately, this was on Ascension Day - a moveable feast which falls on a different date each year. This meant that his regnal years always began on a different date. Furthermore, sometimes they could be more than a year long and sometimes they could be less.

This grant by King John was made during a regnal year which lasted less than a full calendar year. The grant was made on the 2nd of March in the second year of John's reign, which began on the 18th of May 1200 and ended on the 2nd of May 1201. As a result, the document is dated 2nd of March 1201.

Grant, 1201 (Mi D 4650) with detail below
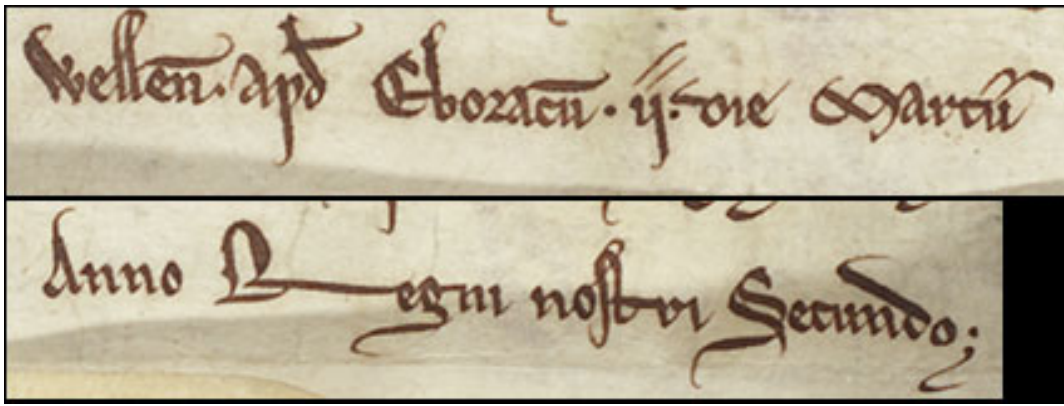
Another difficulty is that because a regnal year is normally calculated from a fixed date to a fixed date, the moveable feasts of the church - such as Easter - can sometimes take place twice in one year. Users should always take care to check this.

Next page: Dating by Religious Feast Day

Dating by Religious Feast Day

Many early documents were dated by reference to the day of the week and to a nearby religious feast date. Thus a document might be dated 'The Wednesday before the feast of St Peter and St Paul 5 Henry VII'. Dates set out in this format simply have to be decoded, stage by stage.

This deed provides an illustration of dating according to a feast day. The Latin quitclaim from John de Wellow to Oliver Burdon is dated 'the Monday next after the feast of the Lord's Ascension, in the 18th year of the reign of King Edward, son of King Edward'. This must have been King Edward II; there would have been some further distinction given if the deed had referred to King Edward III.

Quitclaim, 1325 (Ne D 2002), with detail below
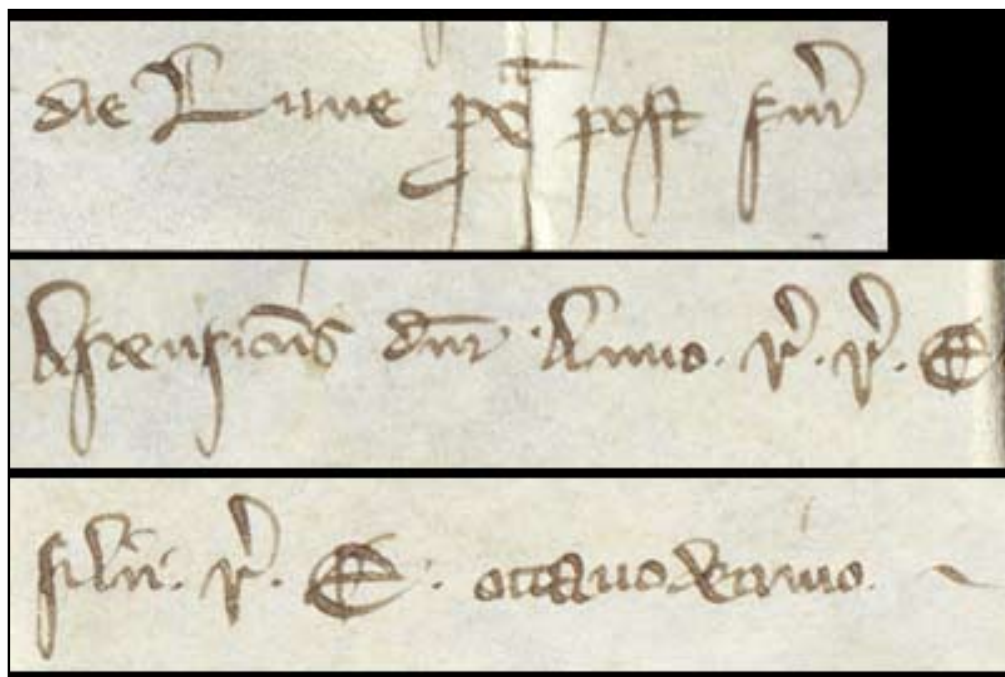
Transcript:
die Lune p[ro]x[imus] post f[estu]m
Ascaensio[n]is d[omi]ni Anno r[egni] r[egis] E[dwardi]
filie r[egni] E[dwardi] octavo decimo

The first stage in the process is to find the date of the religious feast day in question. Again, Cheyney's Handbook of Dates will assist with this - see the Bibliography. Reference to a list of saints' days indicates that the feast of the Ascension falls on 'The Thursday following Rogation Sunday'. Rogation Sunday is the 5th Sunday after Easter Day.

In order to be able to work out the date, therefore, we need to know when Easter fell in the second year of Edward II. The regnal year 18 Edward II ran from the 8th of July 1324 to the 7th of July 1325. Therefore Easter of that regnal year fell in 1325.

By looking at a calendar for 1325, we can see that Easter Day fell on the 7th of April. This means that Rogation Sunday, being the 5th Sunday after Easter, fell on the 12th of May. Ascension is the following Thursday, namely the 16th of May. Our document was dated on the Monday following Ascension, or the Monday following the 16th of May. Our document, therefore, is dated the 20th of May 1325.

Next page: Julian/Gregorian Calendars

Julian/Gregorian Calendars

The Julian Calendar was the system of dating followed from 46BC onwards. It was this calendar which added one extra day in every four years (giving us our 'leap year') because it had been calculated that the earth takes 365¼ days to complete its circuit around the sun, not a straight 365 days.

Unfortunately, this calculation was not entirely accurate. In fact, the sun's circuit is not exactly 365¼ days - it actually takes a further 11½ minutes. This may seem a very small amount, but over a large number of years the figure builds up. As a result, it emerged that the Julian Calendar was over-correcting by around 8 days each millennium.

In the 16th century the problem was examined. A solution was hit upon whereby centenary years would not be leap years unless they were divisible by 400. This meant that three out of four centenary years would not be leap years, or, that in every 400 years there would not be 100 leap years but 97. Using this calculation meant that there would only be an over-correction of 23 seconds, and that it would take 3,700 years before the over-correction amounted to a full day.

In 1582 Pope Gregory ruled that this new calendar - thereafter called the Gregorian Calendar - should be brought into use. By that stage, the Julian Calendar had added ten days too many to the calendar, so Pope Gregory decreed that the day after the 4th of October 1582 should be the 15th of October 1582, thus correcting the error.

Unfortunately for historians, the new calendar was not adopted universally - different countries began to follow it at different dates. The main dates of introduction are as follows:

Italy	1582
France	1582
Spain	1582
Portugal	1582
Prussia	1583
Flanders	1583
Poland	1586
Hungary	1587
Netherlands	1700

Denmark	1700
Sweden	1700-1740 (gradually, by omission of leap years)
Great Britain	1752
America	1752
Japan	1872
China	1912
Bulgaria	1915
Turkey	1917
Russia	1917
Yugoslavia	1919
Romania	1919
Greece	1923

In Great Britain, the new calendar was adopted in September 1752. In order to deal with the discrepancy of days, which by now had grown to eleven, it was ordered that 2nd September 1752 would be immediately followed by 14th September 1752. This led to crowds of people on the streets demanding, 'Give us back our 11 days!' It also explains why our financial year starts on 5th April. The official start of the year used to be Lady Day (25th March), but the loss of eleven days in 1752 pushed this back to 5th April.

Users beware!

Because of this discrepancy in the date of adoption, documents written on the same day in different countries may carry different dates. In correspondence between Britain and France between 1582 and 1752, for instance, there would be a discrepancy of 10 or 11 days between the two calendars. Therefore, the 10th of November 1583 (Julian) was actually the 20th of November 1583 (Gregorian). What this meant in practice was that a reply written in Britain to a letter sent from France could actually be dated from before the original was sent!

For example, a letter written in France on the 22nd of April 1660 (Gregorian) could well be replied to in England on the 15th of April 1660 (Julian - actually the 25th of April in the Gregorian Calendar).

This helps to explain why this document, a list relating to orders for the march of the Dutch army, was dated the 23/13 December 1688. The date was the 23rd of December on the Continent, reckoned according to the Gregorian Calendar, but the 13th of December in Britain, reckoned according to the Julian Calendar.

Orders for the march of the Dutch army, 1688 (Pw A 2226) with detail below

The following table will assist in making conversions from the Julian to the Gregorian Calendars:

- After 5th October 1582 add ten days to the Julian Calendar
- After 28th February 1700 add eleven days to the Julian Calendar
- After 28th February 1800 add twelve days to the Julian Calendar
- After 28th February 1900 add thirteen days to the Julian Calendar

Next page: The Historical Year and the Civil Year

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The Historical Year and the Civil Year

The 1st of January was not, however, always recognised as marking the start of the year. In fact, until 1751, the civil (and ecclesiastical and legal) year in Britain was considered to begin on Lady Day, the 25th of March. This can create ambiguity, because for dates between the 1st of January and the 25th of March the historical year does not match the civil year. 1752 was the first year in Britain in which the civil or legal year began on 1st January.

To give an example of how this worked in practice, here is a example showing how the dates worked in the years 1748 and 1749:

> 30 December 1748
> 31 December 1748
> 1 January 1748
> 2 January 1748
> ...
> 23 March 1748
> 24 March 1748
> 25 March 1749

Another example of that of a tombstone in Salisbury Cathedral, which commemorates a baby boy who was born on 13th May 1683 and died on 19th February of the same year. This makes no sense unless you know that the civil year ran from March to March.

Thus, for example, a document dated the 25th of January 1748 (civil year) was actually written on what we would consider the 25th of January 1749 (historical year). The new historical year has begun but the civil year continues until the 25th of March. In order to address this ambiguity, researchers are advised to refer to the date as the 25th January 1748/9. Indeed, many contemporaries actually did the same thing, as in this example of a letter from Thomas Pelham-Holles, 4th Duke of Newcastle upon Tyne [later 1st Duke of Newcastle under Lyne]. The correct date according to the historical year is the latter of the two figures.

Letter from the 4th Duke of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1739 (Ne 6 D 16/1/518) with detail below

Researchers will also come across the use of the terms 'Old Style' (O.S.) and 'New Style' (N.S.) dates. They help to clarify the ambiguities of dates falling between 1st January and 24th March. 'Old Style' means that the document is dated according to the civil year and so the date must be adjusted in order to put the document into the correct historical sequence.

The civil year explains why the twelfth month of our year is called December, when the first syllable of the word so obviously means 'ten', or the tenth month is October when the first syllable really means 'eight'. With the civil year beginning on 25 March, March was actually the first month, making April the second, May the third, June the fourth, July the fifth, August the sixth, September the seventh, October the eighth and so on. Thus users who come across dates containing a number or Roman numeral in place of the month should pay particular attention.

Take this example of a list relating to orders for the march of the Dutch army. The list is dated '23/13 Xbre [16]88'. This is NOT the 23/13 of October 1688 as might be expected, but is actually the 23/13 of December of that year.

Orders for the march of the Dutch army, 1688 (Pw A 2226) with detail below

Next page: Law Terms

Manuscripts & Special Collections

Law Terms

Many documents, particularly official documents, are dated by reference to a law term. These emerged because there were certain times of the year during which legal business could not take place and cases would have to be suspended. As a result, it was generally preferred to pursue legal matters at times when they could be fairly continuous. There were four main periods when this was possible, and these developed to become the law terms - Michaelmas, Hilary, Easter and Trinity.

- **Michaelmas** term runs from the 1st of October to the 21st of December.

- **Hilary** term runs from the 11th of January to the Wednesday before Easter Sunday.

- **Easter** term runs from the second Tuesday after Easter Sunday, and ends on the Friday before Whit Sunday.

- Finally, **Trinity** term runs from the second Tuesday after Whit Sunday and ends on the 31st of July.

When documents are dated by law term, they will normally bear the name of the term, followed by a regnal year, e.g. Trinity Term 50 George III. The sorts of documents which may be dated in this way include various forms of legal paper, parliamentary bills and acts, and exemplifications of documents such as final concords and common recoveries.
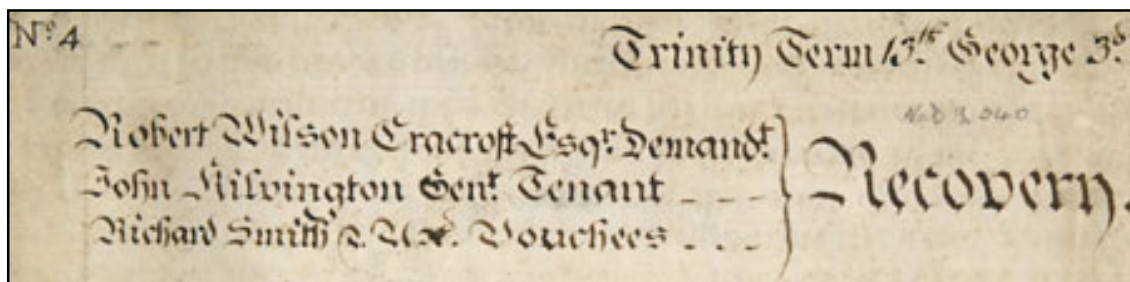
Endorsement on exemplification of common recovery, 1773 (Ne D 3040)

Next page: Other Forms of Dating

Other Forms of Dating

From time to time users may encounter other, unfamiliar forms of dating. One example of this is the **French Revolutionary Calendar**, which operated in France between November 1793 and January 1806 (and again, briefly in 1871). This was a complete departure from the traditionally recognised form of calendar.

According to the French Revolutionary Calendar, a year was divided into 12 months, each of which had 30 days, with an additional 5 or 6 days following at the end of the year. The months had very unfamiliar names:

- Vendémiaire
- Brumaire
- Frimaire
- Nivôse
- Pluviôse
- Ventôse
- Germinal
- Floréal
- Prairial
- Messidor
- Thermidor
- Fructidor

Months were not divided into weeks, but into three 'decades', each of which consisted of 10 days, named:

- Primidi
- Duodi
- Tridi
- Quartidi
- Qunitidi
- Sextidi
- Septidi
- Octidi
- Nonidi
- Decadi

The five or six additional days at the end of the year, following on from Fructidor, were known as:

- jour de la vertu
- jour de génie
- jour du travial
- jour de l'opinion
- jour des recompenses
- jour de la révolution.

The latter was a 'leap day', occurring once every four years.

Years themselves were numbered from 1 to 14, with 1 being the first year of the Republic, following the Revolution, that is the 22nd of September 1792 to the 21st of September 1793. Converting a Republican year, therefore, is similar in practice to converting a regnal year.

This pamphlet entitled 'La Décade' is dated 20 Germinal in the 6th year of the Republic. This equates to the 9th of July 1798.
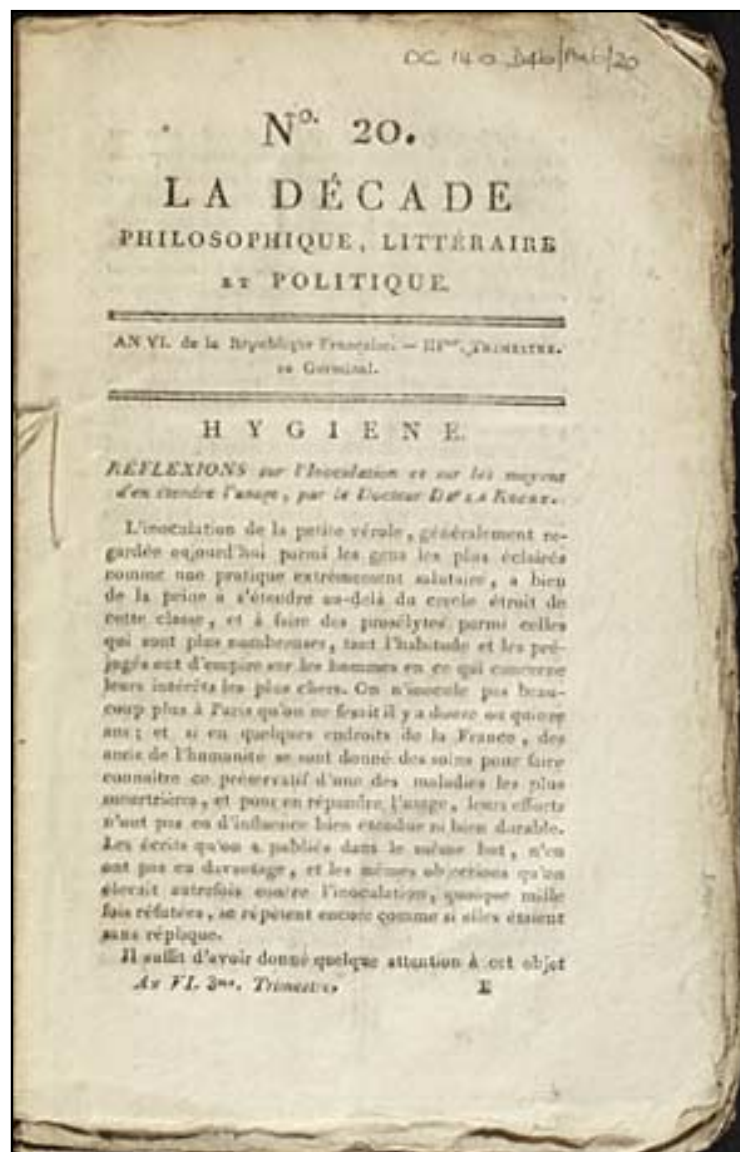
Pamphlet, 1798 (DC140.D6) with detail below

AN VI. de la République Française. — IIIme. TRIMESTRE.
20 Germinal.
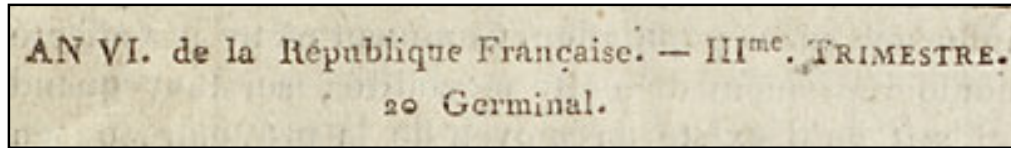
There are many other forms of specialised calendar, such as the **Hebrew, Islamic and Chinese calendars**. There are resources for deciphering these calendars available online.

Next page: Undated Documents

Undated Documents

From time to time researchers will come across documents that are not dated at all. In such cases, deciding upon a date becomes a matter of detective work, based on palaeographical and diplomatic features (i.e. the style of the document) or on the contents.

For example: the form of handwriting used in the document may place it before a certain date; a watermark in a paper document may bear date which shows that the item could not have been written any earlier; or, there may be reference to a particular individual (e.g. a bishop) or event (e.g. a battle) which allows a date or date-range to be determined. Again, items in the select bibliography will provide assistance with this.

In this example, the pamphlet entitled 'A Dialogue between K.W. and Benting' is not dated, but a reasonable estimate can be made by reference to the content. The 'K.W.' in question is King William III and 'Benting' is Hans William Bentinck, 1st Earl of Portland. The strap line indicates that the dialogue was 'occasioned by his Going into Flanders after the Death of the Queen'. It is this event, then, which helps to provide the date. William III's queen, Mary, died in December 1694. As a result, the date of the pamphlet must be around that time, i.e. 1694-1695.

(1)   20

A

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

K. W. and Benting,

Occafioned by his Going into *Flanders* after the DEATH of the QUEEN.

W. In Bed, the Candle burning dim.

W. THefe *Gripes* of *Confcience* are a damn'd *Difeafe*, nor is there any *Cure* for e'm, except a *Medicine*, that will never down with me, I thought I had quell'd, maul'd, kill'd, and rammed the Worm for ever moving more; and yet if Trouble come, or Danger threaten, I cannot be alone, but it comes crawling on, and ftings, and bites, the Vulture feeding on *Prometheus's* Heart cannot be a greater Torment: The impartial Devil will not bate an Ace of Truth, but mufters up all my Villanies before me, enough to have damn'd ten thoufand to the *loweft Hell*, and then——

The Q's Ghoft glides by, and difappears

Ha! What art thou? Sure it was She, and is there then fomething of us that remains even after Death? Is there a reckoning in the Cafe? Sure mine will be no very comfortable part in the other World, if it be anfwerable to my Deferts in this.

The Ghoft returns, approaches him, and fpeaks.

Q's Ghoft, *Repent*, for me it's too late, not yet for you.

(*Exit Ghoft.*)

W. Ha! This preaching Ghoft hath put me in a fit of Trembling; but fince *Mofes* and the *Prophets* could never do any good of me, it fhall never be faid, that *She* coming Canting from the *Dead* fhall move me, whom I never regarded in her Life, Repent! *Wife work indeed.* Where fhall I begin? Or when fhall I make an end? My whole Life hath been fuch a Scene of *Monftrous Villanies*, that they are fcarce to be *repeated*, never to be *repented*. Who would begin a work which will never be done? I have traded in *barbarous Murders*, *hellifh Lyes*, damn'd *Confpiracies*; I have oppreffed my *Country*, Banifhed my *Father*, Seiz'd his *Kingdoms*, put the *whole World* in *Blood* and *Flames*, and as far as Man can, have even dethroned God himfelf, for I have made *Religion* a meer *Cheat* and *Stalking-horfe* to my

A   Defigns,

Pamphlet, c.1695-1695 (Pw A 2715)

In the second example, a satirical French verse about Lords Halifax, Bentinck and Danby, the date of the document can be narrowed down by using the titles of the individuals concerned.
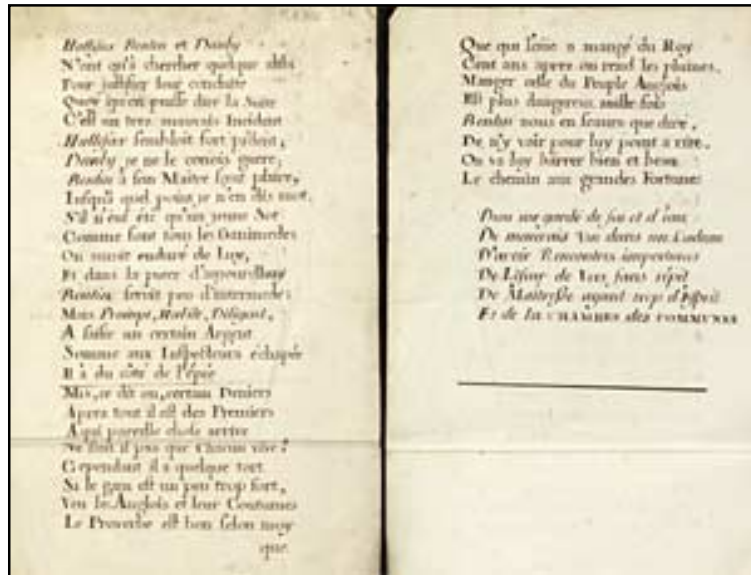
Satirical verse, c.1688-1689 (Pw A 2035) with detail below
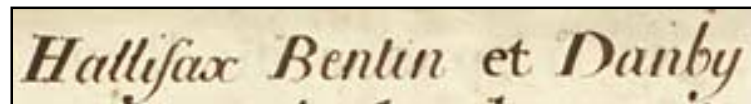
George Savile became 1st Viscount Halifax, or Lord Halifax, in 1668. The poem, then, must date from after that time. Thomas Osborne was styled Earl of Danby between 1674 and 1689, before being elevated to the title of Marquess of Carmarthen and ultimately Duke of Leeds. Thus the poem must be from between those dates. William Bentinck was created 1st Earl of Portland at the coronation of William and Mary in February 1689. Since he is not referred to as 'Lord Portland' in the document, the poem must date from before that time. Finally, the poem's content indicates that it relates to a period after William III had come to power. With all of this information together, it is possible to estimate that the date of the poem is between December 1688 and February 1689.

Next page: Latin numbers, words and phrases used for dates

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Latin numbers, words and phrases used for dates

All the numbers given below are in the form in which they would appear in documents from the medieval period onwards.

- Days of the week
- Dates of the month
- Months
- Numbers written out in full
- Roman numerals
- Phrases

Days of the week

Latin	English
die dominica, die Solis	on Sunday
die Lunae	on Monday
die Martis	on Tuesday
die Mercurii	on Wednesday
die Jovis	on Thursday
die Veneris	on Friday
die Sabbati, die Sabbatinus, dieSaturni	on Saturday

Dates of the month

Latin	English
primo	first
secundo	second
tertio	third
quarto	fourth
quinto	fifth
sexto	sixth
septimo	seventh
octo	eighth
nono	ninth
decimo	tenth

undecimo	eleventh
duodecimo	twelfth
decimo tertio	thirteenth
decimo quarto	fourteenth
decimo quinto	fifteenth
decimo sexto	sixteenth
decimo septo	seventeenth
decimo octo	eighteenth
decimo nono	nineteenth
vicesimo	twentieth
vicesimo primo	twenty-first
vicesimo secundo	twenty-second
vicesimo tertio	twenty-third
vicesimo quarto	twenty-fourth
vicesimo quinto	twenty-fifth
vicesimo sexto	twenty-sixth
vicesimo septo	twenty-seventh
vicesimo octo	twenty-eighth
vicesimo nono	twenty-ninth
tricesimo	thirtieth
tricesimo primo	thirty-first
ultimo	the last

Months of the year

Latin	English
Januarii	in January
Februarii	in February
Martii	in March
Aprilis	in April
Maii	in May
Junii	in June
Julii	in July
Augusti	in August
Septembris	in September
Octobris	in October

Novembris	in November
Decembris	in December

Numbers written out in full (often used for years in deeds)

Latin	English
millesimo	one thousandth
centesimo	one hundredth
ducentesimo	two hundredth
trecentesimo	three hundredth
quadrigentesimo	four hundredth
quingentesimo	five hundredth
sescentesimo	six hundredth
septingentesimo	seven hundredth
octingentesimo	eight hundredth
nongentesimo	nine hundredth
vicesimo	twentieth
tricesimo	thirtieth
quadragesimo	fortieth
quinquagesimo	fiftieth
sexagesimo	sixtieth
septuagesimo	seventieth
octagesimo	eightieth
nonagesimo	ninetieth
primo	first
secundo	second
tertio	third
quarto	fourth
quinto	fifth
sexto	sixth
septimo	seventh
octo	eighth
nono	ninth

decimo	tenth
undecimo	eleventh
duodecimo	twelfth
decimo tertio	thirteenth
decimo quarto	fourteenth
decimo quinto	fifteenth
decimo sexto	sixteenth
decimo septo	seventeenth
decimo octo	eighteenth
decimo nono	nineteenth

Example:
Anno domini millesimo quadragesimo quinquagesimo nono = A.D. 1459

Roman Numerals (used for dates and years)

Roman Numerals (which could be written in either lower or upper case)	Arabic Numerals
i, ij, iij, iv or iiij, v, vj, vij, viij, ix, x	1-10
xj, xij, xiij, xiiij, xv, xvj, xvij, xviij, xix	11-19
xx, xxj, xxij, xxiij, xxiiij, xxv, xxvj, xxvij, xxviij, xxix	20-29
xxx	30
xl	40
l	50
lx	60
lxx	70
lxxx	80
xc	90
c	100
d	500
m	1000
Example years:	
MCCCXVIII	1318
MDXLVI	1546
MDCCLXII	1762
MCMXCIX	1999

Phrases

Latin	English
Anno domini	In the year of the Lord
Ante meridiem	Before noon (a.m.)
Altera die	On the next day
Cras	Tomorrow
Die sequenti	On the next day
Die vero	On this very day
Ejusdem die	Of the same day
Eodem anno	In the same year
Eodem die	On the same day
Eodem mense	On the same month
Hodie	Today
Mane	In the morning
Nocte	At night
Post Meridiem	After noon (p.m.)
Postridie	On the day after

Next page:

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Glossary

Users of this skills module, and those wishing to decipher the dates of historical documents may find the following definitions useful:

Accession	The action of entering upon a particular office or dignity, most often a king or queen succeeding to a throne
Civil year	Administrative reckoning of the year, beginning on the 25th of March and ending on the 24th of March. This causes confusion for documents dated between January and March, because they will fall in one civil year, but in the following historical year e.g. 4 Feb. 1660 (civil year) is 4 Feb. 1661 (historical year). Historians usually deal with this by writing 4 Feb. 1660/1, or 4 Feb. 1660 O.S. (meaning old style, to indicate the civil year) or 4 Feb. 1661 N.S. (meaning new style, to indicate the historical year). Sometimes called the legal year or the ecclesiastical year
Coronation	The crowning of a king or queen
Easter Term	Law term running from the second Tuesday after Easter Sunday unti the Friday before Whit Sunday
Ecclesiastical year	See civil year
French Revolutionary Calendar	Operative during the period of the French Republic, following the Revolution. Introduced a completely new way of dividing the year, with new names for months and no use of weeks
Gregorian Calendar	A modified form of the Julian calendar, introduced by Pope Gregory in 1582 to counteract discrepancies which had emerged between the tropical (i.e. seasonal) year and the calendar year. Adopted by different countries at different times. Introduced in Britain in 1752
Hilary Term	Law term running from the 11 January to the Wednesday before Easter Sunday
Historical year	The year reckoned as beginning on 1 January and ending on 31 December
Immovable feast	A religious feast day celebrated on the same date, year after year, such as Michaelmas
Julian Calendar	System of dating instituted by Julius Caesar and followed from 46BC; introduced the concept of the leap year. Eclipsed from 1582 by the introduction of the Gregorian calendar
Legal term dates	Four main periods of the year when it was possible to pursue legal business fairly continuously, without breaks for particular feast days - namely Michaelmas, Hilary, Easter and Trinity terms. Note that the terms did not all begin and end on the same date every year
Legal year	See civil year
Michaelmas Term	Law term running from 1 October to 21 December
Movable feast	A religious feast day which does not fall on the same date every year but which can move around the calendar, for example, Easter
Old Style (O.S.)	Dating of a document between 1 January and 24 March by the civil year rather than the historical year. Old Style dating of documents occurred in Britain up to 1752
Regnal year	System of dating according to the year of the reign of the presiding monarch. The number of year was reckoned from the date or anniversary of the monarch's accession
Religious feast	A religious anniversary celebrated every year, such as saints' days or days marking particular events such as the crucifixion, the ascension and so on. Feasts could be movable or immovable
Trinity Term	Law term running from the second Tuesday after Whit Sunday until 31 July

Next page: Bibliography

Select Bibliography

The following bibliography includes a commentary for each of the items listed indicating what they include and how they may be used in terms of dating documents:

- C.R. Cheyney and M. Jones, *A Handbook of Dates; Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks No. 4* (Cambridge, 2000)
  Effectively the 'bible' for dating documents. Includes explanations of the reckonings of time, lists of the regnal years of rulers, a list of popes, a list of saints' days and other festivals used in dating, explanation of legal chronology, calendars for every year (listed as calendars for all possible dates of Easter), the British Calendar for 1752 (when ten days were lost in order to accommodate the Gregorian Calendar) and a chronological table of Easter days. When deciphering regnal years or dates reckoned according to feast days, this is essential reading.

- L.M. Munby, *Dates and Time: a handbook for local historians* (Salisbury, 1997)
  Another invaluable source, which provides a comprehensive overview of the way historical documents are dated. C. Waters, *Dictionary of Saints Days, Fasts, Feasts and Festivals* (2003)

- E.B. Fryde, D.E. Greenway, S. Porter and I. Roy (eds), *Handbook of British Chronology; Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks No. 2* (London, 1986)
  Another indispensable source. This includes lists of rulers, lists of officers of state (e.g. chancellors, prime ministers, secretaries of state), lists of archbishops and bishops, lists of peers, lists of parliaments and lists of councils of the Church of England. Invaluable for dating undated documents by reference to office holders, parliaments or councils.

- B. Grun, *Timetables of History* (New York, 1991)
  Provides the dates of historical events from 5,000BC to 1990. Entries are divided into categories: history and politics; literature and theatre; religion, philosophy and learning; visual arts; music; science, technology and growth; and daily life. Accompanied by extensive indexing. Useful for dating undated documents from reference in the content to particular events.

- D.A. Pickrill, *Ministers of the Crown* (London, 1981)
  List of names of individuals who have held ministerial posts, senior and junior. Effectively organised by government department, e.g. War Office, Defence, Trade and Industry, Education and Science and so on. Useful for dating undated documents from a reference to an office holder.

The volumes listed below are all part of a series. Generally, these include details of monarchs, a chronology of main events, details of governmental administrations and lists of public office holders, information on parliaments, details of election results, information on religious developments, lists of major treaties, details of campaigns of the armed forces, details of events in British colonies, details of major developments in law and order, society, economy and finance and local government. These volumes are also invaluable for dating undated documents according to references in the content to people or events:

- K. Powell and C. Cook, *English Historical Facts 1485-1603* (London, 1977)

- C. Cook and J. Wroughton, *English Historical Facts 1603-1688* (London, 1980)

- C. Cook and J. Stevenson, *British Historical Facts 1688-1760* (Basingstoke, 1988)

- C. Cook and J. Stevenson, *British Historical Facts 1760-1830* (London, 1980)

- C. Cook and B. Keith, *British Historical Facts 1830-1900* (London, 1975)

- D. Butler and G. Butler, *British Political Facts 1900-1985* (London, 1986)

Finally, the volumes listed below are useful for finding information about individuals who may be mentioned in documents, from which reference it is then possible to assign a date:

Burke's *Peerage, Baronetage and Knightage* - various editions

G.E. Cockayne, *The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom: extant, extinct or dormant*, 14 vols. (London, 1910-1959)

Dictionaries of National Biography - for various countries

Of course, there are also numerous resources available online which may assist with dating. These should be reasonably accessible using standard search engines and so are not listed here. However, users should exercise a note of caution when assessing the validity of such sites, and ensure that they are both accurate and authentic.