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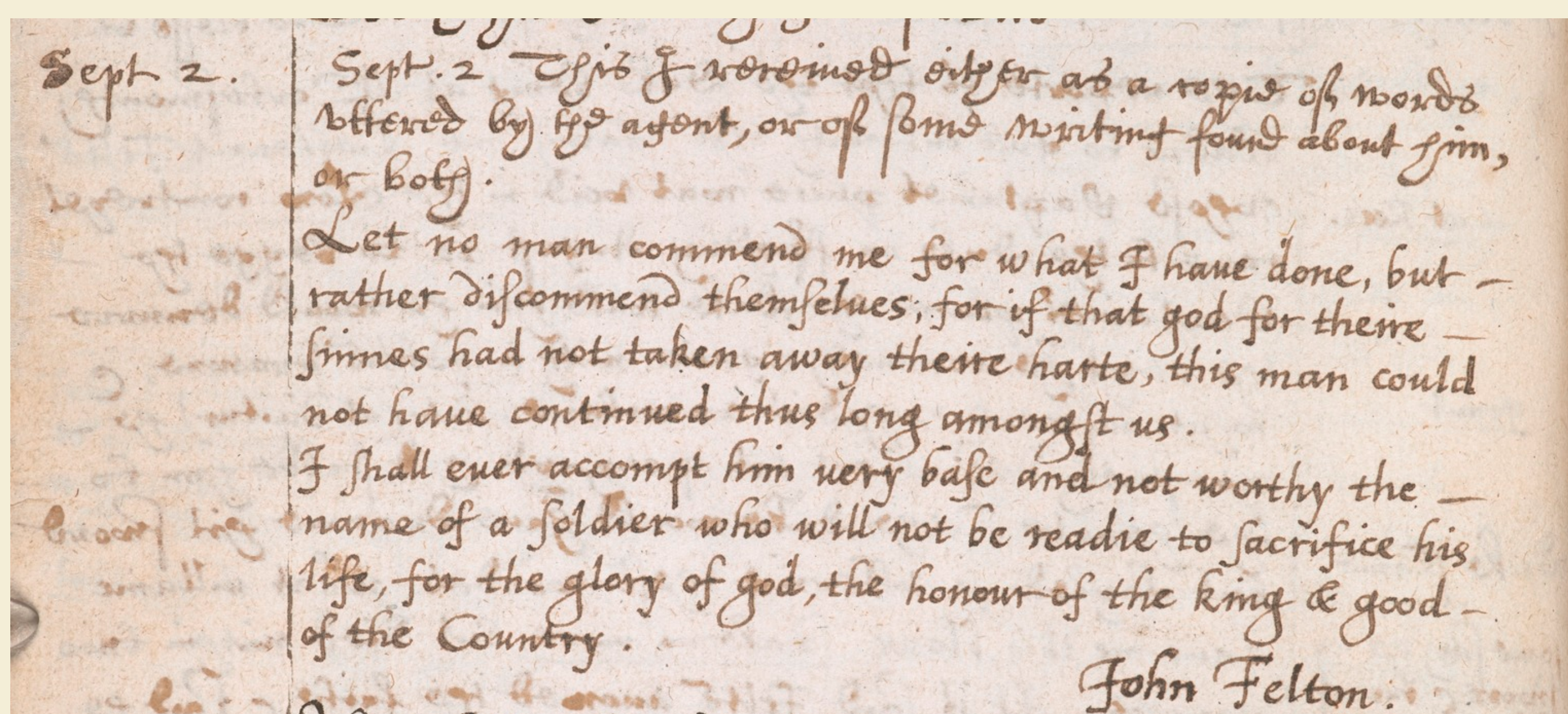**General rights**

Manuscript Pamphleteering
in Early Stuart England

V. Anker, R. Bell, J. Hallett, M. A. Jones, N. Millstone, and S. Verweij

Introduction

Before the outbreak of Civil War in 1642, England developed a large, influential and often radical pamphlet literature. Speeches, learned briefs, and scaffold apologies joined character assassinations, secret histories and conspiracy theories in a jumbled literary underground. Large numbers of copies survive – probably in the tens of thousands – suggesting a significant readership. Nevertheless, this pamphlet literature is rarely mentioned and even more rarely analyzed by historians or literary critics, not least because it was written by hand rather than printed with movable type.

The Manuscript Pamphleteering in Early Stuart England (MPESE) project (https://mpese.ac.uk) surveys this vast hidden archive of early Stuart England's manuscript pamphlets. It provides a searchable database of several hundred examples with bibliographic information, and digital images, to allow scholars to better understand the production and circulation of pre-Civil War political writing.

British Library, Additional MS 22959, f. 25v
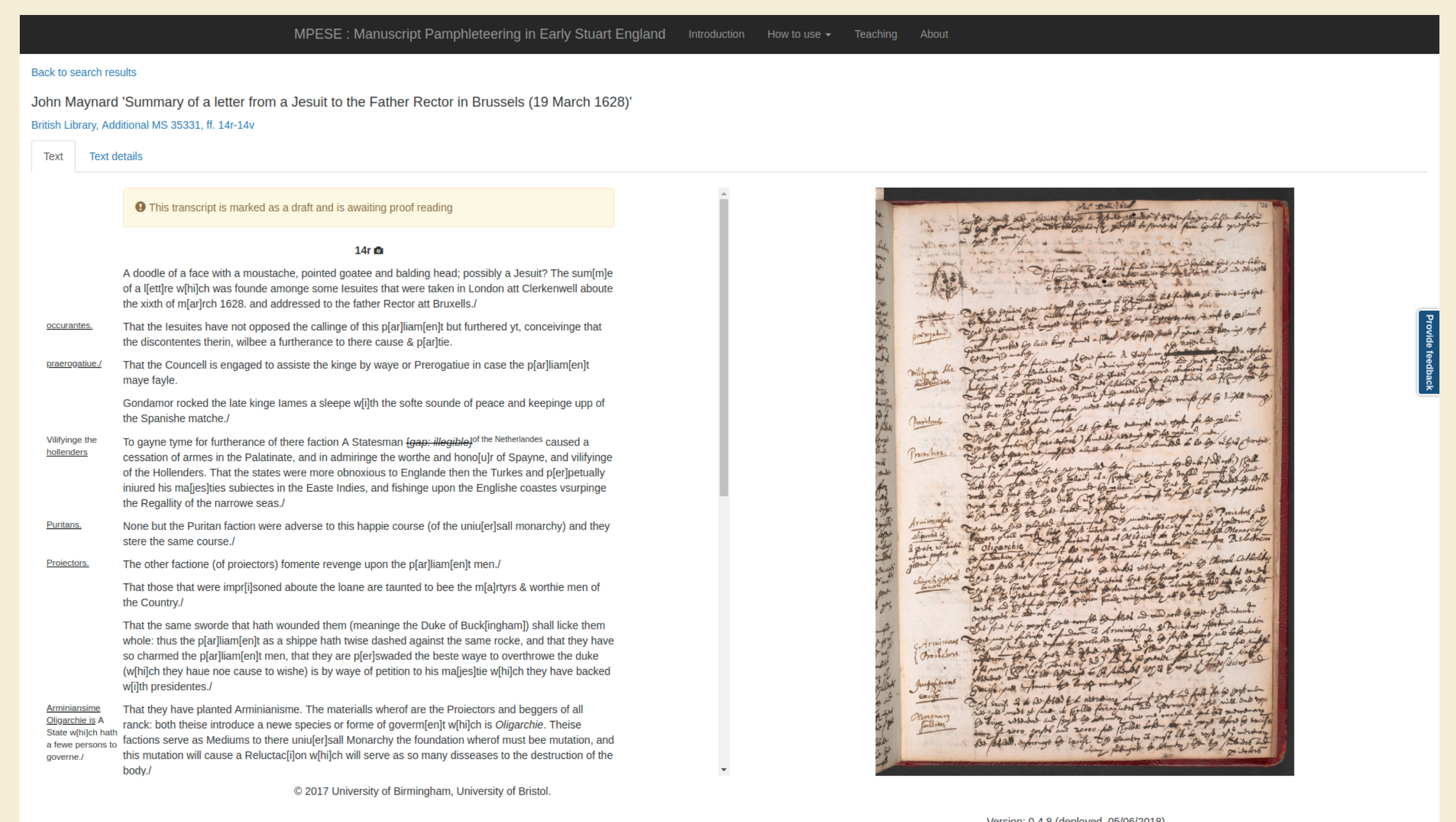
TEI/XML

The project uses TEI/XML to markup the text of 200+ exemplar pamphlets to provide semi-diplomatic transcriptions with an introduction, provenance, and details of other manuscript witnesses, contemporary seventeenth century printed witnesses and modern critical editions. The transcripts were primarily made by the project team using the Oxygen XML Editor, but also by volunteers from local archives using MS Word. A workflow was established to convert transcripts made in Word to TEI/XML and to check the quality of the transcription and the consistency in the markup used.

British Library, Additional MS 35331, f. 14r

Database

The XML is stored in an eXist database and a bespoke web application (https://mpese.ac.uk) was written to provide a facility to search and browse the pamphlets and their manuscripts. The British Library digitized several hundred texts from their collections and so it is possible to view the transcripts alongside high quality images of the originals. Since we are encoding the texts as XML it is possible to display them as HTML within the web application or download as a PDF file.
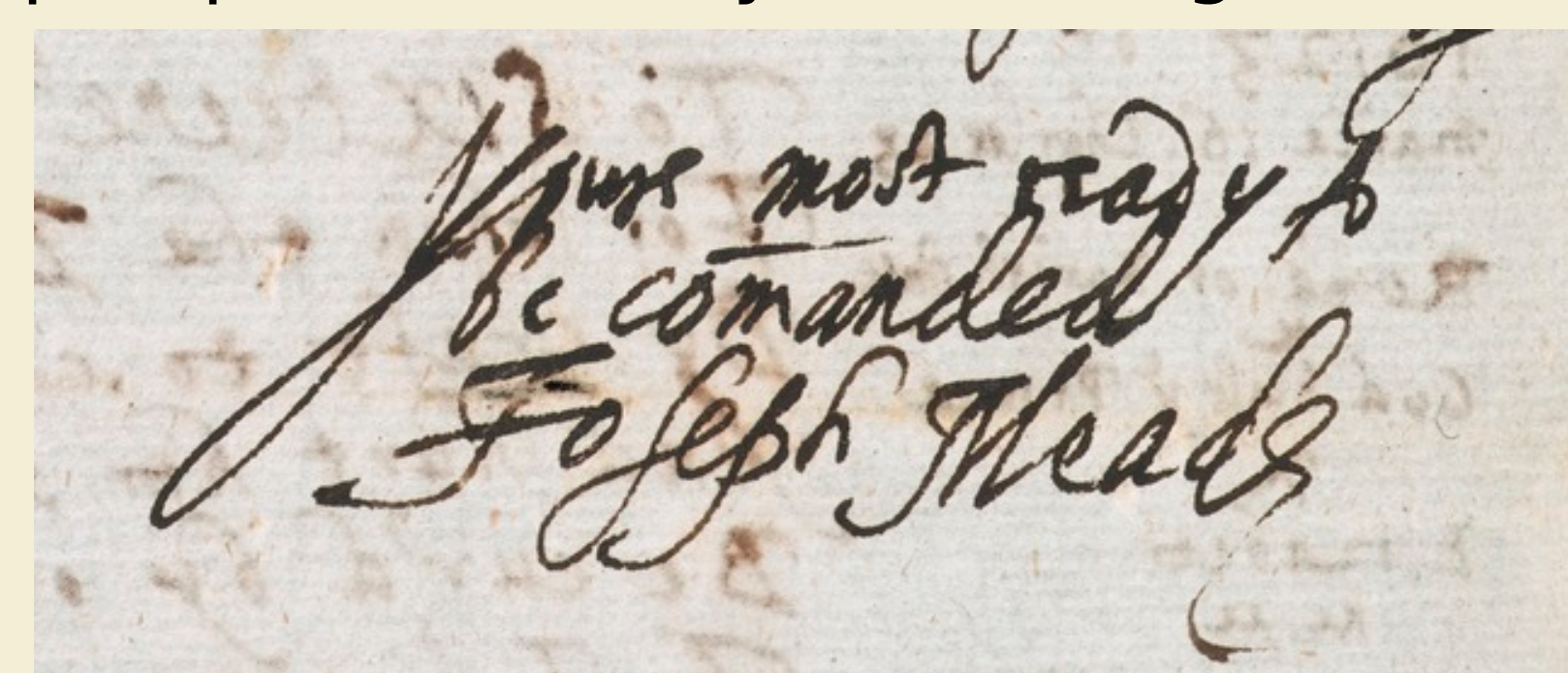

MPESE database

Archives

The project is running 'transcribathons' with Surrey History Centre and Norfolk Record Office to raise local interest in the project and transcribe manuscript pamphlets in their collections. In working with local archives, the project will help archivists recognise and catalogue their collections, providing them with (at worst) an extensive list or (at best) full digital transcriptions of manuscript pamphlets which the archives can use to attract international scholars. The project also has a team of volunteers, trained in palaeography, who are helping to transcribe manuscripts from the British Library.

Symposium

With the support of the Past and Present Society, the project held a conference in London on the 29–30 June 2018 at the British Library and University College London. It included papers that explored the uses, importance and circulation of manuscript pamphlets in early Stuart England.

British Library, Harley MS 389, f. 335v

Sustainability

It is the intention that this AHRC-funded work represents an initial phase of an extended bibliographic project. All data, such as the TEI/XML encoded texts, will also be preserved in long-term storage (20+ years) at the University of Bristol and published on https://data.bris.ac.uk under a permissive licence. The source code of the web application will available under an open source licence.

Schools

The project will provide resources useful to A-Level history teachers and students. All four exam boards have modules for early Stuart history and MPESE will help teachers provide students with primary-source rich material that gives an interesting perspective on Stuart political life.

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