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MATTHEW PARIS AND ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND:
A THIRTEENTH-CENTURY VISION OF THE DISTANT PAST

Rebecca Reader

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Submitted to the University of Durham for the degree of PhD
October, 1994
Abstract

By Rebecca Reader.
Submitted to the University of Durham for the Degree of PhD, October 1994.

The contours and dimensions of the historical imagination of Matthew Paris, monk of St Albans from 1217-1259, constitute the focus of the thesis. Matthew's historical works, the Chronica Maiora, Historia Anglorum, Abbreviatio Chronicorum, Flores Historiarum, Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei, Gesta Abbatum, Vitae Duorum Offarum and his genealogical chronicles extant in B.L. Cotton MS. Claudius D iv and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS.16, are plundered for the vision of Anglo-Saxon England that they enshrine. Chapter one proposes Matthew's authorship of the vitae of the Anglo-Saxon abbots contained in the Gesta. It suggests that responsibility for the composition of the abbey's first domestic history lay with Matthew rather than with the twelfth-century St Albans cellarer, Adam, to whom the Gesta alludes. Chapter two investigates the deeds with which Matthew credited the early abbots. It assesses the historicity of those deeds and it traces the colourful thematic threads of ethnicity, nobility and moral misdemeanour that they weave. Chapter three marvels at the extent to which Matthew could edit history in an endeavour to whitewash the reputation of Offa, king of the Mercia, the alleged founder of St Albans. Matthew did not hesitate to rewrite the story of an age separated from his own by some half a millennium. Chapter four discusses Matthew's curious bestowal on Alfred, rather than Offa, the title of protomonarchus Anglie and his evident belief that Anglo-Saxon history had reached its glittering zenith during the reign of Edward the Confessor, that conqueror of sin, the flesh and the devil. Yet England was soon to be home to a conqueror of a rather different breed. Matthew's ambivalence with regards the reign of that most Christian, yet tyrannical king William and his sympathy for the gens anglorum of the late eleventh-century who suffered the 'yoke of Norman servitude' are considered in chapter five. Matthew's vision of history was coloured by his prejudices and moulded by his preferences. The past was rocky terrain so he carefully selected his path.
No part of this work (which falls within the statutory word limit) has previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other university.

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Abbreviated References

Manuscripts

AD  British Library, Additional MS.62777

B  Brussels, Bibliothèque Nationale MS.7965-73 (3723)

B.L.  British Library

CCCC  Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS

HRO  Hertfordshire Record Office

LA  Liber Additamentorum (the charters, documents, treatises of B.L. Cotton Nero D i, excluding the Vitae Offarum and Gesta Abbatum)

LB  Liber Benefactorum (B.L. Cotton Nero D vii)

N  Autograph Gesta in B.L. Cotton Nero D i, ff.30-68v

V  An abridgement of Matthew's Chronica in B.L. Cotton MS. Vitellius A xx, ff.77r-108v

Printed Primary and Secondary Sources


ASC  (Anglo-Saxon Chronicle) C.Plummer (ed.), Two of the Saxon Chronicles in Parallel (Oxford, 1892)


EHR  English Historical Review
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<td>Vita</td>
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Introduction

'In that ocean of events who can track the course of every wave' 1

One man, one mind and one historical vision are considered in this study. The man is Matthew Paris, monk of St Albans from 1217-1259 and the mind and vision were his alone. By virtue of his birth in around 1200, his vision was thirteenth-century but it will not be presented as 'the thirteenth-century vision of the past'. 2 Since human imagination is a purely personal faculty, it would be presumptuous to suppose that Matthew was the historical imagination of the age. But his thoughts about the past cannot have been wholly unrepresentative of the thoughts of his contemporaries. If cloistered as a Benedictine, he was not closeted from the world. Familiar with the court and company of Henry III and his wife Eleanor, he possibly attended the marriage of the couple at Westminster in 1236 and the marriage of their daughter Margaret to Alexander II King of Scotland in 1251. 3 He definitely attended celebration of the feast of Edward the Confessor at Westminster in 1247 and Henry III visited the abbey of St Albans on at least nine occasions in Matthew's time. 4 Matthew was careful to record the details of his personal encounters with the king. 5 In 1246, he negotiated with the Cahorsin money-lenders of London to free the Norwegian abbey of St


3 H.R.Luard, Chronica Maiora, 7 vols (RS, 1872-1883) [henceforth CM], CM iii. 336-339; ibid.v. 266-267.

4 Ibid. iv. 644-645 and ibid., iv. 402; ibid., v. 233, 257-8, 319-320, 320, 489, 574, 617-618

5 Ibid. iv. 644-645; ibid. v. 233-234, 246-254, 617-618.
Benet Hulme from debt and in 1248 he set sail for Norway itself, bearing a letter of Louis IX for King Hakon, and intent on educating the monks of St Benet in the intricacies of St Benedict's Rule. 6 A well-connected man, he numbered Richard, earl of Cornwall, Hubert de Burgh, Richard of Clare, Alexander de Swereford and John Mansel amongst his informants. 7

If Matthew's personal mobility sits awkwardly with his Benedictinism, it is reassurance at least that his view of the world, past and present, had been fed by the joint stimuli of a monastic library and a contemporary secular setting. Just as he had received inspiration from the secular world so he informed the secular world of his discoveries about the past. Queen Eleanor and Henry III were presumably familiar with his Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei because he had dedicated it to them. 8 Isabel, Countess of Arundel and Mathilda, Countess of Winchester borrowed a book containing illustrated and autograph copies of his lives of Edward and Thomas Becket. 9 Yet, rather than claiming for Matthew, spokesman status, this study peeps, (respectfully), inside the mind of a man who 'paid the debt of nature' some seven hundred and fifty years ago and seeks to grasp the essence of his attitude to the distant past. The parameters of Matthew's distant past have been set at approximately 757-1087, beginning with the accession of Offa of Mercia and ending with the death of the first Anglo-

6 Ibid. v. 42-45; ibid., 35-36 and 44-45.
8 Estoire, I.49-72.
9 Trinity College, Dublin MS., f.11r. M.R. James translated the note in the introduction to W.R.L. Lowe and E.F. Jacob (eds.), Illustrations to the Life of St Alban in Trinity College, Dublin MS.E.i 40 (Oxford, 1924), pp 15-16. '(1) If you please, you can keep this book until Easter. (2) G., send, please, to the lady Countess of Arundel, Isabel, that she is to send you the book about St Thomas the Martyr and St Edward which I translated and Illustrated, and which the lady Countess of Cornwall may keep until Whitsuntide...........'
Norman king of England, William the Conqueror. All events falling within this period would have occurred at least a century before Matthew's birth and at a time when England was 'Anglo-Saxon'. Cultural as well as chronological factors would have forged the historical distance that Matthew perceived.

Colourful, robust and larger than life, Brother Matthew adorns the thirteenth century as once he adorned, with quill and ink, the pages of his manuscripts. He was a man of many talents. An imaginative artist whose technique paid homage to an Anglo-Saxon outline style of art, he could piously portray Christ and the Virgin drifting upon heavenly clouds, whilst devoting unwholesome attention to the cannibalism of the Tartars and atrocities committed in the reign of John.

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Similarly, the solidly depicted elephant of Nero Di is a world apart from the delicate and flighty king Offa who heads folio 2r of the same manuscript. A total of two hundred and ninety-nine illustrated shields testify to his passion for heraldry and Walsingham believed him to have been a goldsmith. Perceptive cartographer, his maps of Britain were precocious in their North/South orientation and displayed an astounding accuracy of coastline, topography and scale. He was an avid natural scientist, noting the first arrivals on English soil of the elephant, the buffalo and the crossbill and his fascination with earth science led him into analysis of the subterranean mechanics of earthquakes.

11 B.L. Cotton MS. Nero D i, f.168r.

These shields occupy the margins of the Chronica Maiora (CCCC 26 and 16), Historia Anglorum (B.L. Royal MS.14 c vii), Abbreviatio Chronicorum (B.L. Cotton MS. Claudius D vi), Flores Historiarum (Manchester, Chetham's Library, MS.6712) and Liber Additamentorum (B.L. Cotton MS. Nero D i). These texts will be dated and described below. For a short account of Matthew's interest in heraldry see Vaughan, Matthew Paris, pp.250-253. See also O.Göschen, 'Wappen aus den Werken des Matthias von Paris', Vierteljahrschrift für Heraldik, Sphragistik und Genealogie, ii (Berlin, 1881), 109-118 and F.Hauptmann, 'Die Wappen in der Historia Minor der Matthäus Parisiensis' in Jahrbuch der K.K. Heraldischen Gesellschaft, xix (1909), 20-54. Thomas Walsingham is sole witness to Matthew's metal-working skills: GA i. 395 - 'Inerat ei tanta subtilitas in auro et argento, caeteroque metallo, in sculpendo et in picturis depingendo, ut nullum post se in Latino orbe creditur reliquisse secundum'. See C.C. Oman 'The Goldsmiths of St Albans Abbey During the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society (1932), pp.81-82.


14 CM v. 489, records Louis IX's presentation of an elephant to Henry III in February 1255. Drawings of the elephant, which he made from life, found their way into the Liber Additamentorum (f.168v) and into CCCC 16, ff. iv rv. He wrote a short tract to accompany the drawings. Ibid. v. 254-255, tells of an invasion of birds into the abbey orchard, 'Habebant autem partes rostri cancellatas, per quas poma quasi forcipe vel cultello dividenebant.' Matthew describes the buffaloes sent to earl Richard of Cornwall under the Chronica's annual for 1252; Ibid. v. 275 - 'Eodem quoque anno in Quadragesima, missi sunt comiti Ricardo de partibus transmarinis bubali, pars vero sexus masculini, pars feminini, ut in his partibus Occidentaliibus ipsa animalia non prius hic visa multiplicantur.' An earthquake in the Chilterns apparently
His obsession with the weather, to which he frequently alludes in the *Chronica*, is famously English and his dabblings in astronomy produced a diagram of a parhelion seen in the sky on the 8th March 1233 and diagrams of comets, the solar system, the phases of the moon, the path of the sun and lunar and solar eclipses. Yet the rapacious hunger for knowledge of this thirteenth-century polymath remained unappeased. Throughout his forty-two years in the monastery of St Albans he completed four lengthy annalistic works, three Latin and four Anglo-Norman saints' lives, one domestic history, one cartulary and a collection of fortune-telling tracts. His hand is to be found in eighteen St Albans manuscripts.

A man of larger than life achievements, he possessed opinions to match. Pope and king were the two millstones between which the English church, that

15 See for instance Matthew's account of the thunderbolt that struck the queen's bedroom in 1251 *CM* v. 263-264 and the less dramatic account of a wet summer in 1240 *ibid.* iv. 80. Matthew's interest in the weather also produced the two wind roses of the *Liber Additamentorum* which are discussed in E.G.R. Taylor, 'The *De Ventis* of Matthew Paris' in *Imago Mundi* ii (1937), 22-26. The diagram of the parhelion and notes concerning it occur on folio 185r of the *Liber Additamentorum*, although Vaughan observed its essential inaccuracy; *Matthew Paris*, p.254. Matthew's other astronomical diagrams are included amongst the twenty three with which he illustrated a copy of the *Dragmaticon Philosophiae* of William of Conches (1080-1145) extant as part ii of CCC 385. A beautifully drawn comet complete with tail and gold-leaved nucleus decorates the margin of CCC 16, f.124v.

16 Matthew's works will be listed and considered below. The manuscripts which contain his hand are CCC 26 and 16 and 385, Cambridge, University Library MS. Dd ii 78, Manchester, Chetham's Library MS. 6712, B.L. Cotton MSS. Nero D i, Nero D v, Claudius D vi, Vespasian B xii, Vitellius A xx, Julius D vii, Royal MSS.14 C vii, 13 D v, 13 E vi, 4 D vii, Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS. 2, Bodleian Library, Ashmole MS. 304 and Dublin, Trinity College MS. 177; see R. Vaughan, 'The Handwriting of Matthew Paris', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, i (1949-1953), 376-394.
vineyard without a wall, was ground into subjection. 17 He condemned the Roman court, basking in 'the stench of its foul smoke', for its fickleness and insatiable cupidity. 18 Its legates were simoniacl usurers, plunderers of revenues and thirsters for money. 19 The king he considered 'fox-like' in his cunning and a 'wasteful squanderer' of money whose servants indulged in 'draining the little wells of the needy with the drawbuck of their cupidity that by the drops of those in want, the sea of those living in abundance might be increased'. 20 On the one hand, Matthew could delight in recalling Hubert de Burgh's labelling of the king as 'squint-eyed, silly and impotent', 'more a woman than a man'. 21 On the other hand, he could liken him to Merlin's lynx that 'penetrates all things with its eye'. 22 The Poitevins were 'fickle as a weathercock', the Tartars, 'monstrous and inhuman cannibals', the Jews were false coiners and forgers of seals and the Friars were 'of insolent bearing'. 23 The crusaders were like a wall without cement and the Hospitallers and Templars hid wolfish treacheries under sheep's clothing. 24 Individuals fared no better. The bishop of Lincoln was 'a hammer

17 The metaphor of the millstone occurs for example at CM v. 39 and 182.

18 The quotation is culled from J.A. Giles's translation of the Chronica Maiora; Matthew Paris's English History, 3 vols. (London, 1852-1854), ii. 48. For references to the greed of the Roman court see CM iii. 374, 525 and iv. 419, 536 and Giles, English History i. 38, 161 and ii. 55, 176. Matthew believed that in 1241 '...the insatiable cupidity of the Roman court grew to such an extent, confounding right with wrong, that laying aside all modesty, like a common brazen-faced strumpet, exposed for lure to everyone, it considered usury as but a trivial offense, and simony as no crime at all...'; CM iv. 100 and Giles, English History, i. 332.

19 CM iii. 483, Giles, English History, i. 127.

20 CM iii. 495; ibid. v. 283-284; ibid. iv. 426-427, Giles, English History, i. 165; ii. 483, 61.

21 CM iii. 618-619, Giles, English History, i. 238.

22 CM iv. 511, Giles, English History, i. 135.

23 CM iv. 253; ibid. iii. 488; ibid. v. 114-115; ibid. iv. 516, Giles, English History, i. 454, 131; ii. 340, 138.

24 CM iii. 615; ibid. iv. 291, Giles, English History, i. 235, 484.
and cruel persecutor of the religious men of his diocese' and he squeezed the breasts of religious females to check for debauchery. Moreover, Matthew's highly sensitive nostrils wrinkled at the 'sulphureous stench of infamy and scandal' which arose from the 'enormous excesses' committed by Boniface of Savoy. Frederick II, 'the greatest of earthly princes, the wonder of the world and the regulator of its proceedings', was spared the venomous ink that flowed from Matthew's pen, although the latter could record with some interest the insults that Cardinal Reimer hurled at that 'raging dragon', that 'roaring lion', that 'new Pilate'. Matthew was remarkably respectful when speaking of women. He admired the chaste lives of Margaret Biseth and Cecilia of Sandford, the manly strength of Blanche, mother of Louis IX and Isabella, countess of Arundel. and the learning of Katerina of Athens. Yet he could not resist a comment upon 'the singularly immense size' of the countess of Béarn. Matthew's posthumous fame rested upon this vivacity of word and deed. He is mentioned by a thirteenth-century monk of Ramsey and, in the next century, by Thomas Wykes and the author of the Book of Hyde. Thomas Walsingham praised this 'religiosus monachus incomparabilis cronographus et pictor peroptimus' on three separate occasions, in his Gestab Abbatum, Liber

25 CM iii. 528; ibid. v. 226-227, Giles, English History, i. 163; ii. 435.
26 CM v. 188, Giles, English History, ii. 402.
27 CM v. 190, 61-67 and Giles, English History, ii. 404, 298-301.
28 CM iv. 200; ibid. v. 235-236; ibid. iv. 111; ibid. v. 260; ibid., v. 286-287, Giles, English History, i. 412; ibid., ii. 440-441; ibid., i. 340; ibid., ii. 462; ibid., ii. 528-529; ibid., ii. 485.
29 CM iv. 224: '...quaedam mulier singulariter monstruosa et praegrossitudine prodigiosa.' Giles, English History, i. 431.
Benefactorum, and in the tract De Fundatione et Meritis Monasterii Sancti Albani. 31 On the 9th of August 1569, Sir William Cecil, chief minister to Elizabeth I praised the works of Matthew Paris, in a letter to Archbishop Matthew Parker, and asked to borrow a copy of them for a week or so. 32 On the 29th of July 1993, Matthew received a four-column spread in the Times, written by his twentieth-century namesake Matthew Parris. 33 His works have been continued or edited in every century down to the present, bar the fifteenth and eighteenth. The Gesta was copied and continued to the end of the fourteenth century, the Chronica was continued into the fifteenth-century and the Flores entered general circulation so that over nineteenth manuscripts of the work are now extant. 34 Archbishop Parker edited the Flores in 1567 and the Chronica in 1571. 35 Wats reedited the latter work in 1640, alongside the Vitae Offarum, the Gesta Abbatum and Liber Additamentorum. 36 The Chronica, the Flores, the Historia, the Abbreviatio, the Gesta and the Liber were edited for the Rolls Series in the nineteenth century. 37 In the same century the Chronica

32 B.L. Lansdowne MS. xi. f.138.
33 Matthew Parris, 'Meet the Other Matthew Paris' in The Times, Thursday July 29 1993, p.36.
35 M.Parker (ed.), Flores Historiarum Matthaei Westmonasterii Monachi... (London, 1567) and M.Parker (ed.), Matthei Paris Monachi Albanensis Historia Major... (London, 1571).
36 W. Wats (ed.), Matthei Paris Monachi Albanensis Angli Historia Major... (London, 1640), Vitae Duorum Offarum... et Viginti Trium Abbatum Sancti Albani... (London, 1639), (henceforth 'Wats') and Additamenta, (London, 1639).
37 Luard’s Chronica is cited in full above. H.T.Riley, Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani 3 vols. (RS, 1867-1869) [henceforth G4]. F.Madden (ed.), Flores Historiarum, 3 vols. (RS, 1890), [henceforth FH], Historia Anglorum 3 vols. (RS, 1866-1889) [henceforth HA], Abbreviatio Chronicorum in Historia Anglorum, pp.159-348, [henceforth AC]. The Liber was edited as volume six of Luard's Chronica [henceforth LA].

8
was translated into French and English and the *Flores* into English alone. The twentieth century has seen editions of the *Vie de Seint Auban*, the *Vie de Seint Thomas de Cantorbery*, the *Vie de Seint Edmond*, the Estoire, the *Vitae Duorum Offarum* and translations of excerpts from the *Chronica*. This study has been borne of a desire to probe the mentality of one of history's 'great men'.

There is a great deal more to learn about Matthew Paris, for study of him has suffered a relative imbalance. He is valued primarily as the chronicler of his own age, a journalist whose column covered contemporary home and world affairs ranging from the financial exigencies of Henry III, to the frantic globe-trottings of Frederick II and the Tartars. He is neatly packed in the terminological wrappings of twentieth-century mass media as 'a medieval gossip columnist' and 'a tabloid monk, not a broadsheet monk'. 'Matthew Paris would have been a good reporter-gatherer of stories for the "other news" columns of bus-plunges in Peru and budgies sucked into hoovers'. Scholarship has created and reinforced this image. Articles focussing on Matthew's handling of contemporary figures and events, whether they be Villard de Honnecourt, Robert of Abingdon or

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40 R. McKitterick and Lida Lopes Cardozo, *Lasting Letters. An Inscription of the Abbots of St Albans* (Cambridge, 1992) and Parris, 'Meet the Other Matthew Paris'.

41 Parris, 'Meet the Other Matthew Paris'.

9
William Longspee, the Jews or the Tartars, the Paper Constitution or thirteenth-century 'culture', far outnumber those that seek to delineate his attitude to the distant past. Much has been said about Matthew's response to and opinion of the world around him. The length, depth and originality of the Chronica's annal, for 1235 to 1259, have dictated this scholarly bias.

Yet Matthew could not have worked harder to bequeath to posterity greater evidence of a lively and innovative interest in the distant past. One domestic chronicle, a Latin Life, an Anglo-Norman history in octosyllabic verse form, four genealogical chronicles, three heptarchic diagrams and interpolations in four annalistic works comprise the corpus of works upon which this study is based. The Gesta Abbatum is a domestic history of the abbey of St Albans from 793-1255, arranged according to the twenty-three abbacies which spanned the period beginning with abbot Willegod (793-797) and ending with John of Hertford (1235-1263). The autograph copy of the work is extant in B.L. Cotton MS


43 Throughout this study reference will be made to the 1644 reprint of William Wats's edition of the Gesta (entitled Vitae Viginti Trium Abbatum Sancti Albani and abridged here as 'Wats' for this has been the most easily accessible to me in Durham's Chapter Library. All references to Wats Vitae will be followed by a reference to Riley's edition of the Gesta for the Rolls Series, abridged as 'GA'. The lives attributable to Matthew occur at GA i. 3-324. Although Riley's edition is based on Thomas Walsingham's transcription and continuation of the Gesta in B.L. Cotton MS. Claudius E iv, the early vitae follow closely those of Matthew's autograph manuscript, B.L. Cotton MS. Nero D i. Wats's edition was based upon Matthew's autograph
Nero D i. The first section, ending midway through the account of the abbacy of John of Hertford, was penned some time before 1250 for the Historia, begun in this year, makes reference to it on five occasions. The remaining section was compiled in 1255 for, with reference to the time of John of Hertford, Matthew wrote. 'A tempore, dico, sue creationis usque in annum sue prelationis vicesimum, quo, scilicet, hec pagina a fratre Mattheo scripta est Parisiens, qui de futuris non presumit diffinire. The Vitae Duorum Offarum postdates the Gesta to which it makes reference and in the same reference implies its own completion in the year 1250: 'Gesta quoque abbatum omnium qui a tempore regis Offani fundatoris ecclesie sancti Albani in eadem ecclesia extiterunt, usque ad annum gratiae millesimum ducentesmum quinquagesimum, similiter in presenti volumine denotantur'. The Anglo-Norman Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei, is extant only as a non autograph copy or adaptation of the prototype in Cambridge University Library MS. Ee iii 59, produced some time in the 1250s.

although it possesses the disadvantages of inaccessibility and numerous errors for which Wats charitably declared his amanuensis responsible.

44 ff.30r-62r and 63v-68v.
45 HA i. 23, 228, 276, 291; ibid., ii. 55.
46 Wats, p.94 (GA i. 324).
47 B.L. Nero D i, ff.2-26. Wats, p.20. I have accepted Vaughan's argument that the Vitae was the work of Matthew and that he employed Roger of Wendover's Flores as copied into his own autograph Chronica (CCCC 26 and 16) as his source; Matthew Paris, pp.43-48. Theopold was the first to attribute the work to Matthew; Kritische Untersuchungen über die Quellen zur Angelsachsischen Geschichte des Achten Jahrhunderts, (Lwoff, 1872), pp.112ff. Luard considered the author of the Vitae to have been a St Albans monk writing towards the end of the twelfth-century; CM i. lxix-lxxx and xxxii-xxxiii. E. Rickert agreed with him, 'The Old English Offa Saga', Modern Philology ii (1904-1905), 29-76 and 321-376, 30 and n.5. Both proposed abbot John de Cella as author; CM i. xxxi-xxxii and Rickert, 'Old English Offa Saga', p.39. R.M. Wilson shared their opinions; The Lost Literature of Medieval England, (London, 1952), pp.10-11.

The work, based on Ailred of Rievaulx's *Vitae Sancti Aedwardi Confessoris* and the *De Genealogia Regum Anglorum*, is popularly attributed to Matthew who probably wrote it at some point within the period 1236-1245. Many of Matthew's thoughts about the past materialized in the form of interpolations into his annalistic works: the *Chronica Maiora* was begun in the 1240s and had been compiled as far as its annal for 1250 by February 1251. The *Historia* of B.L. Royal MS.14 C vii is a copy and abridgement of the *Chronica* as far as the annal for 1253 which was begun in 1250 and completed in around 1255. The *Abbreviatio Chronicorum*, an abridgement of the *Chronica* and *Historia*


49 M.R. James was the first to attribute the work to Matthew: *Estoire de Seint Aedward Le Rei* (Roxburghe Club, 1920), pp.17-28. Vaughan upheld this opinion in *Matthew Paris*, pp.169-181 as did G.Henderson, 'Studies in English Manuscript Illumination', p.79. Recent scholars have favoured his authorship of the work: Wallace, *Estoire*, pp.xvii-xxi and Binski, *Reflections*, pp.338-339. N.Morgan argues, however, that the poet of the *Vie de Seint Thomas de Cantorbery* and the *Estoire* was probably not connected with St Albans 'Matthew Paris, St Albans', p.95. H.R.Luard in *Lives of Edward*, pp.x-xi and R. Fritz in *Über Verfasser und Quellen der Altfranzösischen Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei* (Heidelberg, 1910), pp.15-19 argued that the author was probably a monk of Westminster. The work was attributed by J.C.Russell to Henry d'Avranches on the basis of a reference in the Liberate rolls of 1244-1245: a certain Henry the Versifier was paid ten pounds for his writing of the Lives of Saints Edward and George. Cited in Wallace, *Estoire*, p.xix, n.21. Wallace dated the work to 1236-1245: *Estoire*, p.xxii. Luard favoured the year 1245, the occasion of the restoration of the abbey church: *Lives of Edward the Confessor*, pp.xi-xii. M.R.James suggests that the work was begun around 1241 when Edward had made a new shrine for the relics of St Edward: *Estoire*, p.17. Vaughan dates it to 'fairly soon after 1240': *Matthew Paris*, p.178. N.Morgan has recently suggested a date as late as around 1250-1255: 'Matthew Paris, St Albans', p.95, although Binski claims that evidence for so late a date is lacking: 'Abbot Berkyng's Tapestries and Matthew Paris's Life of St Edward the Confessor', *Archaeologia*, cix (1991), 85-100, 95. See also Binski, 'Reflections', pp.339-340. Detailed consideration will not be lent to the *Vie de Seint Auban* because its subject falls outside the chronological timespan of this thesis and because it is almost solely hagiographical.


51 Ibid., pp.61-63. The *Historia* abridges the autograph manuscripts of the *Chronica*, CCCC 26 and 16. It also makes occasional use of Roger's *Flores* and the epitome of the *Chronica* in B.L. Cotton MS. Nero D v, part ii.
dateable to 1255, covers the years 1000-1255.\textsuperscript{52} The \textit{Flores}, is another abridgement of the \textit{Chronica} although it ends with the year 1249.\textsuperscript{53} Its first book, extending as far as 1066, is dateable to 1240-45 and the second book was competed in around 1250-1252.\textsuperscript{54} In addition, Matthew often drew the past in the form of vertically arranged genealogical chronicles strung together by medallion portraits of kings of old. The second flyleaf of CCCC 16 harbours just such a chronicle beginning with Brutus and ending with Henry III. Two incomplete genealogies occupy folios 10v-11v of B.L. Cotton MS. Claudius D vi. Both Claudius MS. D vi and Royal MS. 14 C vii contain wholly pictorial genealogical chronicles, both ending with Henry III but the first beginning with Brutus and the second with William the Conqueror.\textsuperscript{55} Circular heptarchic diagrams, capturing on the page the complexities of Anglo-Saxon political dynamics, are to be found in both Claudius D vi and CCCC 26.\textsuperscript{56} Matthew's communication of the distant past assumes a variety of shapes and guises.

\textsuperscript{52} Vaughan, \textit{Matthew Paris}, pp. 113-114.

\textsuperscript{53} The two manuscripts of the \textit{Flores} from which all others are derived are Manchester, Chetham's Library MS.6712 and Eton College MS. 123. According to Vaughan, they were based on the common exemplar 'ChE', \textit{Matthew Paris}, pp. 93-99. In using Luard's edition of the \textit{Flores} I have ignored passages found in the Eton manuscript but not in the Chetham manuscript since Vaughan suggests that these were additions in the former rather than omissions from the latter. They are therefore likely to have been absent from \textit{Che:Matthew Paris}, pp. 99-100. F. Madden was the first to attribute the \textit{Flores} to Matthew and he did so on the basis of handwriting; \textit{HA I}, pp.xix-xxxviii. Folios 173v-202v of Manchester, Chetham's Library MS. 6712 are in Matthew's own hand. Galbraith came to a similar conclusion concerning the authorship of this work; V. Galbraith, \textit{Roger Wendover and Matthew Paris} (Glasgow, 1944), p. 31 and Appendix. Vaughan considered the Flores to be the the work of Matthew as far as the annal for 1249: \textit{Matthew Paris}, pp. 39-41.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., pp. 102-103.

\textsuperscript{55} Claudius MS. D vi, ff.6r-9v and Royal MS. 13 ff.8v-9r.

\textsuperscript{56} Claudius MS. D vi ff.5v, 10v and CCCC 26 f.iv v.
In the degree of his interest in the distant past and in the variety of ways in which he expressed that interest, Matthew was unique within St Albans and within the thirteenth century at large. Monks of the abbey in the century and a half preceding Matthew's productive years have left little evidence of a fascination with earlier periods of history. Of the sixty-five extant manuscripts that were produced at the abbey during the period 1066-1235, only ten contain material of a historical nature. CCCC 290, an early twelfth-century collection of genealogies, annals and a chronicle relating to Merovingian and Carolingian history and Royal MS.13 D v, an early thirteenth-century copy of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Britonum Regum*, Gildas's *De Excidio*, William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum* and extracts of Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum*, are the two most noteworthy examples. Other historical authors represented in the manuscripts of this period include Eusebius, Bede, Cassiodorus, and Peter Comestor and rythmic poems in praise of Alban, Cuthbert and Edward the Confessor are to be found in the twelfth-century St Albans manuscript B.L. Arundel MS. 201. In a century of renaissance, St Albans was not entirely a scholastic wasteland for it devoted considerable attention to the writing of *Passio*. William of St Albans wrote his *Passio Albani* around the middle years of the twelfth century although his claims to have translated a book written in England in the year 590 must be regarded with some suspicion. By the turn of the century Ralph of Dunstable had versified


58 Works of Eusebius and Bede are to be found in B.L. Royal MSS. 13 B v and 12 F ii. Cassiodorus and Comestor are represented in Cambridge, Trinity College O.7.13 (1341) and Royal MS. 4 D vii. The rythmic poems occur at ff.44-97 of Arundel 201.

William's prose for his *Vita Sancti Albani*, extant in B.L. Cotton MS. Julius D iii. An Anglo-Norman *Vie de Thomas Becket*, attributable to a certain monk Benedict and dateable to 1184, translated and turned into verse a lost life by Robert of Cricklade. Nicholas of St Albans, who became abbot of Malmesbury from 1183-1187 penned a *Passio Sancti Albani*. His contemporary, Walter the Chanter compiled the *Indiculus* or a catalogue of the abbey library, extracts of which were printed by Bale. So whilst twelfth-century St Albans was 'au fait' with its saints, it does not appear to have sustained any interest in the writing of early history. Matthew had not entered upon a rich heritage of scholarship on the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman pasts, although he made the best of what he had for rubrics and marginal notes in his hand accompany the texts of Royal MSS. 13 D v and 4 D vii.

Thirteenth-century century St Albans effected some improvement in this state of affairs. Roger Wendover's compilation of the early annals of the *Flores* entailed extensive familiarity with and the amalgamation of a host of reputable twelfth-

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61 On Benedict see *Manuscripts*, p.68.

62 References to Nicholas are to be found in Thomson, *Manuscripts*, i. 66-67, M.H. Marshall, 'Thirteenth-Century Culture', p.471. This is probably the Nicholas who was in the running for the abbacy of Bury St Edmunds in the time of Jocelin of Brakelond but who was struck off the list for being an 'alien'; H.E. Butler (ed.), *The Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond* (Nelson Medieval Texts, 1949), p.22.


century sources such as Florence of Worcester's *Chronicon ex Chronicis*, William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum*, Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum*, Simeon of Durham's *Historia Regum* and *Historia Dunelmensis Ecclesii*, the *De Primo Saxonibus Adventu* and the works of Ailred of Rievaulx. He also made use of the eleventh-century works of William of Jumièges and Marianus Scotus, the seventh- and eighth-century *Liber Pontificalis* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. On occasion he is responsible for incorporating into his early annals material undocumented elsewhere. His *Flores*, for example, makes reference to a previously unknown King Redwulf of Northumbria whose historicity was subsequently proven by the excavation of coinage bearing his name. His claim that the conspiracy of Aethelbald, Alstan bishop of Sherbourne and Eanwulf, earl of Somerset had been partly due to the fact that Alfred had been crowned in Rome is also new. A little later in the century, at some point during the decade 1247 and 1257, John of Wallingford, as infirmer of the abbey, compiled a historical miscellany comprising tracts on the origins of Christianity and the invention and translation of St Alban, a genealogical chronicle, heptarchic diagram, extracts from Henry of Huntingdon on the Anglo-Saxon heptarchic system and a list of the sons of Brutus and kings of Wessex. By and large he had copied and abridged this material himself from


67 *Flores*, i. 290-291.

68 B.L. Cotton MS. Julius D vii, ff.10r-33r.
works of Matthew, with whom he was friendly. The miscellany does however preserve a remarkable chronicle for which neither John nor Matthew could claim credit. The anonymous, autograph chronicle, palaeographically dateable to around 1220, was composed either at the abbey itself or at the cell of Wallingford, for it contains an account of the invention of St Alban by King Offa of Mercia. It shares with Roger Wendover its use of a rare combination of sources, William of Jumieges's *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, the *De Primo Saxonibus Adventu* and certain Northumbrian annals. Yet its remarkable lies in the precociously critical stance that it adopts in its reconstruction of the Anglo-Saxon past. It admitted uncertainty with regards the regnal dates of the early ninth-century kings of England; '...I have found the reckoning of others up to the time of Alfred, the fourth son of Ethelwulf vague and uncertain, and I myself have left up to this time many things uncertain in my reckoning of numbers.' It noted the various alternative names by which St Edmund was referred to in the sources and expressed fear that 'the difference respecting the names may cause doubt'. Moreover it criticized Geoffrey of Monmouth for claiming that Athelstan was the first Anglo-Saxon king to carry the sceptre.

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69 Matthew's portrait of John of Wallingford on f.42v of Julius D vii testifies to the friendship between the two men.


71 Vaughan, 'Chronicle Attributed to John of Wallingford', pp.ix and xi.

72 Ibid., p.xi.

73 Ibid., p.11 and Stevenson, *Church Historians*, p. 530.


Its well-considered doubts and cynicisms, are accompanied by the presentation of information undocumented elsewhere. It claims, for instance, that Rollo travelled to England to aid Alfred against the Danes, that Edward the Elder destroyed the Danish fort of Wistoche in Mercia and that Edward the Martyr had presented his mother in law with the whole of Dorset as a dowry from his father.\textsuperscript{76} The contents of a thirteenth-century Dunstable miscellany, B.L. Cotton MS. Vitellius A xx presented by Prior Ralph to the cell of Tynemouth, whilst scarcely as impressive, bear similar witness to a basic interest in figures and events of long past in the cells of St Albans. It contains two chronicles beginning with Christ and Brutus, a Life of Warmund, king of the East Angles, a list of the bishops of Lindisfarne and fragments of histories of Rollo, Edgar, Edward the Confessor and William the Conqueror. So the pace of historical writing at St Albans and its cells did quicken in the early thirteenth century. Yet it is highly significant that Matthew had had a hand in the compilations of both Vitellius A xx and Julius D vii. The former contains abridgement of his Chronica as far as 1246 and the Gesta Abbatum and it preserves examples of his handwriting.\textsuperscript{77} For the Julius miscellany, compiled largely from his manuscripts, he drew the picture of John of Wallingford and the map of Britain which John had folded in four, filling in the blank openings with notes on the heptarchy and zodiac.\textsuperscript{78} The flourishing of historical activity at the abbey's cells in these years owed much to the inspiration of Matthew whose poetic and biographical works on the Anglo-Saxon past remained unparalleled at the abbey for the rest of the century. And

\textsuperscript{76} Vaughan, 'Chronicle Attributed to John of Wallingford', pp.34-35, 39, 56 and Stevenson, Church Historians, pp.542-543, 544 and 556.

\textsuperscript{77} ff.77r, 81r, 88r, 93v, 103r. The abridgement of the Chronica extends as far as 1246.

\textsuperscript{78} f.42v. The map appears on ff.50-53 and has been bound separately in the British Library.
they were unparalleled within thirteenth-century England as a whole. This was the hey day of the monastic annal. The seeding of monastic chronicles at places such as Southwark, Dunstable, Merton, Worcester, Bury St Edmunds, Winchester, Osney, Waverley and Barnwell, curtailed the influence of romance historiography and signalled the decline of biography and domestic history as distinct genres. There are isolated examples of conscious endeavour to study the past for the past's sake. In around 1234, Bury St Edmunds produced an architectural tract and an account of the abbey's foundation which oozed antiquarianism in harking back to the alleged origins of the abbey in the days of Bede. 79 In the early years of the century Thomas of Marlborough revised and continued the late eleventh-century Evesham chronicle. 80 At the tail end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth Bartholomew Cotton and Peter Langtoft narrated the course of English history preceding the Conquest. 81 The first made almost exclusive use of Henry of Huntingdon's Historia Anglorum. The second drew heavily upon the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Yet these are the exceptions in a century obsessed with itself. Luard considered the thirteenth-century an 'unhistorical age'. 82 Galbraith painted a barren picture of the historical endeavours of this era and Beryl Smalley lamented the absence of historiographical experimentation. 83 Matthew's works of history were an

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80 Ibid., pp.89, 113.

81 Ibid., pp.444-448 and 476-477.

82 CM i. Ixxvi.

oasis in a historiographical desert. For this reason alone they are worthy of study.

It is only within the last decade or so that scholarship on Matthew's attitude to the past has gained pace. Six articles, four theses and one book have touched to a lesser or greater degree upon this topic and the *Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei* was edited by K.Y.Wallace in 1983 who provided useful comment upon the work's historiographical context, its date, authorship, sources and versification. Some four years later, in 1987, Suzanne Lewis considered Matthew's impression and artistic portrayals of past figures such as Mohammed, Alfred, Offa and Cnut in a book dealing primarily with Matthew's illustrations to his autograph *Chronica*. A year later, Nigel Morgan claimed that the poet of the *Estoire* had no direct association with St Albans and that his identification with Matthew Paris was unproven. 84 The 1990s have seen a surge of interest in Matthew's vision of the past. Andrew Todd excavated the literary and documentary substrata of the *Vitae Duorum Offarum* and analysed in depth its portrayals of the foundation of St Albans, the murder of King Ethelbert of East Anglia and the Carolingian kings. 85 Todd's work was the first ever to focus exclusively on this text. Ben Gordon-Taylor in his study of twelfth-century hagiographical writing on Saints Alban and Amphibalus, made use in passing of the early lives of Matthew's *Gesta*. 86 Martin Kauffmann surveyed art historical aspects of Matthew's lives of Alban, Edward the Confessor and Thomas Becket, considering the circumstances of their production, their relation to traditions of

84 These three works are cited in full above.


iconography, illustrated hagiography and apocalypse narrative and the complex interactions of text, picture and page. Furthermore, he placed the Lives within the context of thirteenth-century political discourse. 87 Simon Keynes briefly considered Matthew's contribution to the cult of King Offa that burgeoned in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. 88 In two articles written in 1990 and 1991 Paul Binski reclaimed for Matthew authorship of the Estoire and gauged the degree to which the work was a mirror of thirteenth-century court culture and contemporary attitudes to and ideals of kingship. 89 The Edward of the Estoire, holy and virtuous in his government, staunch in his repulsion of aliens, wise in his dependence on baronial counsel and practising the highest form of cooperative and conciliatory kingship, was everything that might have been wished for in Henry III. Pamela Taylor, in a forthcoming article, makes use, in passing, of the information that Matthew supplied on the abbey's early endowment. 90

The century and a quarter preceding 1983 had produced two editions, two theses, two articles, one pamphlet and of course the groundbreaking Matthew Paris by Richard Vaughan. 91 In the 1860s H.T.Riley edited the Gesta Abbatum


90 P.Taylor, 'The Early St Albans Endowment and its Chroniclers' (forthcoming). I am grateful to Dr Taylor for allowing me to read her article in advance of publication. My forthcoming article on 'Matthew Paris and the Norman Conquest' will contribute to an understanding of Matthew's vision of the distant past.

for the Rolls Series although he based his edition on Thomas Walsingham's revision and continuation of Matthew's work, extant in B.L. Cotton MS Claudius E iv. Luard's edition of the Estoire, published in 1858 was mercilessly savaged by R. Atkinson in 1873 in an article tactfully disguised as 'Strictures on Mr Luard's Edition of a French Poem On the Life of Edward the Confessor'.

Rudolf Fritz opted for construction rather than demolition in his study 'Über Verfasser und Quellen der Altfranzösischen Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei.' Sources for the Lives of the Offas were considered by Ludwig Theopold and Edith Rickert. The trouble is that neither Luard, Fritz nor Rickert realized at the time that they were furthering study of Matthew Paris for they assumed that the Estoire and the Vitae had been written by others. Theopold was first to propose Matthew as author if the Vitae and M.R. James was the first to claim for Matthew, authorship of the Estoire. Scholarship on Matthew's vision of the past in the hundred and sixteen years between 1867 and 1983 was thus patchy and frequently unconscious.

Matthew's conception and envisualisation of the distant past are the starting point of the present study and it is in this sense that the study differs from those listed above. Its focus is different. It does not come at Matthew from an earlier century; it does not ask, in the first instance, whether Matthew got it right or

92 R. Atkinson, 'Strictures on Mr Luard's Edition of a French Poem on the Life of Edward the Confessor', Hermathena, i (1873), 1-81. The editions of the Gesta and Estoire are cited in full above.

93 Published at Heidelberg in 1910.

94 L. Theopold, Kritische Untersuchungen and Rickert, 'Old English Offa Saga', cited in full above.

95 See above notes 47 and 49.

96 See above notes 47 and 49.
wrong and it does not gauge the value of his works for the study of the Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Norman pasts. Neither does it approach Matthew through one particular text. Rather than exploring the *Gesta*, the *Estoire* and the *Vitae* as examples of historical narrative, it plunders them for the building bricks with which Matthew constructed his vision of the eras they describe. The texts are the pathway and not the purpose; all three texts are examined, not as entities in themselves, but for the light that they shed upon Matthew's view of the past. However, some critical and textual analysis of the *Gesta* in particular has been necessary for previous detailed discussion of its authorship and contents is almost wholly lacking. In short, the novelty of this study lies in its attempt to fully comprehend the mentality of Matthew Paris, monk of St Albans by redressing the imbalance in popular portrayals of his attitudes and achievements. In fulfillment of this, it explores his view of a world past and his handling of historical perspective.

Chapter one confronts the problem of authorship that has, in the past, hindered critical handling of the early vitæ of the *Gesta*. The chapter questions prevalent assumptions that the early vitæ as far as abbot Robert, (1151-1166) are to be attributed to the twelfth-century Adam the Cellarer. Having collated the known details of Adam's life the chapter casts a cynical eye over the proposition that a man termed 'illiteratus' by the *Gesta* can have written the abbey's first domestic history whilst fulfilling the very different duties of the office of cellarer. Textual and palaeographical features of the *Gesta* in B.L. Cotton MS. Nero D i strongly suggest that Matthew was rather more responsible for the the portrait of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman St Albans in the early vitæ, than has previously been supposed. Chapter two takes a close look at the contents of the early vitæ of the *Gesta* as far as the vita of abbot Frederick, the last Anglo-Saxon abbot. It
tackles the vague and confused chronology of the early abbots of St Albans, assesses the historicity of the gesta attributed to each, and tracks the thematic threads with which Matthew bound together the accounts of these abbacies. Chapter three contemplates Matthew's handling of the reign of Offa of Mercia. How did Matthew regard Offa's military confrontation with Beornred, his elevation of the see of Lichfield to archiepiscopal status and his murder of King Ethelbert of East Anglia? What did Matthew make of Offa's alleged journey to Rome, his foundation of St Albans and his relations with Charlemagne? Chapter four considers the shape and form of the Anglo-Saxon heptarchy and the dynasty of Wessex in Matthew's historical imagination. How successfully did Matthew grapple with a period of history that began with a multitude of kingdoms and ended with the indomitable supremacy of one? How could he justify bestowing upon Alfred rather than Offa the title of 'protomonarchus anglie'? Matthew's impression of the Norman Conquest and the reign of the first Anglo-Norman king are considered in the final chapter, where his ambivalent attitude to the Conqueror and his grassroots sympathy with the English cause are considered against backgrounds of historiographical tradition and contemporary political mood.

This study dusts the finer historical sensitivities of Matthew Paris. In doing so it assesses the nature and depth of his historical vision, the extent of his dependence upon earlier writers, the degree to which his portrayal of history diverged from that forged by the primary evidence and the role that his contemporary situation played in creating that divergence. It considers his imaginative input and his enthusiasm for moulding the past. To Matthew the past was a foreign country and he did things differently there.
George Henderson once spoke of the uncanny ability of Matthew Paris "to attract to himself top flight works of art of unknown pedigree". If Matthew's corpus of artistic works once displayed the plump contours associated with a rich diet of benefit of the doubt his endeavours as a historian of the distant past have always suffered the slimming effects of pervasive cynicism. The *Vitae Offarum* was rescued from the hands of the ever conscientious Anonymous Twelfth-Century Author by Richard Vaughan in 1958, and only in the last decade has analysis of Matthew's reworking of Ailred's *Vita Edwardi Regis* gained pace. Similarly, the historical material that he interpolated into the early annals of Roger Wendover's *Flores Historiarum* has remained largely unexplored beneath the rubble of assumptions that Matthew was at best the conscientious chronicler of the reign of Henry III. This state of affairs must be remedied. Yet any conclusion concerning the nature and depth of Matthew's historical vision rests heavily upon the extent to which composition rather than compilation can be shown to underlie his works of early history. Neither his *Vitae Offarum* nor his *Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei* were pure transcriptions of preexisting works and are therefore rich sources in any consideration of Matthew's historical talents. His *Gesta Abbatum* 's failure to assume its rightful place in this list has resulted from nothing other than an ambiguous note on folio 1r of B.L. MS Nero D i, the earliest extant manuscript of the work which was penned by Matthew himself. This chapter addresses the problems of authorship.


2 See introduction, pp. 20-22.
surrounding the early vitae of the Gesta and gauges the degree to which Matthew can be held personally responsible for the vision of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman St Albans that they embrace.

In the top right hand corner of folio 30r (the first folio of the Gesta), in the small cursive hand of Matthew Paris appear the following words,

Secundum antiquum rotulum Bartholomei clerici cum domino Adam Cellararius diu fuerat serviens ei et ipsum rotulum sibi retinuit de scriptis suis hoc solum eligens.

According to the ancient roll of Bartholomew the clerk who was for a long while with Adam the Cellarer, serving him, and he retained for himself this roll from among his writings choosing this one alone.

Of inherent interest as a rare acknowledgement by Matthew of dependence on a source (he never acknowledged use of Roger's Flores) this curious and ambivalent note has spawned some debate concerning the authorship of Gesta's first eighteen vitae. H.R. Riley believed that the account of the earlier abbots in the Gesta was derived from an ancient roll either written by Adam or merely in his possession before its acquisition by Bartholomew. T.D. Hardy stated that the early portion of the work was undoubtedly derived from that of Adam the Cellarer if not compiled by him and to this same obedientary L.R.F Williams generously attributed the initiation of the tradition of historical writing at St Albans. Richard Vaughan claimed that Matthew "based at any rate the earlier

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3 G.A i. xiv-xy.

part of his *Gesta Abbatum* on an ancient roll" in keeping the medieval tradition of "continuing" extant works. His suggestion that Matthew began to be original with the abbacy of Simon rests upon his conclusion that Adam died in around 1167. Furthermore opinions vary as to the precise span of history covered by the mysterious 'rotulum'. Thomson declared that "the basis of the *Gesta Abbatum* to the end of the reign of abbot [Robert] Gorron in 1166 is described by Matthew Paris himself as the ancient roll". This is erroneous; Matthew does not inform us of the extent of his debt to the older work or the point at which his use of it begins and ends. Adopting a more conservative approach, Jenkins decided that the 'rotulus' probably constituted an account of occurrences within Adam's own lifetime and as recently as 1992 Rosamund McKitterick selected the *Gesta* 's account of the years 1140-1166 for attribution to Adam. Should it prove the case that Adam's roll was a work of contemporary history then Matthew becomes wholly responsible for reconstructing the history of the abbey of St Albans during the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman periods. Galbraith alone remained justifiably sceptical of Matthew's wholesale dependence upon the work of a twelfth-century predecessor; 'the suggestion that the *Gesta* embodies

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5 Vaughan, *Matthew Paris*, pp.182-184 and Vaughan (ed. and transl.), *Chronicles of Matthew Paris. Monastic Life in the Thirteenth Century*. (Gloucester and New York, 1984), pp.6-7. Pamela Taylor followed Vaughan's line in suggesting that, in the early part of the *vita*, Matthew was transmitting not creating. Her claim that Matthew himself said that most of his material up to the mid twelfth century came from a pre-existing roll, is unsubstantiated for Matthew is not that explicit, 'The Early St Albans Endowment and its Chroniclers', (forthcoming).


7 R.M. Thomson, *Manuscripts from StAlban's Abbey 1066-1235*, 2 vols (Woodbridge, 1982), i. 3. Thomson places the roll in the first half of the twelfth century but this need not necessarily be the case given that Adam died in the late 1160s or 70s; pp.41-42.

any considerable history by a preceding writer is unproven and unlikely.9

Problems surrounding the degree of Matthew's dependence on the roll and the
nature of the roll itself have never been systematically confronted. The early
vitaev have found themselves either plundered as though unequivocally the work
of Matthew Paris or rejected out of hand as the product of Adam. This chapter
aims to assess, on the basis of historical, archaeological, palaeographical and
textual evidence the degree to which Matthew employed compilative rather than
compositional techniques in his writing of the Gesta. Although conclusions can
never be definitive while the roll remains lost, it will be suggested that Matthew
is responsible for a great deal more of the text than is generally supposed.

A prevalent belief that plagiarism and a keen eye for prepackaged history
constituted the chief talents of the medieval historian has led many to prefer the
abilities of a shadowy anonymous predecessor than to acknowledge the
possibility of original composition in any instance. Unproven St Albans 'alumni'
have long inflicted dents on the historical armour of men as great as Roger
Wendover and Matthew Paris. Luard for instance, claimed that John de Cella
(1195-1214) wrote a compilation extending to 1189, that formed the basis of
Wendover's Flores Historiarum.10 Tenuously based upon an ambiguous note in
the Douce manuscript of the Flores, at the end of the annal for 1188, this

9 V.H. Galbraith, Roger Wendover and Matthew Paris (Glasgow, 1944), p.25. Edgar Wigram
also considered Adam's roll to have been a record of contemporary events; 'The Chapter House
at St Albans', Transactions of the St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and

10 CM i. xxxii; ibid. ii. x-xii; ibid. vii. ix-xi. Luard was supported in his conclusions by E.
Rickert also considered John de Cella responsible for the Vitae Offarum and the chronicle
attributed to John of Wallingford in Cotton MS. Julius D vii which she considered a rough
draft of the St Albans compilation.
proposition was convincingly exploded by Powicke. Similarly, although Pits
*De Illustribus Angliae Scriptoribus* of 1619 supplies the single extant reference
to 'a certain chronicle of English affairs', written in the year 1180, its alleged
author, Walter, precentor of St Albans has still received consideration as the
historian upon whose literary achievements those of Wendover and Paris were
based. Tenuous links between the works of these shadowy 'alumni' occupied
Williams who argued that Walter's chronicle 'probably amplified and updated the
work of Adam the Cellarer'. Ironically, such sustained attempt to root the
historiographical achievements of the thirteenth century in those of the twelfth
is, in part, a response to the overwhelming lack of evidence for historical activity

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11 Powicke, 'The Compilation of the *Chronica Maiora* by Matthew Paris', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, xx (1944), 147-158, 147-151. The note in Bodleian, Douce MS. 207 reads, 'Huc usque in lib. chronic. Johannis abbatis'. Opposite this there is a note in a later hand - 'usque hoc chronica Johannis abbatis et hic finis'. The debate proceeded as follows; Luard suggested that CCCC 26, the first volume of Matthew's *Chronica Maiora* had used a text independent of Roger Wendover's *Flores*. He noted that the manuscript closed with the annal for 1188, the point at which the note cited above occurred in Douce MS. 207 and he concluded that Matthew had used a chronicle written by abbot John de Cella that had also supplied the base text for Roger's *Flores*. Powicke, however, suggested that CCCC 26 was independent of the *Flores* only for the periods Creation to 231 and 1013-65. The manuscript's ending with the annal for 1188 he ascribed to mere convenience of quire division rather than dependence on a source ending in this year. Most importantly he believed that the note in Douce MS. 207 meant not that Abbot John de Cella had written a chronicle but that a manuscript making use of the *Flores* and ending in that year, most probably CCCC 26, was in the possession of an abbot John living around the time of Douce MS. 207's production, namely 1300. (Luard had considered Douce MS. 207 dateable to 1250) As candidates for the mysterious John he presented John of Berkhamstead (1290-1301) and John de Maryns (1302-1303). Nothing, he said, pointed to John de Cella as a chronicler and there was no evidence that Roger used or continued an earlier chronicle. He concluded that Roger deserved credit for the work by his name, at least from the annal for 1065 although he conceded that Roger may have used an earlier compilation for the annals from the Creation to 231 and 1012-1065. Galbraith agreed with Powicke; *Roger Wendover and Matthew Paris*, p. 16. Vaughan was non-committal; *Matthew Paris*, p. 23.

12 T. D. Hardy argued that Roger had based his *Flores* on a twelfth-century St Albans compilation, produced possibly by Walter, and extending as far as 1154 or perhaps 1188; *Descriptive Catalogue*, iii, xxxvi, n. 3. Especially Williams, *History of the Abbey of St Albans*, p. 80 and L. F. R. Williams, 'William the Chamberlain and Luton Church' in Notes and Documents, *EHR*, xxi (1913), 719-730, 720 n. 5. Both Madden and Powicke displayed due scepticism; *HA* i. xii and Powicke, *Compilation*, p. 149.

13 Williams, *History*, p. 80.
at one of England's most wealthy Benedictine monasteries, during the earlier century. Whilst the writing of a domestic history at the monastery in this period is feasible - this was after all the great century of house histories such as those of Abingdon, Ramsey and Ely - it cannot be taken for granted. The intellectual and literary leanings of twelfth century St Albans lend little credence to the notion that twelfth century St Albans must have produced its own domestic history. St Albans 'historical' flowering occurred in the thirteenth century rather than the twelfth and this makes it unique amongst English Benedictine houses.

Yet, who was Adam the Cellarer? The little that can be established of Adam's career is derived, in the main, from the Gesta itself. He was already a monk in the time of Abbot Geoffrey (1119-1146), the latter granting him the manor of Shephale for £4 12s. Circumspect and discreet, he was sent with his uncle Godfrey, to reform the monastery of Croyland. The Gesta implies that Godfrey was soon elected and created abbot. Richard Vaughan placed the journey of Adam and his uncle in the year 1138 on the basis of a reference in Cotton Vespasian B xi to the succession of Godfrey to the abbacy in that year following the deposition of Abbot Waldenus. The Gesta, however states that Robert, abbot of St Albans from 1151-1166, sent the pair to Croyland. This is no doubt

14 See the introduction for discussion of St Albans literary output in the twelfth century.

15 Pamela Taylor has argued that St Albans was backward in producing new hagiography; it never made use of an itinerant hagiographer and it does not appear to have produced its own hagiographical writing until William of St Albans lives of Alban and Amphibalus in the 1170s; The Early St Albans Endowment and its Chroniclers. It seems to have been similarly backward in its historical writing. Taylor's interesting suggestion that St Albans had felt no need to forge its charters and the documentation of its land holdings in the twelfth century may have meant that it felt no need either to produce its own house history. For house histories of this century usually aim at the authentification of an abbey's claims to land and privileges.

16 Watts, p.41 (GA i. 107).
an error, Matthew's misplacing of the event by roughly a decade probably stemmed from his ignorance of the year in which Godfrey became abbot. At Croyland, Godfrey caused the Rule to be observed and the house flourished inwardly in order and religion and outwardly in temporal affairs. Adam meanwhile set about improving the state of the monastery. Unable to remain hidden for long once the 'fragrance of his good repute' had reached abbot Robert, he found himself recalled to St Albans and appointed cellarer. This appointment entailed a great deal more than provision for the daily sustenance of the house. King Henry II's displeasure at the arrangement, in his absence, for a hearing concerning the bishop of Lincoln's episcopal authority over St Albans abbey, occasioned a diplomatic visit by Adam the Cellarer and the prior, a certain Dominus S. Commissioned with the task of appeasing the king's anger they persuaded him of the abbot's innocence on the grounds that Pope Alexander had summoned the hearing. They argued that the defendant (the abbot) could not displease the plaintiff (the bishop) and that, in any case, the judges were familiars of the bishop and thus suspected by Robert. Adam and Dominus S. promised that if the king were to emancipate their church from subjection to Lincoln they would do for him in life and in death, as much as they would have done for the founder of their church, King Offa. Evidently appeased by so attractive a bribe, Henry summoned Robert to London and demanded that he bring with him privileges old and new for examination. The two messengers notified the abbot and convent of events and expressed the fear that if anything in their privileges displeased the king, he would annul them. Adam thus played

17 Wats, pp.44-45 (GA i. 120-121). For the date of the deposition of Abbot Waldenus see W. Dugdale, Monasticon Anglicanum (London, 1819), p.101.

18 Wats, p.45 (GA i. 121).

19 Wats, p.45 (GA i. 145-146).
a crucial role in the abbey's quest for royal confirmation of the privileges granted it by Popes Celestine II and Adrian IV. The degree of responsibility attached to his position in the monastery is emphasized once again, upon the death of Robert in 1166; the abbey was confiscated by the justiciar Robert, earl of Leicester but Robert's possessions were consigned to the care of the prior, Adam the Cellarer and other brothers. 20 Adam died most probably during the abbacy of Simon (1166-1183). 21 He witnessed one charter dateable to this time that concerned an agreement between the abbot and Robert, son of Serlo, concerning land at Stanmere and Greneburga. 22 He was certainly dead by the time of Warin's decree that his anniversary be celebrated in the same manner as that of the abbots, with Psalms, Masses and provisioning of the poor. Preparations for the celebrations were to be lavish, the cellarer of the monks kitchen would provide all those things necessary for a splendid feast for the convent in the refectory. On this day the almoner and the monk's cellarer would feed one hundred paupers each. The church of Sudbury in Suffolk was to be set aside for this anniversary as well as for that of Adam's parents from whom the abbey had acquired the church. Adam is praised with endowing the monks kitchen with an annual rent of one hundred pounds and three marks less fourteen pence. 23 Papal bulls of Adrian IV and Alexander III dateable to 1156 and 1161 respectively go some way towards corroborating this for they confirm lands acquired by Adam for the monks'

20 Wats, p. 59 (GA i. 182).

21 Henry Fowler suggested that Adam had been present at the invention of St Amphibalus in 1178 thus explaining the Gesta's account of it, although his suggestion cannot be substantiated; 'The Benedictine Cell of Redbourn', Transactions of the St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society (1897), pp. 45-56, pp. 47-48.

22 B. L. Cotton MS. Otto D iii, f. 73r.

23 Wats, p. 64 (GA i. 206-207).
kitchen.  Matthew's account of the abbacy of William of Trumpington supplies three further references to Adam the Cellarer. The first mentions two candles that Adam had bequeathed to the abbey and that, in the time of William, had been placed towards the eastern side of the abbey. The second concerns the removal from above the great altar of an old beam (veterem trabem) that Adam had caused to be made and on which had been drawn the twelve apostles and patriarchs, a church and a synagogue. Third, the Gesta states that the corrody of Adam was to be given to a female recluse of St Michaels.

Three other manuscripts of later date mention Adam the Cellarer. The Liber Benefactorum, (B. L. Cotton MS. Nero D vii [henceforth LB], written in 1380 under the auspices of Thomas Walsingham, provides amongst other things, a brief account of the gifts bequeathed by each abbot to St Albans. Between the entries for Simon and Warin (the placing may be suggestive of the date of Adam's death), reference is made to Adam the Cellarer's expansion of the monks

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24 W. Holtzman, Papsturkunden in England iii. (Abhandlungen der Wissenschaften in Gottingen Philologische-Historische Klasse) (Gottingen, 1952), 238-239 (no. 101) and 276-278 (no. 135). The relevant section of no 101 reads as follows; 'Eapropter, dilecti in domino filii, vestris iustis precibus aures benivolae commodantes inferius annotatas possessiones, quas dilectus filius noster Adam Cellerarius pia sollicitudine adquisivit, vobis et per vos ipsi cenobio auctoritata sedis apostolice confirmamus. There follows an extremely detailed list of lands acquired by Adam and the names of the donors. No. 135 repeats a lot of the information contained in no. 101 and adds additional acquisitions to the list. The Gesta states that Adam played a role in the settlement between Robert Taillebois and Laurence abbot of Westminster over the manor of Aldenham; Wats, pp.47-48 (GA i. 134).

25 Wats, p.80 (GA i. 284).

26 Wats, p.81 (GA i. 287). It is possible that the inspiration for this stemmed from the shrine made during the abbacy of Richard that was gilded and worked in wood and that contained the relics of the twelve apostles and other saints; Wats, p.34 (GA i. 70).

27 Wats, p.81 (GA i. 305). Adam's memory survived the test of time for abbot Thomas de la Mare was to buy stone for his tomb in the late fourteenth century; GA iii. 389-390 - Thomas paid six and a half marks for stone for the tombs of Adam prior of Wittenham and Adam the Cellarer.
kitchen, by his gaining of an additional annual sum of one hundred pounds and three marks less fourteen denarii. Moreover, like the *Gesta*, it supplies the information that he made a beam, decorated with the twelve patriarchs and apostles analogous with synagogue and church, that he placed above the great altar.²⁸ Another manuscript compiled under the supervision of Walsingham in the last decade of the fourteenth century, B.L. Cotton MS. Claudius E iv, mentions Adam in a tract *De Fundatione et Meritis Monasterii Sancti Albani*. Adam is described as a Martha in worldly affairs and a Mary in contemplation. On account of his sanctity revealed through miracles, he had many admirers in this world so that his tomb was frequented by devoted people who claimed to have avoided the danger of tertian or quatarian malaria by the swallowing of dust collected from his sarcophagus.²⁹ In the same manuscript a tract entitled *De Subtractione Diversorum Onerum Obedientiaris Sancti Albani Pertinentium* details the reduction of the payments hitherto exacted from the various obedientaries of the monastery. It belongs to the time of Walsingham and was probably entered under his direction. Adam receives brief mention 'Item, de anniversario Adae Cellerarii quinque marcae. Coquinarius centum pauperes.'³⁰ He appears too in B.L. Harleian MS. 3775, a small quarto volume of the fifteenth century that contains the *Chronicon Rerum Gestarum in Monasterio Sancti Albani* (a domestic chronicle covering the years 1421-1431).³¹ A treatise written in around 1435 supplies Adam with the 'inappropriate' surname Lyons

²⁸ *LB*, f.16. Small sections of this manuscript are printed in Dugdale, *Monasticon*, pp.217-223 and the whole manuscript was transcribed by Henry Fowler in 1897, the unpublished handwritten version of which is in the Hertfordshire Record Office; HRO D/E Sa12.


³¹ Adam's roll might well have constituted this type of brief contemporary domestic chronicle.
and locates the site of his burial, 'prope ostium capituli'. Archaeological evidence supports this latter proposition. An excavation on the site of the medieval chapterhouse of St Albans in 1978, headed by Professor Martin Biddle uncovered the graves of many early abbots including Paul, Richard, Geoffrey, Ralph, Robert, Simon and Warin. Adam the Cellarer was found to be buried on the north side near the west door of the chapterhouse. The site itself, claims the Harleian treatise, was covered with a marble stone engraved with keys. The old stone had risen above the level of the pavement and had proved an obstacle to passers by. It was removed and laid aside although chippings from it, reduced to dust and drunk, were used to prevent various diseases.

The unifying feature of these few extant accounts of Adam the Cellarer is their adulatory tone. The Gesta praised his skills in managing the abbey's affairs and his diligence in matters relating to the kitchen. He was always, so the Gesta intimates, assured of special remembrance laden with blessing. He wholly

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32 Riley, Annales, i, Appendix D, 435. Its apparent knowledge of the burial sites of the abbots is all the more intriguing given that some two hundred years previously the Gesta had lamented the fact that the burial places of the early abbots had been forgotten through the carelessness of abbot Robert; Wats, p.59. (GA i. 183). The relevant section of the treatise is translated in R.Lloyd, An Account of the Altars, Monuments and Tombs, Existing in AD 1428 in St Albans Abbey (St Albans, 1873), pp.7-8. M.Biddle adapted this translation in McKitterick and Cardozo, Lasting Letters, p.23.


34 Riley, Annales, ii. 435. McKitterick argued that the fact of Adam's burial alongside the abbots rather than the monks suggested the regard in which he was held as historian of his community before 1166. As we have seen he might have been buried with the abbots for any number of other reasons. It is his talents as cellarer, businessman and diplomat and not his penchant for literary composition that are consistently praised in the later medieval sources.
deserved on account of his excellent merits, to be solemnly buried in the chapter house. *LB* echoes the *Gesta* in paying this particular compliment. Both the *De Fundatione* of Claudius E iv and the *De Altaribus*... marvel at the health giving qualities of dust from his tomb. In the *Gesta*, Adam is praised as a business man. In the later manuscripts he achieves the mystical stature of a holy man, famed for his sanctity. No text praised his literary achievements. It is significant too that Roger's *Flores* failed to touch, in any capacity, upon the lives of the early abbots; his text betrays no sign whatsoever that he had used or even knew of a domestic history of the abbey.

It is significant that a man who attracted adulation for various personal qualities should have failed to incur a single mention of his alleged writing of a domestic history, save for the ambiguous and hastily written note in Nero D i. Maybe he did not write one. Given the *Gesta*’s reference to him as 'illiteratus' this seems highly likely. Most when faced with this problematic adjective have adopted the tactics of Claude Jenkins; 'It is unfortunate that the record of his virtues describes him as illiterate but we will mask the inconvenient fact and march forward.' Yet he did exercise some caution with regards his 'candidate for honours in history'; he believed that the clerk Bartholomew mentioned in the

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35 *LB*, f.16 and Wats, pp.45 and 59 (*GA* i. 121 and 182).

36 The conclusion of A.E. Levett in *Studies in Manorial History*, (Oxford, 1938), p.110, is particularly sound. 'The part played by Adam, who is described as "illiteratus", in setting on foot the historical work of the abbey has been much discussed, and remains uncertain: it would seem safe to ascribe to him very considerable organizing powers, employed in the economic and judicial administration of the manors.'

37 C. Jenkins, *The Monastic Chronicler*, p.34 Those who have tended to assume that Adam possessed some literary prowess include Williams, *William the Chamberlain*, p.720 n.5 and Biddle, *The Medieval Chapterhouse*, p.10, where he describes Adam as 'the first chronicler of St Albans'. Those who are rightly non-committal include Thomson, *Manuscripts*, p.3 and Riley, *GA* i. xiv-xvi.
note on folio 30r had written the roll for Adam and hinged his argument upon the translation of the phrase 'de scriptis suis' as 'from his own writings'. In a note in *English Historical Review* for 1911, L. F. R. Williams had confronted the problem of Adam's illiteracy by focussing upon the definition of the word 'illiteratus'. He suggested that Matthew only meant that Adam 'lacked the literary taste that distinguished his uncle Geoffrey'. He also suggested that the 'principal business man' at a monastery as great as St Albans cannot have been illiterate in the strict sense in the twelfth century. Jenkins agreed with him; Adam the Cellarer was 'probably no more [illiterate] than many men of action who have no time for polite letters'. Yet in both medieval and classical Latin 'illiteratus' is commonly used to mean simply illiterate or unlettered. It appears to be used in the broader sense of 'unlearned', 'inelegant' or 'unpolished' only in relation to objects rather than people. Even had Matthew employed the term in its broadest sense, would he really have described Adam as uncultured having adopted verbatim a domestic chronicle written by him? Probably not. Even if Williams is correct in his assumption that all twelfth-century obedientaries were literate, it is, in the words of Jenkins, 'quite another matter to credit him with powers of literary composition'. Yet it is not entirely certain that all great obedientaries of the twelfth century were necessarily literate. Jocelin of Brakelond could say of Abbot Ording that he was 'an illiterate man, and yet he was a good abbot and


40 Other references to literacy in the *Gesta* suggest that Matthew must have been familiar with the full connotations of the word 'illiteratus'. At Wats, p. 34, (GA i. 64), Paul's relatives are described as 'litteraturae ignaris et origine ac moribus ignobilibus que non possunt scribi.' At Wats, p. 45 (GA i. 125), Robert the Chamber, father of Nicholas Breakspear is termed 'litteratus aliquantulum'. That the *Gesta* acknowledges degrees of literacy in people makes its use of the absolute 'illiteratus' highly significant.

41 Jenkins, *The Monastic Chronicler*, p. 34.
ruled this house wisely...'. Jocelin's understanding of the word 'illiterate' is divulged in his ensuing account of the debate that raged between the monks of Bury as to whether an abbot should be learned rather than practical and virtuous. One monk asked 'How can he, a man who has no knowledge of letters, preach a sermon in Chapter or on feast days to the people? How shall he who does not understand the Scriptures, have knowledge of how to bind and loose? seeing that "the rule of souls is the art of arts and the science of sciences." God forbid that a dumb image should be set up in the church of St Edmund, where it is known that there are many men of learning and industry.' On the other hand another monk could cry 'From all good clerks, O Lord deliver us'. He desired as abbot, a good manager 'as is proved by the performance of his tasks and by the offices that he has filled so well and the buildings and repairs that he has made. He knows how to work hard and how to defend our house...'. It is clear from his account of this debate that, for Jocelin, 'illiterate' meant an inability to read. More importantly, it seems that even in the third quarter of the twelfth century (the period in which Jocelin wrote), the literacy of great monastic obedientaries and even of abbots themselves cannot be assumed. Jocelin himself, steered a middle course in this contentious issue, surprising perhaps for the author of both the Chronica, and an account of the martyrdom of St Robert, a boy allegedly murdered by the Jews in Bury in 1181. He states that, should he live to see the abbey vacant once again, it would be his counsel that the convent 'choose one who is not too good a monk or too good a clerk, nor yet too ignorant or too weak, lest, if he know too much, he should be too confident in himself and his

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42 Butler, The Chronicle of Jocelin, pp.11-12. Abbot Ording shared little in common with Abbot Samson who said that if he had been in that state of life in which he was before he became a monk, and had had five or six marks of income wherewith he might have maintained himself in the schools, he would never have become monk or abbot'; p.36.

opinions and disdain others, or, if he be too stupid, should be a reproach to the rest of us.\textsuperscript{44} The supposition that twelfth-century obedientaries were necessarily literate rests on little evidence. Besides which, Adam the Cellarer's clerk may have obviated the need for literacy inherent in the position of cellarer.\textsuperscript{45}

The fundamental proposition that a cellarer or indeed a cellarer's clerk, whose duties were in the main so divorced from the literary or intellectual concerns of the monastery, should have written a history stretching back to the eighth century is strange in itself. Monks, monasteries and churchmen were not slow to voice their expectations of cellarers. Texts such as the \textit{Rule of St Benedict}, the \textit{Monastic Constitutions} of Lanfranc and countless monastic customaries reaching into the fifteenth century set out in detail the personal qualities required of this important obedientiary and the duties inherent in his office. The \textit{Rule} demands that a cellarer be wise, mature, temperate, not proud, boisterous, injurious, lazy or lavish.\textsuperscript{46} A customary of Eynsham, composed some time between 1289 and 1300, by John of Wood Eaton requests caution during

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., p. 15. That such ideological debate could have a profound impact upon and shape constitutional wranglings within the monastery is suggested by the \textit{Electio Hugonis}. Written in around 1222-1229, this work centres on an election dispute between the sacrist and Hugh. It has been described as a dispute essentially between sacristy and cellary, between monks from outside East Anglia and those from within, between those supporting the cause of Henry II and those favouring the barons. Yet it is also clear that Hugh's party contained a large number of 'magistri' such as Nicholas of Dunstable, Thomas of Walsingham, Thomas of Becles and Jocelin of the Altar, the latter probably synonymous with Jocelin of Brakelond. Friction between the learned and less learned at Bury could aggravate constitutional upheavals. See R.M. Thomson, \textit{The Chronicle of the Election of Hugh Abbot of Bury St Edmund's and Later Bishop of Ely} (Oxford, 1974), pp.xxxiii-xlvii.

\textsuperscript{45} Jocelin mentions the outrage caused by the abbot's attaching of a clerk to the position of cellarer to serve him 'both as a witness and a partner in respect of both income and expenditure.' Butler, \textit{The Chronicle of Jocelin}, pp.79-80.

\textsuperscript{46} R. Hanslik (ed.), \textit{Benedicta Regula in Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum}, lxxv (1960), 87.
questioning, humility in response, generosity in provision and moderation in
pomp and display. 47 St Augustine's Canterbury evidently desired qualities of
prudence and discretion. 48 Most texts that touch upon the functions of the
cellarer agree with the Rule of St Benedict that he should be 'pater totius
congregationis', father and provider of the monastery. 49 Jocelin termed him
'secundus pater ... in monasterio'. 50 'To the cellarer's office it belongs', wrote
Lanfranc, 'to procure all things necessary for the brethren in the way of bread
and drink and all kinds of food according to the circumstances of the
neighbourhood. He shall provide utensils for the cellar and kitchen, and flagons
and tankards and other vessels for the refectory, as well as all necessary furniture
for these three places.' 51 The importance of the cellarer within the monastery is
suggested by the fact that he is the only monastic official apart from the abbot
upon whom Benedict dwelt in any detail in Chapter 31 of the Rule. 'Let him look
upon the utensils of the monastery and its whole property as upon the sacred
vessels of the altar. Let him not think that anything may be neglected so that no-
one may be troubled or vexed in the house of God.' 52 Yet, the cellarer did a
great deal more than tend the monastic storeroom, provide for the daily

47 A. Gransden (ed.), The Customary of the Benedictine Abbey of Eynsham in Oxfordshire in
Corpus Consuetudinem Monasticarum, ii (Siegburg, 1963), 168.

48 The customary attributable to this abbey is extant as B.L.Cotton MS. Faustina C xii,
dateable to around 1330-1340. E.M.Thompson (ed.), Consuetudines Monasterii Sancti
Augustini Cantuarie (2 vols, 1902-1904) Vol. 1 in Henry Bradshaw Society, xxiii. 121.

49 Hanslik, Benedicta Regula, p.87.

50 Butler, The Chronicle of Jocelin, p.103. It is interesting to note that E. Searle and B. Ross
liken the cellarer to the mother of the community as far as he is the provider of foodstuffs and
the manager of the household; Accounts of the Cellarers of Battle Abbey 1275-1513 (Sidney,


52 Searle and Ross, Accounts, p.6
sustenance of the monks and care for the utensils. The *Monastic Constitutions* of Lanfranc echo a passage in the *Rule* when they declare that the cellarer 'should have a care both for the sound and still more the sick.' The cellarer tended the young and the weak, guests and paupers. He might be the lord of the banlieu, the landed endowment of a monastery, as at Bury St Edmunds or find himself in charge of virtually all the finances of the abbey as at Worcester, Evesham and Creake in Norfolk. On the other hand he might be chiefly responsible for the bread and ale as at Abingdon, no mean feat when a monk might be expected to consume a pound of bread and a gallon of ale per day. At the priory of Worcester the cellarer supplied robes for the prior's men-at-arms and carried out building work. At Battle he did everything from purchasing the monasteries victuals to buying a chain for the monastery's pet monkey.

There is one thing that cellarers apparently did not do and that is write chronicles. Extant cellarer's rolls supply little if any evidence for the active involvement of the cellarer in the intellectual concerns of the monastery. Any involvement he may have had appears to centre on the provision of materials. The roll of the cellarer and bursar of Worcester for 7-8 Edward II, AD 1313-1314, notes expenditure on 'pergameno pro rotulis et aliis necessariis' and a later cellarer's roll for the priory (25-26 Edward III) mentions the buying of paper or 'papiro'. Eleven cellarer's rolls from the abbey of Battle mention payment for parchment to enable their clerks to complete the accounts and it is possible that


the huge numbers of animal skins sold by the abbey went to supply other scriptoria. 56 The cellarer's contribution to intellectual life might occasionally transcend the provision of raw materials; the cellerers of both the priories of Norwich and Worcester made payments to the scholars of Oxford. 57 It is, in short, hard to believe that Adam the Cellarer or his clerk, managed to write a work of history or even desired to do so whilst catering for a community of approximately fifty monks; as we have seen, the Gesta itself testifies to the extent of his preoccupation with the business and legal affairs of the abbey. 58

Given that the curious note on folio 30r of Nero D i refers to a roll associated with Adam the Cellarer, a little must be said of the nature of extant cellarer's rolls. Might the content of our mysterious 'rotulus' have paralleled that of surviving 'rotuli cellararii.' Obedientiary rolls in general are extant only from the second quarter of the thirteenth century. The earliest roll from Canterbury dates to 1260, those from Durham and Worcester, to 1278, Westminster and Ely 1291, Winchester 1308 and Abingdon 1322. One from the priory of Worcester

56 Searle and Ross, Accounts, pp. 95, 106, 110, 117, 120, 124, 135, 138, 143, 149, 159. (The accounts for the years 1399-1400, 1412-13, 1420-21, 1435-36, 1438-39, 1439-40, 1442-43, 1464-65, 1465-66, 1478-79, 1512-1513.) A typical reference to receipts from large amounts of animal skins occurs in the earliest extant cellarer's account from Battle, that for 1275; '16s [8]d for 80 sheepskins and 4s 2d for 20 sheepskins from Alciston sold.' The account for 1278-9 acknowledged receipt of 40s from the sale of two hundred sheepskins from Alciston.

57 Wilson and Gordon, Early Comptus Rolls, 20-21 Edward I (c. 51) 30 Nov. 1291-1292, p.11. There is debate as to whether Jocelin of Brakelond had been cellarer of Bury St Edmunds. Even if he had, he did not write his Chronica whilst occupying this position. His contribution to the debate over cellarer's clerks betrays this fact; 'If I were cellarer, I should be very glad that a clerk should be my witness in all that I did.'; Butler, Chronicle of Jocelin, pp. 80-81. See A. Gransden, Historical Writing in England c.550-c.1307 (London. 1974), p.382 for the debate over whether Jocelin of Brakelond is to be identified with Jocellus the Cellarer who appears in Jocelin's Chronicle.

58 Levett, Studies, p.110, notes that from 1240, when complete lists of cellerers can be reconstructed from court rolls and dated with accuracy, no cellarer was ever drawn from the ranks of the historians or reverted to literary work.
belongs to the year 1291-2 (20-21 Edward I). It consists of two skins stitched together and written on both sides in double columns; in the left hand column are listed receipts from rents, corn, wool and sundries and in the right hand column expenses incurred in each of the four terms of St Andrews, the Annunciation, the Nativity of John the Baptist and St Michael's. Expenses included wages, 'esculentia' and 'potulentia' (corn, oats, barley bread, beer and wine), gifts and travel. Sixteen years older is the earliest surviving cellarer's roll from Battle; 'Account of brother N. cellarer of Battle from Invencio Sancte Crucis in the third year of the reign of King Edward to the day after Michaelmas next following in the same year.' Listing receipts from the sale of horses, oxen, sheepskins, cider and 'the hide of a bull dead of murrain' it proceeds to expenditure on items as diverse as saffron and iron for the dormitory door.

Cellarer's rolls from Durham Cathedral priory, the earliest dating to 1307-8, are similarly arranged as is the fragment of an account of the cellarer of Wilton Abbey in Wiltshire; written upon four membranes sewn head to foot is a weekly account of food and drink supplied day by day for the nuns of Wilton.

Extant cellarer's rolls are predominantly financial, business accounts. They lack any pretense to literary sophistication and never indulge in historical digressions. There are of course limitations to the extent to which the nature of a twelfth-

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59 Wilson and Gordon, Early Compotus Rolls, p. 8
60 Searle and Ross, Accounts, pp. 41-43.
61 Canon Fowler (ed.), 'Durham Account Rolls' 3 vols. (1898-1901), i. 1-6, Surtees Society, 99 (1900). E Crittall (ed.), 'Fragment of an Account of the Cellarer of Wilton Abbey 1299', Collectanea, N.J. Williams (ed.), Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society Records Branch, 12 (1956), 142-156, 143 and 145. The dating of the account to 1299 rests upon a marginal note mentioning the introit of Abbess Emma la Blounde, celebration of which occasioned the purchase and removal from store of great quantities of food including sixteen swans, thirteen peacocks, thirteen partridges, sixty gallons of milk, two casks of wine and two thousand five hundred and fifty eggs.
century 'rotulus cellararii' can be inferred from extant specimens of a century later although an assumption that they probably shared a financial purpose seems logical enough. Did the roll of Adam mirror extant cellarer's rolls. Intriguing in this respect is the detailed passage in the *Gesta* on the revenues received by the monk's kitchen from various estates during the reign of Geoffrey (1119-1146). It is derived from a tract incorporated in the *Liber Additamentorum* [henceforth *LA*] which appears also in the twelfth-cartulary of St Albans transcribed by the Bollandists in the seventeenth century Brussels Bibliothèque Royale, MS. 7965-73 [henceforth *B*]. It seems at least possible that this tract is part (or all?) of Adam's 'rotulus' and that Bartholomew's retaining of it is the reason for its anomalous appearance in the twelfth-century cartulary and subsequently in the *Gesta*. With a clerk by his side Adam would have required no great literacy to compile this account. In any case, he would have compiled it with hindsight for he only became cellarer during the abbacy of Robert (1151-1166).

Brief consideration must be lent to the possibility that a domestic chronicle might be written in the form of a roll rather than a codex in the twelfth century. Rolls were a relative novelty in this century hence the variety of terms used to describe them; 'rollus', 'rolla' and most commonly 'rotulus', the latter popularized by Richard Fitz Neal's *Dialogus Scaccario* written in the 1170s. However, given

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62 Wats, p. 36 (GA i. 73-75), *LA*, f.152v. [In referring to the documents of the *Liber Additamentorum* use has been made of the most modern foliation. Vaughan depended on the foliation carried out by Luard which is always a folio behind the modern version.] *B* f.168rv.


63 It is interesting to note that this is the only section of the *Gesta* that frequently employs the word 'we' or 'nos' in the course of its narrative; Wats, p.36 (GA i. 73-76). Unless Matthew was displaying solidarity with the past community of his abbey this section seems to have been compiled by a contemporary. It certainly does not share the general tone of the *Gesta* that avoids detailed financial analyses.
that Jocelin of Brakelond terms Domesday Book 'the great roll of Winchester' and that the Exchequer 'rotulus', even into the thirteenth century constituted two membranes sewn together and joined to other 'rotuli' at the head, Matthew's precise understanding of the term 'rotulus' cannot be easily determined. It is important however that whatever Adam wrote, it could not be termed 'liber'.

In the twelfth century royal records began to be stored in roll form, pipe rolls, rolls of chancery, receipts and itinerant justices. Monastic 'rotuli' might record litigation; Thomson notes that the use of the word 'superius' in the account of the dispute over the election of abbot Hugh of Bury St Edmunds suggests that these proceedings were once recorded on a roll. Durham Cathedral priory's account of its litigation against Bishop Anthony Bek is also on a roll. Monastic rotuli might also harbour cartularies and inventories. Although no cartulary or inventory for St Albans is extant in roll form, a roll of three membranes, B.L. Cotton Roll xiii 6, contains twelfth-century copies of twenty-three royal, episcopal and founders charters relating to the Augustinian priory of Stone in Staffordshire, founded around 1135. Yet did monastic rolls contain domestic

64 For a discussion of the increasing popularity of the roll in the twelfth century and its various uses, see M. Clanchy, From Memory to Written Record (London, 1980), pp. 105-115. That Matthew had some familiarity with rolls of the Exchequer is certain; Alexander of Swereford, Baron of the Exchequer had allowed Matthew to inspect the Exchequer records. Vaughan, Matthew Paris, pp. 17-18.


66 Clanchy, From Memory, p.112 n.113.

67 Similarly, from the priory of Ogbourne in Wiltshire came a roll ninety inches in length and containing early thirteenth-century copies of thirty eight episcopal, royal, papal and other charters spanning the period 1086-1199 and relating to the lands and churches of the abbey of Bec in England. An early thirteenth-century Durham Cathedral Priory inventory, Misc. ch. 2585, containing thirty four episcopal charters to the priory in the time of Bishop Hugh le Puiset, is extant on a roll of two membranes. See G.R.C. Davis, Medieval Cartularies of Great Britain (London, 1958), pp.107, 82-83 and 39.
chronicles? Chronicles and pictorial histories in roll form there certainly were, for instance, thirteenth-century royal genealogical chronicles and the *Compendium* or *Tabula Historie* of Peter of Poitiers. The only monastic chronicle in roll form that I have managed to find is that from the abbey of Abingdon, seventeenth century extracts of which survive in Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS. 255. Written in 1361, it was compiled from a martyrology, the *Liber Albus* and a chronicle of Thomas Marcham. It proceeds abbacy by abbacy and appears to possess similar interests as the *Gesta* such as loss and acquisition of monastic land although Twyne's seventeenth-century abbreviation of the original manuscript prevents an accurate assessment of the true nature of the text. Dr Ian Doyle has suggested that the practice of writing chronicles in roll form would have depended largely upon the conventions of individual monastic scriptoria. This is extremely interesting given the fact that at an early stage in his career, Adam spent time at the monastery of Croyland that later produced the Guthlac Roll. Otherwise it seems hard to explain why a wealthy monastery such as St Albans should have chosen a roll format for possibly its earliest domestic history. In short, although it is possible that a text of the literary sophistication of the *Gesta* assumed the novel and relatively humble form

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68 See W.H. Monroe, 'Two Medieval Genealogical roll-chronicles in the Bodleian Library', *Bodleian Library Record*, 10 (1980), 215-221. Other texts in this form include exultet rolls; one such roll, Additional MS. 30337, was written and illuminated in Italy at the end of the eleventh century and it constitutes a lengthy Latin prose chanted by a deacon on Easter Eve at the blessing of the candle which is then lit to symbolize the resurrection of Christ.


70 Personal correspondence with Dr Doyle.
of a roll in the twelfth century it does not seem likely. Adam's roll was possibly something simpler, if not a financial record then a list of benefactors that required no great literary skills on the part of Adam or devotion on the part of his busy clerk and was aptly suited to roll format. The fourteenth-century treatise *De Altaribus, Monumentis, et Locis Sepulchorum in Ecclesia Monasterii Sancti Albani* in Harleian 3775 does indeed refer to 'rotulis benefactorum'. It could be that Adam's roll was little more than a chronological table, this is a possibility suggested by an intriguing note at the foot of folio 20r in Matthew's autograph manuscript of the *Chronica Maiora*, CCCC 26. Written perhaps in Matthew's hand it reads as follows:

Secundum rotulum abbatis. Sancta Maria habuit quatuordecim annos quando peperit salvatorem et triginta tres annos cum eo commorata est in terra, et sex decim annos post eius ascensionem vixit in mundo, et sexaginta tres annos habuit quando migravit a seculo. Et sciendum quod Joseph vir suus ante passionem Christi obiit, quando, nescitur unde comissa est custodienda bono Johanni ewangeli migrature annum autem Gabriel ferens palmam transitum eius.

Could this be a quotation from Adam's roll? If so, then Adam's work was clearly not a mirror image of the extant *Gesta*. If not a cartulary, chronological table or list of benefactors Adam's roll can have been little more than a skeletal version of the *Gesta* as bequeathed us by Matthew in *N*.

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71 Although, given the weird and wonderful guises adopted by manuscript chronicles, anything is possible. A universal chronicle detailing world events from Creation to 1595 and produced in Germany in the latter year is produced in the form of a 'flagellum' and labelled 'a chronological scourge' in a British Museum Exhibition case; (B.L. Additional MS. 16280.)
So, Adam did not compose the early *vita* as they stand and nor was he ever likely to have done. His claim to be St Albans first domestic historian springs from nothing other than Matthew's scrawled note and the eagerness of some to fill the historical vacuum of twelfth-century St Albans by lightening the load of Matthew's vast literary output. Odd then, and somewhat disturbing might appear the suggestion of William Wats that a later copy of work of 'Adam' is in existence. In the introduction to his edition of the autograph text of the *Gesta*, published in London in 1639, Wats stated that his establishment of the text had depended upon collation of three manuscripts; 'Minor Cottonia' (Nero D i), 'Maior Cottonia' (Walsingham's continuaucion of the *Gesta* in Cotton Claudius E iv) and 'Codex Spelmannus'. He conjectured that the Spelmann manuscript (in its account of the older abbots at least) probably represented the text of the roll since it was 'brevior ... et contractior' than Nero D i although his belief that it constituted a later copy of Adam's work is made implicit by his acknowledgement of Nero D i as 'liber antiquissimus et authenticus'. 72 In the margins of his edition he noted the material omitted from the Spelman manuscript and this he supposed, represented some if not all of Matthew's additions to the roll. By the late 1860s when H.T. Riley came to edit Cotton MS. Claudius E iv for the Rolls Series, the Spelman manuscript had mysteriously vanished, enabling him to indulge in flights of fancy and speculation wholly justified by Wats's enigmatic conclusions. Handicapped by his failure to locate the manuscript, Riley suggested that it had 'probably represented the text of the manuscript of Stephen's time' although he appears to have reached unaided the conclusion that Spelman was 'evidently the oldest manuscript'. 73 The manuscript

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72 Wats, p.iiir-v.

73 *GA* iii. xvii and xii-xiii.
resurfaced in the private collection of the Marquess of Bute (MS. 3) in time for Vaughan to assign it a date of around 1400.\footnote{Vaughan, \textit{Matthew Paris}, p. 8.} On the occasion of its auction at Sothebys in 1983, the catalogue entry dated it to the early fourteenth century and suggested that it had once belonged to abbot Hugh de Eversdon (1308-1326). At present it bides time in the stacks of the British Library safely constrained by brown wrapping paper and string and going by the name of Additional MS. 62777.\footnote{For the dating of the manuscript, a full palaeographical survey, and a summary of its contents see \textit{Catalogue of the Bute Collection of 42 Illuminated Manuscripts and Miniatures. Sothebys 3rd July 1983, lot no. 5}.}

Disregarding for a moment its turbulent history, do folios 91-152 of the manuscript, henceforth termed \textit{AD}, really merit serious consideration as a fourteenth-century transcript of the roll of 'Adam' or the roll used by Matthew in the compilation of the \textit{Gesta}? On first glance it may appear so. The mysterious 'Secundum' quotation appears to be lacking despite Wats' suggestion to the contrary and not a single reference to Adam the Cellarer is to be found, which we might expect had he written it himself. Moreover, many passages included in the Nero \textit{Gesta} [henceforth \textit{N}] but omitted in Additional MS. 62777 [henceforth \textit{AD}] smack of the tastes and interests of Matthew Paris. \textit{AD} omits a large amount of material on King Offa included in \textit{N}'s account of the abbacy of Willegod, his purchase of meadow on the continent for the use of pilgrims, his founding of a school at Rome for travellers who flocked to the Roman church or court for the purposes of prayer or business, his introduction of Peter's Pence from which the lands of the monastery of St Albans were, of course, exempt.\footnote{\textit{N}, f.30r. Wats, pp.22-23 (\textit{GA i}. 5).}
also omits a eulogy of Offa; Offa, so N tells us, reigned happily in heaven with Alban, his name inscribed indelibly in the book of life even though his bodily remains were not venerated on earth. Glorious King Offa, strenuous in arms had put to flight certain bastard rulers, obtained the monarchy of all of Albion, killed the usurper king Beornred and caused to flee the men of Kent, Wessex, East Anglia and Northumbria. He repented of the slaughter he had committed, the blood he had spilt and the fires and destruction that had resulted from war and on his invention of the relics of St Alban he built a church to house them. 77

Matthew’s interest in King Offa, which will be fully considered in chapter three, led to numerous interpolations into Wendover’s Flores Historiarum, the inclusion of a detailed account of his invention of the relics in the Vie de Seint Auban and culminated in his production of the Vitae Offarum in around 1250.

Other passages omitted from AD appear to centre on the popular concerns of Matthew such as the account of the siege and capture of Antioch and Jerusalem in 1099. The Christians achieved a glorious triumph having everywhere defeated the Saracens and Robert, duke of Normandy fought valiantly for God. 78

Matthew’s attraction to universal history is exemplified in the scale scope and complexity of his Chronica Maiora. 79 AD also lacks brief mention of the gems retained by abbot Leofric for the decoration of the shrine of St Albans. Amongst

77 N, ff.30r-v. Wats, p.23 (GA i. 7-8). AD also omits reference to Offa’s placing of a gold circlet on the head of Alban in 793, in the context of the translation of the saint in 1129- N, ff.39r-40r (Presentibus-persolvit) Wats, p.38 (GA i. 85-86).

78 N, f.36v. Wats, p.34 (GA i. 67). The first crusade culminating in the capture of Jerusalem and the exploits of Robert are dealt with in great detail in Wendover’s Flores copied by Matthew in his Chronica; CM ii. 59-108.

them were certain engraved stones 'quos cameos vulgariter appellamus'. That Matthew sustained an interest in the precious stones possessed by the abbey is reflected in his treatise De Anulis et Gemmis et Pallis Que Sunt De Thesauru Huius Ecclesie extant in the LA. Missing too from AD is a short digression on the silver nails discovered in the shrine of St Alban in the time of William of Trumpington, inserted somewhat anachronistically, into the account of 'Alfric III' as well as a vicious attack on the insatiable greed of the Roman cardinals and papal 'familiares' to whom abbot Robert had presented gifts on his visit to Pope Adrian IV. Matthew's anti-papalism is well established. N's account of the monk Egwin's journey to Odense in Denmark to regain the relics of St Albans plundered from the monastery during the Danish raids is missing from AD. Its firm attribution to Matthew rests upon a personal confession that 'Huius historialis eventus seriem ego, frater Mattheus Parisiensis, duxi litteris commendare, ne iterum, incuria vel vetustate, a memoria hominum deleatur.'

80 Wats, p. 26 (GA i. 29).
81 The treatise on gems appears at LA, ff. 146r-147r and printed at CM vi. 198.
82 N, f. 33r and Wats, p. 28 (GA i. 97) and N, f. 42v and Wats, p. 46 (GA i. 127).
83 The Chronica is littered with instances of anti-papalism. In the annal for 1237 Matthew suggested that 'the Roman church had incurred the anger of God. For its chief men and rectors sought not to call people to devotion, but to collect purses full of money; not to gain souls to God, but to seize on revenues and amass money, to oppress religious men, and, by penances, usury, simony, and various other devices, impudently to usurp the property of others to their own use.' J. A. Giles, Matthew Paris's English History (London, 1852), i. 96. In a similar vein the Gesta notes scornfully that the impression of the papal seal at the top of the tower at St Albans had failed to prevent two fires in three years during the abbacy of John of Hertford.; Wats, p. 85 (GA i. 313).
84 Wats, p. 25 (GA i. 12-19). A great deal of material pertaining to the relics of St Albans has been omitted from AD; N, ff. 39r and Wats, pp. 38-39 (GA i. 85-87). the translation of St Alban 1129 and the dispute between Anketil and Solomon of Ely over whether the bones of St Alban housed in the abbey were genuine. N, ff. 34v and Wats, p. 31 (GA i. 50-51) the flight of Frederick; AD omits N's statement that Frederick took with him 'quibusdam libris et pannis et viaticus necessarum.' In AD the gist of the story concerning Alfric, the relics and the fraudulent activities of the monks of Ely is referred to but in nowhere near as much detail.

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Apart from omitting material that is compatible with the interests of Matthew, many of his favourite phrases, that are dotted throughout the N, do not appear in AD. The latter does not claim for instance, that under abbot Paul, the monastery 'in temporalibus et spiritualibus, diatim felix semper suscepit incrementum'. Nor does it draw upon one of Matthew's favourite similes in condemning the trouble making endeavours of abbot of Westminster over the manor of Aldenham - The Gesta states that the abbot 'quaerat nodum in scirpo', that is 'looked for a knot in a bullrush' or that he sought problems where there were none. The phrases 'in ore gladii', 'in magna cordis amaritudine', 'dotabo et ditabo', and 'misertus et miseratus' all make an appearance in the Gesta. They are nowhere to be found in AD. Casual references and omissions in N suggest that AD is possibly the older version of this text. It omits two references to the 'time of King Stephen' which might be seen to be a retrospective phrase added by Matthew. Furthermore it mentions, unlike N, that the copes bequeathed to the abbey in the time of Geoffrey were still extant (adhuc remanet). The case

85 B, f.103r, N, f.36r, Wats, p.34 (GA i. 64). This phrase is also omitted at - B, f.105v, N, f.38r, Wats, p.37 (GA i. 81). B, f.108r, N, f.41v, Wats, pp.44-45 (GA i. 119). B, f.108v, N, f.42r, Wats, p.45 (GA i. 121).

86 Wats, p.29 (GA i. 44).

87 'in ore gladii' N, f.39r, Wats, p.39 (GA i. 89). 'in magna cordis...' N, f.35r, Wats, p.31 (GA i. 53). 'dotabo et ditabo' N, f.39v, Wats, p.40, (GA i. 89). 'misertus et miseratus' N, ff.40v and 42v, Wats, p.46 (GA i. 128). AD also fails to include Matthew's favourite quotation from Ovid; Ovid Met. III 1 5; B, f.99r, N, f.33r, Wats, p.27 (GA i. 35) and B, f.107r, N, f.40v, Wats, p.42 (GA i. 109).

88 N, f.40v and Wats, pp.40 and 41 (GA i. 106 and 108).

89 AD, f.105r.
for equating *AD* with a copy of the domestic history employed by Matthew
appears reasonably strong.

There are, however, considerable drawbacks to this proposition. The passages
omitted are those that a later abridger of Matthew's *Gesta* might have found the
easiest to omit; they are often self-contained digressions or are physically
displaced within B.L. Cotton MS Nero D i. The passages on Offa and the
discovery of silver nails in the shrine of St Alban provide the flowery
ornamentation of a narrative that could well support itself without them and it is
wholly understandable that a later compiler might fail to include sections of the
text that are physically removed from the bulk of the work; the account of
Egwin's recovery of the relics of St Albans in the time of Wulnoth for example is
to be found on folios 25v-26v, between the *Vitae Offarum* and the beginning of
the *Gesta*. A note at the foot of folio 31v tells us to seek the account 'in libro
hoc ad signum huic correspondens', the sign being the lower half of a lion or
leopard. Similarly *AD* omits the material found in the margins of the abbacy of
Ralph. The compiler's failure to mention in detail the translation of the relics of
St Alban in 1129 may well stem from the fact that this event is described
elsewhere in Additional 62777 in some tracts on the invention and translation of
the saint. 90 That the failure of *AD* to include certain phrases and material
reminiscent of Matthew stems from later abridgement of Matthew's *Gesta* rather
than transcription of Adam's roll seems possible.91

90 ff.65-96.

91 Significantly, *AD* omits the one sentence that Riley suggests is indicative of the fact that an
erlier text is being used; the *Gesta* notes that on the translation of Alban in 1129, the left
shoulder blade was found to be missing 'prout ab eis qui interfuerunt accept'. Wats, p.39 (GA
i. 91).
There is a great deal to suggest that *AD* springs ultimately if not directly from the *Gesta N*. In Additional MS. 62777 the *Gesta* immediately follows Matthew's *Vitae Offarum* as in Nero D i. The two texts are evidently seen as a unit in Additional MS. 62777 since they are consistent in script and rubrics. That the *Vitae Offarum* of Additional MS. 62777 is derived from Nero Di i is suggested by the fact that as in Nero, ornamentation and flourishing of the text only begin in earnest with the account of the second Offa, Offa of Mercia. That the compiler of *AD* should have employed Nero for the *Vitae Offarum*, returned to the roll for the early *vitae* of the *Gesta*, and then used another version of the *Gesta* that included the later lives up to 1308 seems altogether too complex. Moreover, even the accounts of abbots living after the death of Adam are abridged versions of those in the *Gesta*. The case for *AD* exemplifying a fourteenth century précis is convincing.

Marginal and interlinear notes in *N* are frequently to be found in the main text of *AD*. *AD*’s opening sentence in the account of the abbacy of Wulsig displays uncertainty over the spelling of the abbot’s name, 'Wulsigus vel sinus vel sius vero abbas huic successit sine longi tempore intervallo creatus'. This stems from interlinear additions, in the hand of Matthew, to the name of the abbot in *N*,

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vel sius
Wl--------------si----------------.....gus 92
vel nus
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92 *AD*, f.92v and *N*, f.30v. *AD* does not always incorporate name variations included in *N*; e.g. on f. 31r at the start of the abbacy of Eadfrith Matthew has written;

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vel d
Ead------------fr---------------------thus
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This does not appear in *AD* f.93v.
Similarly *N*'s account of the discovery of an ancient book during excavations of Verulamium in the time of abbot Eadmar is accompanied by a marginal note, again in the same hand as the main text, reading 'cum quibusquam minoribus libris et rotulis'. This appears in the body of the text in *AD* as does another marginal note in *N* disclosing the hiding place chosen by Alfric for the relics of St Albans during the Viking raids; 'scilicet sub altari Sancti Nicholai'. In his mention of the exile of Anselm, Matthew added in the margin 'moram faciens apud Cluniacum'. This is included in the main text of the *AD* on f.103r.

Incorporation of *N*'s marginal and interlinear material in the text of *AD* indicates that the latter is derived ultimately from the former. So too does the occurrence in *AD* of phrases popularly employed by Matthew. Concerning the questionable merits of Leofric's selfless aid of the poor Matthew concluded in the *Gesta* that 'novit Ille qui nihil ignorat'. This is also to be found in *AD* as is another phrase characteristic of Matthew 'felix...suscepit incrementum' and words commonly used by him such as 'procaciter' and 'vispilio'.

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93 *N*, f.31v and *AD*, f.96r.
*N*, f.32v and *AD*, f.98v.

94 *N*, f.36r.

95 There are plentiful instances in which marginalia in *N* are to be found in the main text in *AD*;

'Fispol nomen vivarii regis ex reliquis aque diminute' - *N*, f.31r, *AD*, f.99v.
'sancti albani' - *N*, f.31v, *AD*, f.96r.

Other such examples occur at *N*, f.40r and *B*, f.106r, *N*, f.42v and *B*, f.108r.

*AD* also incorporates into its text words omitted in error in *Gesta*; *N*, f.30v omits the words 'alieno indigere' which are needed to complete the sense. These are included in the main text of *AD* at f.92r. Some of the marginalia in *N* are not to be found in *AD* because the section to which they apply has itself been omitted from the latter manuscript; some of the notes on *N*, ff.34v and 35r-v do not appear in *AD*.

96 *AD*, ff.97r, 99r and v, 100v, 104v, 108v.
In support of the suggestion that *AD* is not a transcript of a cellarer's roll it
might be argued that this text omits much that gives *N* of *i* its occasional cellary
leanings; the territorial gains of abbot Paul, the lands and tithes acquire by abbot
Richard, arrangements concerning the revenues assigned to the monk's kitchen
in the time of Geoffrey, and Robert's grant of the church of Luton and 'Hoctona'
and all pertinences to the cellarer of the guest's hall. It also omits a reference to
Robert's gifts to the cardinals and familiars of the Pope, of gold and silver to a
value of two hundred marks and the cost of the journey altogether; eighty
marks. It has already been seen that extant cellarer's rolls record expenditure in
the form of gifts and travel.

The *Gesta* of Additional 62777 has all the makings of a careful and scholarly
précis of Matthew's work. Although *AD* omits the story of Egwin and the relics
of St Alban that occurs on ff.25v-26v in *N*, it appears to account for or
recognize that omission by the addition of a phrase to a sentence that it shares in
common with Matthew's text.

*N*: 'Sed quia non placuit sancto ibi
(Odense, Denmark) commorari ut liquet
per sequentia potius ubi sanguinem suum
pro Christo fudit, suam sic procuravit
repatriacionem.'


98 Furthermore, would Adam really have omitted nearly all details of the translation of St
Alban in 1129, an event that would have been recent history for him?
AD: ‘Sed quia non placuit sancto ibi commorari se pocius ubi sanguine suum pro christe fudit, per industriam et cautelam cuiusdam monachi nomine Egwini suam procuravit repatriacionem.’

Thus AD touched upon the legend of Egwin, yet circumvented the need to include it in full. Abridgement is also clearly at work in AD’s account of the dispute between Ely and St Albans over relics. N’s account of how the monks of Ely considered their secret retaining of the true relics of Alban no great sin, is sandwiched between two sentences that in AD are amalgamated into one. N’s ‘Inierunt autem abbas et conventus elyenses iniquum consilium, quod, scilicet, sibi credita abbati et conventui sancti albani nequaquam resignarent. Et sic ea procaciter respondentes retinuerunt’ becomes the ‘Sed Elyenses consilium iniquum ea procaciter sibi retinuerunt’ of AD. Similarly, in place of N’s detailed treatment of the Norman Conquest, Frederick’s leadership of the English resistance, the imprisonment of Stigand, the struggles of Edgar the Aetheling, the Berkhamstead oath, William’s crushing of opponents and the flight of the English nobles to Scotland, AD reads simply ‘Cum ergo rex totam angliam subiugasset, cepit abbas Frethericus vehementer formidare.’ Those words underlined are not to be found in N. A long list of tithes assigned to the hospital of St Julian by Geoffrey is reduced to ‘multas decimas’, lands and tithes acquired by abbot Richard become ‘et multa alia’ and the detailed account of Geoffrey’s dealings with the monk’s kitchen is summarized in a sentence ‘Iste ordinavit firmas coquine et assignavit coquine monachorum Esewale aspam et

99 N, f.30v, AD, f.93v, Wats, p.25 (GA i. 12).

100 N, f.33r, AD, f.99r, Wats, p.27 (GA i. 35).

101 N, f.34rv, AD, f.101v, Wats, pp.29-31 (GA i. 44-49).
multa alia...\textsuperscript{102} It seems perhaps ironic that big omissions begin with the abbacy for Geoffrey, that is at the stage when the roll of Adam, whatever it was, would have begun to deal with events in his own lifetime. That they are omissions carried out by the compiler of AD rather than elaborations by Matthew seems clear. Apart from anything else, it would have been far harder to expand 'multa alia' into a detailed list of tithes rather than to summarize an already extant list with those same two words. Moreover, a belief that Matthew expanded upon the contents of the roll as represented by AD would be allowing him far greater talents and dedication as an interpolator than our knowledge of his achievements in this field suggests. His interpolations into Roger Wendover's \textit{Flores Historiarum} are simplistic and mechanical. They tend towards the odd word or phrase rather than hefty passages. The expansion of the \textit{Gesta} of Additional MS.62777 into the \textit{Gesta} of Nero D i would have entailed a wholly complex and fiddly grafting of his own additions and stylistic alterations onto a text that was satisfactory as it was. The two texts vary all the way through unlike Wendover's \textit{Flores} and Matthew's \textit{Chronica} that differ only in patches and are substantially the same. In short, \textit{AD} is not a fourteenth-century copy of the roll of Adam. It is a conveniently abridged version of Matthew's \textit{Gesta}.

In its entirety, the manuscript Additional 62777 is a fourteenth-century compilation of material pertaining to the history of St Albans; it includes a \textit{passio} of Saints Alban and Amphibalus and tracts on the invention and

\textsuperscript{102} N, f.37v, \textit{AD}, f.105r, Wats, p.36 (\textit{GA} i. 77).
N, f.36v, \textit{AD}, f.103v, Wats, p.34 (\textit{GA} i. 67-68).
N, f.37rv, \textit{AD}, f.105r, Wats, p.36 (\textit{GA} i. 73-75).

Other precisied material includes Geoffrey's bequest of the church of Rikmansworth to the sacrist, N, f.37v, \textit{AD}, f.105r, Wats, p.36 (\textit{GA} i. 75) Robert's becoming a monk at St Albans, N, f.41r, \textit{AD}, f.107v, Wats, p.42 (\textit{GA} i. 111). The dispute over the church of Lincoln described in the abbacy of Robert and occupying six pages of the \textit{Rolls Series} is reduced to one sentence; Wats, p. 43 (\textit{GA} i. 113-119) and \textit{AD}, f.108r.
translation of Alban besides the *Lives of the Offas* and the *Deeds of the Abbots*. Vaughan considered it to have been compiled independently of Walsingham, and if the Sotheby's dating of the manuscript to the early fourteenth century is correct, it predates Walsingham's similar compilation with whom it shares much material in common. 103 It makes sense then that the *Gesta* should have been abridged to suit the requirements of a book intent on gathering historical material from various sources. What is more, this was not the first occasion on which the text had been abridged. John of Wallingford selected the text for inclusion in his manuscript of miscellaneous historical material, compiled during the decade that he spent at the monastery, 1247-1257. 104 Amidst the royal genealogies, chronicles and drawings of elephants, the *Excerpta de Gestis Abbatum Ecclesie Sancti Albani* are located on ff.115v-123v of B.L. Cotton MS. Julius D vii. Dateable to between 1255 (the completion of N) and September 1258 (John's death), the *Excerpta* constitute a drastic abridgement of the *Gesta*. Where material has been considered worthy of inclusion in the *Excerpta*, it is lifted verbatim from the parent text. Another apparently contemporary abridgement of the *Gesta* is to be found in B.L. Cotton MS. Vitellius A xx, the manuscript that harbours also an abridgement of the *Chronica* in which Matthew's hand is occasionally found. 105 Thus the precedent for abridgement of Matthew's domestic history was there. Yet the compiler of *AD* appears to have done more than simply abridge. There is some evidence of a

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103 For the contents of Additional MS. 62777 see Catalogue of Bute Manuscripts, lot 5. For the contents of Claudius E iv see A Catalogue of Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library (London, 1802), pp.198-199.

104 See introduction, pp.16-17.

105 The abridgement of the *Gesta* is to be found on ff.74rv of Vitellius A xx. The text of the abridged *Chronica* extends from 1066 to 1246 and is compiled from Matthew's 'new material'. Vaughan, *Matthew Paris*, p.115ff. The *Historia Anglorum* and the *Abbrevisatio Chronicorum* testify to Matthew's own talents as an abridger.
process of cleansing at work. It carefully sidesteps a reference to the sedition that arose against abbot Wulsig (underlined) even though it fails to exclude suggestion of his unpopularity.

\[N\] -'Iusta igitur dei et martiris ulcione percussus suscitavit contra eum de suo convento sedicionem. Et ut dicitur postea in brevi migravit ab incolatu huius mundi pocionatus cum odio conventus et maledicione.'

\[AD\] -'Iusta igitur dei et martiris ulcione percussus, postea in brevi migravit ab incolatu huius mundi ut dictur pocionatus cum odio conventus et maledicione.\[106\]

It also avoids mention of abbot Paul's scorning of a simple Englishman, Richard's subjection of the monastery of St Albans to the authority of Canterbury and some of the 'negligences' of Geoffrey and Ralph.\[107\]

Thus the *Gesta* of Additional MS. 62777 is an abridgement and perhaps a censoring of the *Gesta* of Nero D i. That it drew directly upon the latter manuscript however is debateable. Omissions aside there are a considerable number of textual and stylistic differences between the two manuscripts; words are altered, omitted, added, the errors of \[N\] frequently sidestepped and there are differences of orthography and spelling.\[108\] The word order of sentences

\[106\] *N*, f.30v, *AD*, f.93r, Wats, p.24 (GA i. 10).

\[107\] Wats, pp.33, 35, 40-41, 42 (GA i. 62, 72, 94-95 and 109).

\[108\] *AD* has 'reciperet' for \[N\]'s 'susciperet'- \[N\], f.42v, *AD*, f.108r.
*AD* omits words like 'etiam', 'necnon', 'quoque'- \[N\], f.31r, *AD*, f.94v.
*AD* often adds words like 'abbas' before a name - \[N\], f.36v, *AD*, f.103r.
*AD* rectifies \[N\]'s error of 'pormeruit' for 'promeruit' - \[N\], f.30v, *AD*, f.92r.
Difference of orthography - 'historia' for 'istoria' \[AD\], f.106v.
Difference of spelling - \[AD\] has 'totheneye' for 'thooni' or 'thotenei'. \[N\], f.35r, *AD*, 60
frequently varies considerably, describing the consequences of King Offa's generosity. N believes the King 'pro magna parte mutilitatam iacturam et diminucionem incurrisse.' AD believed the same yet chose to rearrange the words; 'et regiam dignitatem pro magna parte mutilitatam iacturam et diminucionem incurrisse.' Certain passages in N are differently located in the text of AD; Abbot Leoftstan's clearing and levelling of roads for pilgrims and travellers, the account of the gifts bequeathed by Geoffrey to the abbey, and his concession of the church of Rickmansworth to the sacrist. Occasionally the text of AD appears to correspond with that of Claudius E iv against N - both Claudius E iv and and AD share the erroneous 'aliquanti' for N's correct 'aliquantuli'. Both replace N's 'rosonabat' with the correct 'resonabat' and both employ the word 'inhonestis' rather than N's 'inhonestatis'. Given however that such similarities between Claudius and AD are limited to around ten in number, the grounds for believing that one borrowed from the other are less than firm. AD appears to constitute a fourteenth-century precis of N made independently of and possibly earlier than the continuation of this text in Claudius E iv. Its text of the Gesta does not predate that of Nero D i and therefore cannot be considered a transcript of the contents of a twelfth-century roll.

f.102v.

109 N, f.30v, AD, f.92v, Wats, p.23 (Ga ii. 9).

110 N, f.33r, AD, f.99v, Wats, p.28 (Ga ii. 39-40). N, f.40r, AD, f.105r, Wats, p.40 (Ga ii. 93-94). N, f.37v, AD, f.105r, Wats, p.36 (Ga ii. 75).

Even if ff. 91r-110v of Additional MS. 62777 do not replicate Adam's roll, Adam had something to do with a roll of some sort, for Matthew tells us so. If it was not a domestic history, what might it have been? A recent suggestion by Dr Simon Keynes that a twelfth-century cartulary, copied by the Bollandists into Brussels, Bibliothèque Nationale MS. 7965-73 (3723), is possibly associated with Adam the Cellarer requires further investigation. B, dateable to the 1630s, is in the hand of more than one person. It contains a collection of historical texts relating to a number of English Benedictine abbeys, entitled *Monasteria Anglia nonnulla antiqua eorumque Historiae* (f.1r). These include a copy of the *Liber Benefactorum* of Ramsey, material on the history of Peterborough, the deeds of the abbey of Croyland, a cartulary of Malmesbury, certain works on the history of Durham and transcripts of the letters of Herbert de Losinga, bishop of Thetford/Norwich 1090-1199. Folios 151r-216v harbour a transcript of a cartulary of St Albans Abbey containing pre- and post-Conquest charters relating to the abbey's endowments. This Keynes believed to be 'a full and careful transcript' of a cartulary, compiled in the twelfth century.

The twelfth-century cartulary apparently contained 'substantially the same series of charters as is to be found in Matthew Paris's *Liber Additamentorum* (BL Cotton Nero D i. fols. 149-161)'. Yet the majority of royal diplomas in B differ chiefly in being preceded by pictorial invocations or chrismons and most of the Brussels charters contain vernacular boundary clauses. Keynes has established

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112 For a full description of this manuscript and a list of its contents see Keynes, 'A Lost Cartulary', pp.3-7. See also Davis, *Medieval Cartularies*, p.94 and Holztmann, *Papsturkunden*, pp.120-123.

113 Keynes, 'A Lost Cartulary', pp.13 and 11.

114 Ibid., pp.6 and 10.
that the \emph{LA}, 'does not in fact constitute the first collection of the abbey's charters, but was merely an abbreviated copy of an earlier cartulary, itself represented by the Brussels transcript.' It appears that Matthew copied and abbreviated the contents of an earlier cartulary, yet omitted anything in Anglo-Saxon.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 10 and 11.}

The supposed connection of the Brussels cartulary with Adam the Cellarer rests on its inclusion of a twelfth-century document dealing with the revenues assigned to the monk's kitchen from various abbey estates during the abbacy of Geoffrey (1119-1146). This same document is transcribed into \emph{LA} and is paraphrased in the \emph{Gesta}.\footnote{Ibid., p. 19, \emph{LA}, f. 152v, \emph{B}, f. 168rv and \emph{Wats}, p. 36 (\emph{GA} i. 73-75).} Keynes noted the intriguing link that thus arises between the Brussels cartulary and the early section of the \emph{Gesta}.\footnote{Keynes, 'A Lost Cartulary', pp. 11 and 19.} Even if the kitchen account can be associated with Adam, its occurrence, paraphrased, in the \emph{Gesta} does not prove Adam's authorship of the work. Having transcribed the document himself into \emph{LA}, Matthew may have chosen himself, to include it in his work of domestic history. However, Keynes' full appreciation of the significance of the Brussels cartulary means that Matthew's compilation of the cartulary extant in \emph{LA} must now be questioned. One important yet hypothetical question needs perhaps to be asked. Does the cartulary itself constitute the roll of Adam the Cellarer? The supposed date of the lost cartulary may well have coincided with the lifetime of Adam, there are numerous precedents for cartularies in roll form and it is rather more conceivable that a man termed 'illiteratus'and heavily involved in the territorial transactions of the monastery might have attached his
name to a cartulary than a literary history. Two arguments in particular support an equation of the Brussels cartulary with Adam’s roll. The first is that the *Gesta’s* mention of several transactions represented by charters in the Brussels cartulary would in part justify Matthew’s charismatic reference to the roll of Adam on folio 30r of Nero D i. Ecgfrith’s grant of Pynesfeld to Willegod (796), Aegelwine Niger’s grant of Grandborough, Redbourne, Langley and Thwangetune (1042-1049), Leofstan’s lease of Cyrictivva to Tova, widow of Wihtric (1050-1052), Oswulph and Aethelgyth’s grant of Studham to Leofstan (1053x1066) and the charter of Henry I, granting Biscot to St Albans in 1116 all find a place in the early section of the *Gesta*. Second, at the time of Matthew’s death in 1259, the foliation of Nero D i allowed for the positioning of the charters and papal privileges of St Albans between the *Vitae Offarum* and the *Gesta*. It is conceivable that the ‘secundum’ quotation refers not forwards to the *Gesta* but backwards to the ‘roll-cartulary’ that preceded it. The quotation is written in the very top right hand corner of folio 30r in a cursive hand and is not indisputably part of the textual apparatus of the *Gesta*.

Little can be established from a collation of the charters of *B* and *LA*; the relationship is a complex one. *B* occasionally omits words to be found in *LA*; ‘regni’ before ‘Merciorum’, ‘Albani’ after ‘sancti’, ‘regis’ before ‘Eadwardi’ and ‘episcopus’ after ‘Eadnodus’. It occasionally lacks more than a mere word; in its version of the will of Eadwine of Caddington, it omits mention of several

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118 Wats, pp. 23, 28, 37 (*GA* i. 6, 39, 54 and 68).


120 *LA*, f.151r, *B*, f.162v.

*LA*, f.151v, *B*, ff.163v-164r.

pieces of land said to have been granted by Eadwine to St Albans in LA; 'haerlea', 'pirian', 'puttanho' and 'beranlea'. On the other hand it contains information not to be found in LA. According to B, archbishop Wulfstan witnessed the charter of Aethelgifu, dateable to around 990. Occasionally the order of witnesses in the charters of B differs from that of LA; the first version of Offa's grant of land at Cashio, Heanhamstede and Stanmore to the abbey in B is witnessed by many including Wynberht and Wihtun. LA reverses the names of these two witnesses. It reverses too the names of Ethelweard dux and Alfric dux who put their signature to a charter of King Ethelred granting to the abbey land at Burston, Wincelfelda and Westwick. B can often appear more accurate in its transcriptions than LA; in the charter of Oswulph and Aethelgyth it has 'nobilis' instead of LA 's erroneous 'nobis'. It avoids Matthew's error of inserting 'Egnes' after 'congregatio' due to eyeskip in his transcription of Leofstan's lease to Tova. Yet, it can also appear less accurate; it occasionally omits a verb from a sentence and it contains repetitions not found in LA; in its transcription of the charter of Aethelred, granting land at Wincelfelda, Burston and Westick, it repeats the phrase 'tradita cum omnibus'. Of greater interest is the inclusion by B of material previously thought to be interpolations by Matthew. B's charter of Offa granting lands at Winslow to the abbey in 795 contains an anathema clause marked as an interpolation by Matthew in Luard's

121 LA, f.151r-v, B, ff.164v-165r.
122 B, ff.165v-165r.
123 LA, f.148r, B, ff.153v-154r.
124 LA, f.153v, B, ff.170v-172r.
125 LA, f.151v, B, ff.163rv.
126 Version two of the charter of Offa ff.167r-168r 'decreverit'.
edition of the Liber Additamentorum. Similarly the brief account of the martyrdom of 'Alnulfus' (Albanus?), again picked out in large type in the edition, occurs in two of the charters contained in B, versions two and three of the charter of Offa granting land at Cashio. Thus, responsibility for alteration and 'improvement' of the abbey's charters falls squarely at the feet of the twelfth-century compiler. Consequently, Matthew's handling of these charters must be viewed in a new and rather more favourable light. After all, the similarities between the Brussels transcripts and those of Nero are staggering. They often abbreviate at the same points. Both state that Aethelwine Niger bequeathed amongst other things, 'v hid aet reodburne vii et i virgam aet langeleye v hidas et dimidiam aet hyangtune iii hid et dimidiam'. Similarly, the occurrence of the 'signature' of abbot Beornran on the same line as that of abbot AhImund (that is, not as part of the vertical list) in B's version of the will of Ulf, is mirrored in LA. Whilst conclusive proof that the twelfth-century Brussels cartulary transcribed by the Bollandists was the roll of Adam is lacking, an equation of the two is not at all unlikely. There is no firm evidence that Adam's roll was a fully blown domestic history and some reason to suppose that it was not.

127 LA, f.152rv, B, f.159v.
129 It is somewhat intriguing that LA omits the second version of the 793 charter of Offa on ff.155v-156r of B. The repetition of charters in both cartularies is interesting. It is possible that the original exemplar was a 'working copy', containing charters at various stages of improvement. Many of the later versions of the charters are more accurate than their earlier counterparts; four charters of King Ethelred, dateable to 996, 1002, 1005 and 1007 (S. 888, 900, 912 and 916), are 'improved upon'. See the alterations effected at B, ff.157v-158v/170v-172r, ff.161v-162v/175v-176r, ff.158v-160r/172r-174r, ff.160r-161v/174r-175r.
130 LA, f.152r, B, f.165r.
131 LA, f.153r, B, f.169r.
The search for clues to the nature of Adam's work must embrace for the moment the problem of the abbey's lost martyrology. R.M. Thomson suggested that the Gesta derived its information chiefly from this source and that the lost martyrology can be found in a later form in the fourteenth-century LB and its fifteenth-century epitome, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 7. The precise relationship between N and LB is complex. That there is some form of textual relationship between the two is, however, apparent. The Gesta opens the account of Willegod with the following passage:

Willegodus primus abbas ecclesie sancti albani [huius] ecclesie curam sibi commissam strenue adiutorio regis fultus rexit [gubernavit]. Huic gloriosus Rex Offa, Merciorum regens gubernacula, corpore Beati Albani patroni nostri de terra levato hanc ecclesiam multarum possessionum libertatumque prerogative dotatam tradidit gubernandum atque monachis e multis regionibus sanctitate preelectis in eadem ecclesie feliciter aptatis iuxta institutionem et tenorem regule sancti benedicti sub ipso vivere regulariter et reverenter ordinavit.

LB omits only those phrases underlined and its use of alternative vocabulary is indicated in square brackets. The rest it shares verbatim with N. Second, it supplies, in common with N and AD an alternative rendering of the name Wlsigus; 'Wulfsigus sive Wulfsinus'. In general LB contains a much shorter

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133 N, f. 30r, LB, f. 11v, Wats, p. 22 (GA i. 4).

134 LB, f. 12r.
account of the abbot's benefactions than that found in N although stylistic similarities abound. The striking feature of LB's account of the abbots is that it focusses chiefly upon portable gifts to the monastery in the form of ornaments, books and gems. It is remarkably uninterested in lands acquired by the abbots. Hence Paul, we are told, gave to the monastery twenty-eight volumes, a silver plate and two candles, yet no single mention is made of the considerable amount of land that fell to the abbey during his abbacy. Richard, LB informs us, bestowed upon the abbey stoles, a purple cloak, two gilded albs, a missal and a tapestry depicting the Passion of St Alban yet again, his success in territorial transactions receives no mention.

Does LB's account of the abbots represent the contents of the lost martyrology or did Walsingham draw upon information supplied by Matthew's Gesta. Several pieces of evidence support the latter proposition. The LB's entry for Frederick contains a phrase popularly employed by Matthew; 'in magna mentis amaritudine'. It also claims with the Gesta that 'ipsius sedaret avariciam volentis hanc ecclesiam apporiare (sic)'. Matthew's anti-papal rantings litter all his major works and although it would be wrong to assign him a monopoly of anti-papalism in the middle ages, his ultimate responsibility for this particular phrase is suggested by the fact that LB appears to follow the Gesta's error of 'apporiare' for 'appropriare'. Occasionally too, LB provides the firm impression

135 Ibid., f.13v.
136 Ibid., f.14r. Similar omissions are made in the case of Geoffrey and Leofric whose acquisitions of five estates, Studham, Redburn, Langley, Greneburg and Thuanetonam are not noted by the Liber Benefactorum; ibid., ff.14v and 12v-13r.
137 Ibid., f.13v.
138 Ibid., f.15r.
that it is summarizing; its statement that Frederick endured many diverse burdens before and during the Conquest appears to account for his struggles with the abbot of Westminster over the manor of Aldenharn and later his leadership of English resistance to the Norman invaders.  

Moreover, the miniatures of the abbots contained in _LB_ owe no small artistic debt to those contained in _N_. _LB_’s miniature of Leofric is heavily suggestive of _LB_’s dependence on the _Gesta_; Leofric has laid down a pastoral staff and is wrongly shown holding a crosier. This effectively perpetuates Matthew’s very personal confusion in the _Gesta_ as which of the two abbots of St Albans, Leofric or Alfric rose to the archiepiscopacy of Canterbury.  

It might also be argued that Walsingham, who used Matthew’s autograph _Gesta_ in his continuation of the text in Claudius E iv could hardly have failed to return to that text when compiling _LB_. Occasionally, _LB_ includes information on the abbots that is clearly not derived from the _Gesta_; it says of brothers Alfric and Leofric that they acquired and gave to the abbey Kingsbury, Childwick, Westwick, Flamstead, Norton, ’Rodenhangre’, Wyncelfeld, Burstan and Upton.  

The lists of benefactions that Matthew included on folios 63r and 167v of _Nero Di_ include these details, although, as Pamela Taylor pointed out, it is improbable that Walsingham drew on these lists for the post Offa information in _LB_.  

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139 Ibid., f.13v. Wats, pp.29-31 (GA i. 41-51).

140 This is fully discussed in chapter two.

141 King Ethelred’s grant to St Albans abbey of land at Norton and St Albans in 1007, extant as Bodleian Library, MS. Eng. hist. A 2 has a vernacular endorsement that makes reference to lands that ‘aelfric arcebisceop 7 brodor Leofric abbod gebohten’. See A.S.Napier and W.H.Stevenson, _Anecdota Oxoniensia. The Crawford Collection of Early Charters and Documents Now in the Bodleian Library_ (Oxford, 1895), p.27.

142 Taylor, 'The Early St Albans Endowment'. The list on f. 63r is headed ‘Quiddam sumptum de veteri libro qui sic incipit Septem Sunt Signacula’ printed at GA vi. 507. The second list, headed, ‘Hoc de antiquo libro, ligato, et cooptero’, differs from the first in as far as it expands the number of Offa’s donations from nine to twenty two. Taylor suggested that this second list occurs on a group of folios that were almost certainly transferred from another manuscript in
in which benefactors are noted in *LB* does not follow the order in which they are presented in either of these lists.  

Moreover, *LB* supplies a small amount of additional information.  

Walsingham probably derived much of his material on these benefactors and the additional information concerning Alfric and Leofric from the earlier martyrology. He did not use the lists penned by Matthew, who himself, may have drawn upon the source used by his successor.

It is quite clear however, that *LB* retained a great deal of material that was presumably found in the early martyrology and that was not derived from Matthew's work; details supplied in the *Gesta* that are not directly to do with the gifts of the abbots are often a vague echo of the more precise details supplied by *LB*. The *Gesta* 's shadowy reference to Odo of Bayeaux’s return of land at Apse and Tiwa is perhaps derived from *LB* 's predecessor. *LB* states that Odo returned three hides at Apse having been promised by the abbot £20, and that he assigned Tiwa to the supply of the monk's victuals.  

The *Gesta* makes no mention of the fact that Remigius of Lincoln (whom *LB* calls 'Robert' in error), bequeathed £46 modern times, and that it is written in a later hand. Although the former proposition is accurate, I am not entirely certain that the hand of this list is not Matthew’s; his hand is evident elsewhere on this particular folio. It is certainly possible, as Taylor suggests, that Walsingham derived his list of Offa's benefactions in the *Liber* from this second list for both lists are identical except for the fact that the *Liber* mentions Ethelred's confirmation of Burstan and Upton as granted by Offa, *LA*, f.4r. Taylor argued that they both appear to have had a cut off point around the time of the Norman Conquest.

The benefactors of Nero D i ff.63r and 166v occur in the following order, Offa, Ecgfrid, Aethelric of Dorchester, Agelwinus cognomento Suerta, Tholf, Sexi, Haad, Therefeld, Aelgiva, Agelbertus, Winsinus, Wilsinus, Alstanus, Osulfus. Those of the *Liber* appear thus; Offa and Ecgfrid, then a little later, Ethelricus, Oswulfus, Tolf, Egelwynus ye Swarte, Ethelgiva, Sexi, Had, Thurefleda, Egelbertus, Wulsinus, Wulfsinus, Aelfstanus

Taylor noted its inclusion of the names of several benefactors whose benefactions alone receive brief mention in these lists, for example, Elfhelmus and Wulfgarbus, both ministers of King Ethelred, who gave Codicote, and Walden respectively.; The Early St Albans Endowment.

Wats, p.31 (*GA* i. 53), *LB*, f.86v.
to the monastery on his death nor does it state that Robert Mowbray, another
benefactor of the abbey became a monk.\textsuperscript{146} The \textit{Gesta} also fails to name several
of the benefactors to whose gifts it nevertheless refers, William de Albeneio,
Peter de Valoniis and Goeffrey Camerarius.\textsuperscript{147} It can be no coincidence that \textit{LB}
is only ever less detailed than the \textit{Gesta} in matters pertaining to the abbots. For
the most part it appears that \textit{LB} did depend upon the abbey's now lost
martyrology.\textsuperscript{148} The complexity of the relationship between \textit{LB} and the \textit{Gesta}
arises from the fact that whilst \textit{LB} depended upon the \textit{Gesta} for information
concerning the abbots both drew also upon the lost martyrology. That the 'old
book' referred to by Matthew on folio 63r of Nero D i is synonymous with the
lost martyrology, is suggested by the fact that the extracts cited by Matthew
refer to various grants in precisely the same order in which they occur in \textit{LB}
although the latter supplies greater detail in each case. Moreover it seems to be
the case that Matthew includes on folio 63r only those gifts and transactions that
are not dealt with in the text of the \textit{Gesta} but were evidently in the martyrology
since they appear in \textit{LB}; those of Ethelric of Dorchester, Ulf, Eadwine of
Caddington, Thelgifu, Sexi, Had, Egelbertus, Wulsinus, Wulfsinus, Aelfstanus
and Thurefleda.\textsuperscript{149} Matthew seems to be supplementing the text of the \textit{Gesta}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{146}] \textit{LB}, ff.86rv and 91v.
\item[\textsuperscript{147}] Wats, p.36 (\textit{GA} i. 67).
\item[\textsuperscript{148}] The general similarity between the two works stems from the fact that both draw upon the
lost martyrology. Both state that Henry I was present at the dedication of 1129 and that he
granted to the abbey Bishopscot. Both say that Stephen gave permission for the destruction of
Kingsbury and both claim that Lanfranc granted one thousand marks for work on the church.
\textit{LB}, ff.5r, 5rv, 86r. Wats, pp.35, 45, 31 (\textit{GA} i. 71, 122, 53-54).
\item[\textsuperscript{149}] See \textit{LB}, ff.86r and 89v-90v. There are a few cases where names are included in the list and
in the \textit{Gesta}; Oswulph and Ayeliza (Wats, p.28, \textit{GA} i. 39, \textit{LB}, ff.89rv), Aethelwine Niger
(Wats, p.28, \textit{GA} i. 39, \textit{LB}, ff.89v-90r). Occasionally the \textit{Gesta} and the list fail to include
material that was evidently in the martyrology since it appears in \textit{LB} e.g. the grant to the
abbey of land at Codicote by Elfhelmus, minister of Ethelred, f.89r.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
with information derived from the martyrology; whether the onus of the original omission from the *Gesta* of this information rests on Matthew or Adam remains to be seen.

The source underlying the twelfth-century martyrology was probably a cartulary much fuller than any now extant for the abbey. Several of the entries in *LB* contain details given by extant charters; its account of the bequest of Oswulphus and his wife Ayeliza of land at Stodham and twenty shillings on their entry into the fraternity of the abbey is mirrored in a charter in *B* and Matthew's *LA*. That Ayeliza agreed to the bequest for the sake of the soul of her former husband Ulf, is also stated by both *B* and *N*. Similarly, *LB* contains a paraphrased version of the will of Aethelgifu, the details of which follow exactly those supplied in the cartularies, *B* and *LA*; all that it fails to mention is that Standon and Offelean were to pass first to Leofsinus and Leofsius and then to their respective sons before passing to St Albans. It would only be logical to assume that similar documentary evidence underlay those transactions mentioned in *LB* for which charters are not extant. Beyond Keynes's lost cartulary represented by *B*, lay a much fuller cartulary upon which the lost martyrology drew. The order of charters in *B* and *LA* mirrors in part the order of entries in the martyrology. Hence Oswulph and Aethelguth, Ulf, Eadwine of Caddington, Aethelwine Niger, and Aethelgifu appear in precisely this order in the cartularies and *LB*. The cartulary represented by *B* was clearly extracted from the fuller cartulary that underlay the abbey's martyrology. Why should anyone have desired an abridged cartulary in the twelfth century? If we assume

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that Adam's roll was a domestic history or even a short list of benefactors, it may be the case that an abridged cartulary was produced to substantiate the information given in the text. If this were the case then Matthew must be deprived of credit for the novel attaching of a separate collection of documentary evidence to works of history. An abridged cartulary may however have had a purpose all its own; it can be no coincidence that of the transactions preserved by LB, only the least obscure appear to be retained by B and LA. Those of the wholly shadowy nobles Sexi, Had, Thurefleda etc are not preserved. Those of Offa, Ethelred, Aethelgifu and Eadwine of Caddington are. More importantly, the majority of the charters recorded in B do not receive mention in the Gesta, a fact which weakens the proposition that B aimed at substantiating the text. It might even have been the case that, after the compilation of the original fuller cartulary, charters had been lost leaving the construction of a briefer cartulary unavoidable. If we consider the notion that B itself constituted the roll of Adam, then Matthew cleverly blended the evidence of the martyrology and the roll cartulary to produce his domestic history. It might well have been the case that Adam's work aimed at supplementing the lost martyrology. Could it possibly be that those detailed lists of land acquisitions so 'foreign' a feature in the Gesta and so obviously absent from LB constituted the contents of Adam's roll? In essence, the network of relationships embracing three lost texts (the lost cartulary, martyrology and roll) and three extant texts (B, N and LB) is difficult, if not impossible to establish with any certainty. We

152 For example, the grant of Ethelred, procurator of the Mercians, to Wulfgar, minister, of 15 manentes at Waladene in 888. B, ff.162v, LA, f.151r, CM vi. 11-12 or the grant of King Ethelred to Aelfhelm of 5 mansae at Codicote B, ff.161v-162v, LA, f.151r, CM vi. 18-20.

153 The two lists of land referred to on ff.63r and 167v may mark the entire extent of the martyrology's interest in land.
cannot even begin to guess at the number of lost manuscripts that may have connected those of which we do have mention.

Following the above discussions certain points require reiteration. First, it seems unlikely that Adam the Cellarer wrote a domestic history of the scale and sophistication of the *Gesta*. Second, AD's candidacy for the twelfth-century domestic history can be rejected out of hand. Third, it is possible that Adam's roll constituted a cartulary, list of territorial acquisitions or financial record of some sort. It is unlikely that Matthew, in writing the *Gesta*, owed any great debt to a previous history written by Adam. When he penned the opening line of that work on f 30r of Nero D i he was composing, not copying.

The most important question of all remains to be asked. Does the autograph manuscript of the *Gesta* itself (Nero D i) display palaeographical features suggestive of the notion that an exemplar is being copied? There is considerable 'overshooting' of columns with text extending into the lower margin. There are also fluctuations in column widths; the narrower columns, ff.38r, 39r, and 38v contain fewer abbreviated words than usual. Occasionally letters are extended and distorted to fill redundant space on a line. Matthew was clearly copying from a codex or bundle of quires rather than from a roll since he seems to be pacing himself against column and folio rather than membrane. Beneath N lay Matthew's own first draft. The extant text of this work is not a direct copy of

154 N. ff.36r, 38r, 38v, 39v. M. Parkes noted that this was a feature of the Leningrad Bede, ff.1-63 and Thomson observed a similar feature in the case of CUL Dd. 86. M.B Parkes *The Scriptorium of Wearmouth-Jarrow* (Jarrow Lecture, 1982), p.6 and *Manuscripts*, i. 8. Both suggest that such textual dislocation is a sign that an exemplar is being copied column for column.

155 Note the extended horizontal 's', on f.31r line 16.
Adam's roll. Matthew had never intended a simple transcription of Adam's work and in his production of drafts he had ample opportunity to alter and rework the source material upon which he drew. It is interesting to note that Matthew employed other scribes when he wished the text of Wendover to be copied nearly verbatim into CCCC 26. He took over responsibility for the text himself, only when he wished to make considerable alterations, as he did with Roger's account of Mohammed under the annal for 622. That the *Gesta* is from start to finish in Matthew's own hand perhaps suggests that he had never intended verbatim repetition of Adam's work, whatever it was. Yet it is intriguing to discover that flourishing of the text begins only with the account of the abbacy of Simon, which, Vaughan argued, marked the beginning of original composition by Matthew. By way of comparison, elaborate flourishing of the first initial of the *Vitae Offarum* heralds a dearth of this form of textual ornamentation from the next seven folios until, on f.9r, a flourish initial introduces the account of Offa of Mercia. Andrew Todd believed that this section of the text alone may be firmly attributed to Matthew. Might it be the case that Matthew employed decoration of the text as a means of indicating the point at which his own responsibility for a text's contents began. This is certainly an attractive proposition and if true, would solve a good many arguments. Yet Matthew in fact appears to decorate texts in a fairly sporadic manner; his useful marginal notae and rubric to the *Gesta* itself fizzle out for apparently no reason on f.34r with the opening of the account of Frederick and his ornamental page headers in the *Chronica* begin not with the annal for 1235, but with that for 1066. Textual decoration cannot be used as a guide to authorship in this case.

156 N, f.48v and Vaughan, *Matthew Paris*, p.185 for his remarks on the flourishing of the *Gesta*.

157 Personal correspondence with Andrew Todd.
Alighting finally upon the internal evidence of the text itself, can the use of a twelfth-century roll be detected in the pages of the *Gesta*? Vaughan and Thomson, believed that it could and their belief stemmed in part from the assumption that Matthew's 'interpolations' into the roll were readily distinguishable. Those passages considered to be 'interpolations' by Vaughan and Thomson are summarized below.

1. Egwin's recovery of the relics of St Alban, seized during Viking raids on England and carried to Odense in Denmark. Wats, p. 25 (*GA* i. 12-19).

2. The fraud of abbot Alfric II concerning the relics of St Alban. Wats, pp. 27-28 (*GA* i. 34-36).

3. The statement that Leofric refused the archbishopric of Canterbury. Wats, p. 27 (*GA* i. 28-29). Vaughan believed that Matthew, failing to recognize the mistaken transposition of the names Leofric and Alfric in his source, attempted to remedy the statement that Leofric (really Alfric), became archbishop of Canterbury. That Matthew had problems over this issue is confirmed by the fact that his statement in the *Chronica* that Leofric became archbishop is added over an erasure on folio 41v of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS. 16. This problem will be discussed further in the next chapter.

4. King Edward's vision of the drowning of the King of Denmark, during a mass at Westminster. Wats, p. 27 (*GA* i. 35).

5. The flight of Frederick to Ely taking with him a few books, clothes and essentials, (i.e. no relics as claimed by the monks of Ely). Wats, pp. 30-31 (*GA* i. 50-51).

6. Anselm's vision of the death of William Rufus. Wats, p. 34 (*GA* i. 65).


9. Details on Anketil, formerly the mintmaster of the King of Denmark. Wats, pp. 38-39 (GA i. 86-87). This is apparently a doublet, or a repetition of information provided Wats, p. 38 (GA i. 84).

10. The account of the reformation of Croyland by Godfrey and Adam the Cellarer. Wats, pp. 44-45 (GA i. 120-121).

11. Marginal notes occurring during the abbacy of Ralph. The first concerns Ralph's career before he entered the monastery of St Albans and his close association with the bishop of Lincoln. The second concerns the alleged crime of the prior Alquin. Wats, pp. 41-42 (GA i. 106 and 107-108).


13. Pope Adrian IV's appointment of three bishops to examine the claims of the convent of Ely to possess the relics of St Albans. Wats, pp. 57-58 (GA i. 175-177).

14. The statement that abbot Robert gave gifts to the Roman cardinals and the household of the Pope 'sciens ipsos Romanos esse insatiabiles sanguisugae filios, pecunie sitibundos'. Wats, p. 46 (GA i. 127).

To be added to this list, Vaughan suggests, are scattered phrases and quotations popularly employed by Matthew; 'Novit Ille qui nihil ignorat', 'felix suscepit incrementum' etc and certain quotations from Virgil, Terence and Ovid. 158

That the passages cited above are the work of Matthew is indisputable. Most contain phrases to be found in other works attributed to him. The note on prior Alquin that occupies the left hand margin of folio 40v, contains the phrases 'secus quam deceret' and 'misertus et miseratus'. The accounts of the reformation of Croyland and the foundation of Sopwell make use of 'felix suscepit incrementum'. The information on the translation of 1129 harbours the phrases 'fictus aut fessus', 'in ore gladii', and 'dotabo et ditabo'. Amidst details of the pious fraud of Alfric is to be found one of Matthew's favourite quotations from Ovid (Met. III. I. 5) preceded by the usual 'secundum illud poeticum'. Moreover, many of the passages reflect the peculiar interests and biases of Matthew; hence his faith in the powers of character assessment possessed by Robert who gave gifts to the Roman cardinals; 'sciens ipsos Romanos esse insatiabiles sanguisugae filios, pecunie sitibundos' and his inclusion in the Gesta of a description of Edward's vision paralleled in the Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei. The passages selected by Vaughan and Thomson are topically and stylistically typical of Matthew.

Yet the grounds for considering them as interpolations into an earlier source cited verbatim for the most part are somewhat weaker. Some, such as the details concerning Anketil and Nicholas Breakspear, for example, do constitute doublets or repetition of information found elsewhere in the Gesta. Yet

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159 Wats, pp.41-42 (GA i. 107-108).
160 N, f.38r, N, f.42r, Wats, pp.44-45 and 37 (GA i. 121 and 81).
161 N, f.39rv, Wats, pp.38-39 (GA i. 87, 89, 91) and N, f. 33r. Wats, p.27 (GA i. 35).
162 Wats, pp.46 and 27 (GA i. 127 and 35) and Estoire ll.1279-1372.
163 See above p.51.
doublets occur in those annals of the *Chronica* written wholly by Matthew. The annal for 1240 for instance, contains two doublets, the description of the arrival of the Count of Flanders in England met by king, courtiers, London citizens, grand horses, trumpets and five hundred marks to be paid to him annually in return for homage, is repeated from the annal for 1239. Similarly, the gruesome description of the circumcision of a boy by the Jews of Norwich occurs also in the previous annal. 164 Matthew is certainly not averse to a little repetition; Simon the Norman's provocative comment that Henry III's dependence on foreigners stemmed from the natural infidelity of Englishmen, riled Matthew sufficiently to merit a second inclusion in his narrative. 165 It seems that the doublets of the *Gesta* are just as likely to have arisen from Matthew's careless arrangement of material and repetitive tendencies as from interpolation into a source. Another doublet in the text concerns the shrinking of Herbert Duketh to the size of a dwarf. Quite clearly Matthew intended to include an account of this under the account of the abbacy of Geoffrey; 'Ut autem, de multis multa praeteriens, taceam veritatis indicia, et perhibeat Herbertus Duketh, qui in praesentia sua usque ad simialem decrevit staturam, evidens testimonium, et alii quamplures, unum duxi huic opusculo inserendum'. 166 Yet for some reason he abandoned this plan and eventually included further details on Hubert in the account of Robert. This doublet at least was the result of careless planning, an altered authorial decision. Had Matthew really interpolated this information into an older source I doubt whether the result would have been so messy. Two other doublets written into the margins of the abbacy of Ralph do, however

164 *CM* iv. 19-20; ibid. iii. 616-617.
165 ibid. iv, 5 and 64.
166 *Wats.*, p.38 (*GA* i. 86).
appear to provide an alternative version of events described in the main text. The first note concerning Ralph's life before he entered the monastery and his subsequent career is more tacitly critical of the role played by the bishop of Lincoln in Ralph's promotion to the abbacy. The second note that deals with the crimes of the prior Alquin, shares with the main text the suggestion that Ralph's persecution of the prior was unjustified and that Alquin's rise to the abbacy of Westminster was achieved through his own merits yet it plays more heavily upon the shame and confusion felt by the latter. Is it the case that Matthew is supplying, from another source, a view at variance with that of Adam contained in the main text. This may well be the case yet it leaves us still uncertain as to the precise extent of the debt that Matthew owed to his source and there is always the possibility that Matthew was editing his own work. He was, after all, master of 'alternative versions'. His dampening down of the more heated passages in the Historia Anglorum had given him plenty of training in providing them. The occurrence of doublets is thus not a certain indication of change of author. The second note is however intriguing in as far as it is headed with the words 'Additum de alio rotulo'. Rather than implying that the main text is thus a verbatim copy of the roll of Adam, this note simply implies that Matthew drew upon two rolls in his construction of the Gesta. Of great interest however, is the fact that the material said to have been derived 'de alio rotulo' contains two phrases reminiscent of Matthew; 'secus quam decreter' and 'misertus et miseratus'. Had Matthew himself gathered material on the domestic history of St Albans in roll form before his compilation of the Gesta? If so, Matthew's responsibility for the content of the Gesta might appear altogether greater.


Both Vaughan and Thomson considered some of the passages to be interpolations because they clumsily interrupt the narrative or are chronologically misplaced. The account of the foundation of Sopwell for instance, slices in two a description of Geoffrey's commencement of the shrine of St Alban, his failure to finish it and the explanation for this (namely, Geoffrey's selling of much of the material collected for the benefit of the poor). As if attempting to compensate for his clumsiness Matthew added 'A diverticulo igitur ad materiam a qua paululum declinavimus redeuntes'. Yet Matthew is equally clumsy and awkward in his account of the abbacy of John de Hertford; his concise and flowing account of the election of John, his profession of fealty to the pope and his receipt of homage from those subject to him is interrupted by the insertion of a letter from the king to the tenants of the abbey informing them of this election and a lengthy digression on how the elect should conduct himself. And again, Matthew corrects his wandering pen; 'sed a diverticulo ad materiam, que scilicet, est de gestis abbatum redeemus'. Chronological misplacements occur with the account of the reformation of Croyland. Matthew may however have made this mistake had he written the Gesta from scratch. The argument proposed by Vaughan and Thomson, that interpolations can be detected because they are clumsy and chronologically inaccurate appears to rest upon the assumption that works wholly compiled by Matthew would have lacked these features. The Chronica, for all its merits, is a peculiarly jumpy text and in general, Matthew's historical works lack the 'smoothly logical skills'
that, Binski suggests, characterise his hagiography. Moreover, his misplacing of the reformation of Croyland is nothing compared to the chronological havoc he reeks in the account of the reign of William I in the Flores.

Several of the passages cited as interpolations are headed by a variant of the phrase 'duximus huic scripto inserendum'. Thus Matthew prefaces his account of Adrian IV's appointment of three bishops to assess St Albans claim to the relics of the saint with 'Ad cumulum autem titulorum Roberti, unum duximus huic scripto inserendum'. The additional information supplied for Nicholas Breakspear follows on from Matthew's statement that 'Et quia non videtur penitus alienum a materia mea, de serie vite eius summam opusculo huic duximus interserere'. Did Matthew deliberately 'advertise' his insertion of additional material? This would certainly mark a departure from his practise in Wendover's Flores where additions are made silently. Yet once again the problem is complex; variants of this phrase are employed in the latter section of the Gesta that is wholly and indisputably attributable to Matthew. Following on from the account of the election of John of Hertford, Matthew introduces a description of the account of the burial of William of Trumpington with the words 'Et ne transeamus officium sepulture eiusdem abbatis Willelmi, libet hanc interpositionem paulisper materie continuationem prerumpendo, inserere'. That

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174 Wats, p.57 (GA i. 175).

175 N, f.42v, Wats, p.45 (GA i. 124).
a couple of the 'interpolations' end with the seemingly apologetic phrase 'a diverticulum vero materie redeuntes' is equally unrevealing. This phrase occurs too in those abbacies penned indisputably by Matthew.\textsuperscript{176}

The grounds for considering these passages as nothing more than interpolations into a twelfth-century source are not altogether firm. If anything, they serve merely to stamp upon the early vitae the hallmark of Matthew's authorship. In any case, any attempt to disentangle additions to a lost source is a dangerous game. There will always remain hidden passages that bear no tell-tale trait of the author or interpolator; the exploits of Offa, narrated under the account of the abbacy of Willegod, probably stemmed from the pen of Matthew in view of the fact that his interest in Offa worked its way into several other of his works such as the \textit{Vie de Seint Auban le Rei} and the \textit{Chronica} itself.\textsuperscript{177} The account of the Norman Conquest occurring in the account of Frederick's abbacy shares the sympathies that coloured his account of the same event in the \textit{Historia} and stylistic links between the two are plentiful.\textsuperscript{178} The account of Willegod appears to harbour much that might be attributable to Matthew. It tells of Offa's decree that a vacant church should quickly elect from amongst its own congregation a pastor, lest the widowed church appear empty of religion and lacking in religious men. It omits mention of any role played by the bishop.\textsuperscript{179} This passage in the \textit{Gesta} clearly stems from the foundation charter of Offa dateable to 793, the earliest extant versions of which are represented by charters in \textit{B} and \textit{LA}.\textsuperscript{180}

\textsuperscript{176} N, f.64r, Wats, pp.87, 88, 91, 92 (GA i. 301, 307, 510, 520).
\textsuperscript{177} Wats, pp. 22-24, 33, 38 (GA i. 5-6, 7-8, 9, 62, 86).
\textsuperscript{178} See chapter five. N, ff.33v-34v. Wats, pp.29-31 (GA i. 41-51).
\textsuperscript{179} N, f.30v. Wats, p.23 (GA i. 8-9).
\textsuperscript{180} B, ff.153r-154v and 155v-156r, N, f.149r (N has no second version of Offa's 793 charter.}
foundation charter contained in LA is of particular interest here for in the margin next to the relevant section concerning the vacant church, there occurs a note in Matthew's hand that reads as follows:

Nota hoc dictum respicere tempus antequam Romam adire disponeret ubi ab omni episcopali subiectione ecclesiam exemptit sed hanc fecit pro cautela; ne si obiter moreretur, ecclesia tali libertate destitueretur.

It can be no mere coincidence that the *Gesta* omits any reference to the role of the bishop, an issue regarding which Matthew displayed some sensitivity in the *Liber Additamentorum*. In short, even were we to assume that Matthew contributed to a lost domestic chronicle, the size of that contribution could never be accurately gauged unless the roll itself were discovered. Even so, those passages cited by Vaughan and Thomson, and the 'hidden' material that also emanated from the pen of Matthew, indicate that he substantially altered the shape and emphasis of whatever it was that he inherited from Adam. More probably, he rewrote it entirely.

Vaughan argued that a clear break in the text after the account of the abbacy of Robert (1151-1166), marked the end of Matthew's dependence upon the work of Adam and the beginning of his own original composition. He suggested that 'Up to the end of the account of Robert's abbacy (1151-1166), the whole

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181 It is possible that to Matthew may also be attributed the statement that Robert was buried at the feet of Paul; this statement does, after all make nonsense of the *Gesta*'s assertion that the burial sites of the early abbots had been lost due to the carelessness of abbot Robert. Wats. p.59 (GA i. 182-183).
emphasis of the *Gesta Abbatum* is on territorial acquisitions and litigation concerning them...". This is an oversimplification: the concerns of the first eighteen *vitae* are as diverse as those of the latter five and they range from Wulsig's scandalous habit of dining ladies at his table to the political meanderings of abbot Frederick. Litigation and territorial transactions have little or no place in the accounts of Willegod, Eadric, Wulnoth, Eadfrith. Wulsin, Ealdred and Eadmar. It is only with the tenth abbot 'Alfric II' that detailed lists of territorial acquisitions begin. Even in the better documented account of the abbacy of Frederick, the *Gesta* can hardly be said to lend priority to territorial matters. Its account of Frederick's dispute with the abbot of Westminster over the manor of Aldenham occupies relatively little space compared with the detailed account of the Norman Conquest and English resistance that takes up the bulk of the narrative. Paul's rebuilding of the abbey and his reforms and ordinances are lent as great a prominence as his regaining of lands such as Tiwa, Apsa, Cnicumba, Redburn and Childewick. In the accounts of Richard and Geoffrey, territorial matters are crammed into brief, detailed sections of text, cataloguing losses and acquisitions. No such losses or acquisitions are mentioned for the abbacy of Ralph. Vaughan's assertion that the early lives focus heavily upon matters of land and litigation only really holds true in the case

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183 Wats, pp.23 and 29-31 (*GA* i. 10, 141-151).
184 Wats, p.27 (*GA* i. 33).
185 Wats, pp.29-31 (*GA* i. 43-44).
186 Wats, pp.31-34 (*GA* i. 51-66).
187 Wats, pp.34, 40 (*GA* i. 67-69, 72, 78).
188 Wats, pp.41-42 (*GA* i. 106-110).
of the abbacy of Robert where disputes over the church of Luton, the fee of Aldenham and the wood of Northaw feature strongly. Yet, even then, the vast percentage of the account of Robert's abbacy is occupied with a description of his acquisition of papal privileges, his tussles with the bishop of Lincoln and his constitutional position relative to the cells of the abbey. The account of the abbacy of Robert, in length and in depth is very much the odd man out amongst the early vitae. Whilst it is true that the later lives do not share the interest in territorial affairs, manifested by their earlier counterparts, they do share an interest in relics, in the relationship between abbot and cell and the artistic heritage of the abbey. If the latter five lives are more closely detailed, it is because they recount events of Matthew's own time: the convent's forgoing of wine for fifteen years to raise funds for the dormitory, John de Cella's prediction of his death from the evidence of his urine, and William of Trumpington's decree that shoes be made of tawed leather rather than blazen, are the kind of details that result only from the contemporaneity of the subject matter. The interest that the earlier lives display in territorial affairs (and that interest is by no means predominant), may reflect simply the nature of the source material employed by Matthew rather than dependence on the work of another author with differing interests. Moreover, Vaughan's claim that a change of author is indicated by the brevity of the account of Simon compared with that of Robert, is rather undermined by the fact that there are several such hiccups in the text of the Gesta, the account of the abbacy of Richard is half the length of that of his predecessor Paul although he was abbot for twenty two years compared to

189 Wats, pp.43-45, 47-48, 53-55 (GA i. 113-119, 134, 159-166).
190 Wats, pp.45-47, 48-53, 55-59 (GA i. 147-158, 166-175).
191 Wats, pp.73, 83 (GA i. 246, 293).
Paul's sixteen. Similarly, although Ralph remained abbot for five years, a third the length of the abbacy of Robert, the account of the former is only one twentieth the length of the account of the latter. Evidence for a change in author after the account of Robert is slight.

Attempts to disentangle the 'contributions' of Matthew and Adam to the Gesta have in general ignored the remarkable degree of uniformity displayed by the work as a whole. Apart from a similarity of interests displayed by the vitae in general, the format of considering an abbot's good then bad deeds spans the whole work and the technique of considering the election of a new abbot before the death of his predecessor is adopted not only in the later lives but also in the account of Robert. On purely stylistic grounds, (that is, on the basis of the occurrence of words, phrases and illusions commonly employed by Matthew), Matthew's presence in the first eighteen vitae is as detectable as in the latter five, many of his stock phrases make an appearance - 'felix suscepit incrementum', 'Novit Ille qui nihil ignorat', 'luxta illud poeticum', 'immo potius', 'sic quaerere nodum in scirpo', 'in magna cordis amaritudine', 'secus quam deceret aut expedet' and 'in ore gladii'. Word plays frequently occurring in the works of

192 N, ff.36v-37r and 34v-36v, Wats, pp.31-34 and 34-35 (GA i. 51-66 and 66-72).
194 Wats, pp. 59 and 86-87 (GA i. 182-184 and 301).
195 'Novit Ille qui nihil ignorat' - N, ff.32r, 40r, Wats, pp.26 and 41 (GA i. 30 and 96).
   'luxta illud poeticum' - N, f.30r, Wats, p.23 (GA i. 7).
   'Immo potius' - N, f.33v, Wats, p.29 (GA i. 42).
   'Sic quaerere nodum in scirpo' - N, f.33v, Wats, p.29 (GA i. 44).
   'In magna cordis amaritudine' - N, f.35r, Wats, p.31 (GA i. 53).
   'Secus quam deceret aut expedet' - N, ff.37r, 43v, Wats, pp.35 and 41 (GA i. 71 and 107).
   'In ore gladii' - N, ff.30v, 39v, Wats, pp.23 and 39 (GA i. 8 and 89).
   'Felix suscepit incrementum' - N, ff.36r, 38r, 41v, 42r, Wats, pp.30, 34, 37, 44, 45 (GA i. 47, 65, 81, 119, 121, 125).
Matthew are also to be found; 'misertus et miseratus', 'doto et dito' as are the
adverbs 'procaciter', 'truculentet'and the nouns 'vispilio', 'muscipulum'. The
twenty-eight instances in which the latter five vitae contain those words and
phrases that Vaughan suggets are indicative of Matthew's authorship are more
than matched by the thirty three similar instances in the early section of the
*Gesta*. Moreover phrases such as 'sine more dispendio', 'sereno vultu' and
'meritis suis exigentibus', recurrent in the early section and not considered by
Vaughan to be reminiscent of Matthew, are to be found frequently in the latter
section of the text. Is this really the result of
stylistic plagiarism rather than the work of a single creative mind? If Matthew
did depend for the early vitae, on a domestic history written in the form of a
cellarer's roll, then he made an excellent job of soldering his own text onto its
base and concealing the join.

The arguments proposed in this chapter are necessarily inconclusive. Discussions
of the relationships of extant texts with lost predecessors will never be

196 'Misertus et miseratus' - *N*, ff. 38r, 40v, 42v, Wats, pp. 37, 41, 46 (*GA* i. 82, 108, 128).
'doto et dito' - *N*, ff. 36r, 39r, Wats, pp. 33 and 40 (*GA* i. 62 and 91).
'procaciter' - *N*, ff. 33r, 43r, 47r, Wats, pp. 27, 46, 56 (*GA* i. 35, 128, 169).
'truculentet' - *N*, f. 34v, Wats, p. 30 (*GA* i. 50).
'vispilio' - *N*, ff. 31v, 33r, 35v, Wats, pp. 25, 28, 33 (*GA* i. 24, 40, 60).
'muscipulum' - *N*, f. 34r, Wats, p. 29 (*GA* i. 44).
'impu dentet' - *N*, ff. 30v, 38r, Wats, pp. 24 and 37 (*GA* i. 11 and 80).
'sagino' - *N*, f. 30v, Wats, p. 24 (*GA* i. 10).

197 'sine more dispendio' - *N*, ff. 48r (x2), 57r, 59v (x2), 63v, Wats, pp. 23, 30, 75, 85 (*GA*
i. 8, 46, 255, 257).
'sereno vultu' - *N*, ff. 42v, 48r, 57v, Wats, p. 46 (*GA* i. 126, 127).
'Meritis suis exigentibus' - *N*, ff. 32r, 34r, 40v, 40v, 42v (x2), Wats, pp. 26 and 29 (*GA*
i. 28, 45).

198 *N*, ff 34r and 49r.
conducive to the making of concrete conclusions. Yet, it has here been proposed that the first eighteen vitae of the Gesta, far from being a verbatim transcription of a lost source, are almost wholly the work of Matthew. A great deal too much has been inferred from a carelessly written note that in itself constitutes an oasis of ambiguities, it reveals nothing concerning the nature of the 'antiquus rotulus', it fails to state clearly whether that 'rotulus' was attributable to Adam or Bartholomew and it makes no suggestion whatsoever of the extent of the debt that Matthew owed to either of them. It is unlike any other acknowledgements of authorship introduced by Matthew into his works. His ascription of a poem in Cambridge University Library MS. Dd xi 78 to Henry d'Avranches, is written in rubrics that immediately precede the text in question and read as follows;

'Verus magistri, h. abrincensis de coronam spinea, de cruce, et ferro lancee quibus rex lodowicus franciam insignivit.' The cases where Matthew cites the authors of some of his marginal additions in the Chronica, follow a similar layout. The words 'De cronicis Sigiberti, scilicet, de anno domini DCC LXXIII', written in red, firmly head a short passage that occupies the top left hand corner of CCC 26, f.57v. Eusebius is acknowledged in a similar manner on f.61v. The note on folio 30r of N has all the appearance of an afterthought. Neither is it justifiable to assume that he probably handled Adam's roll as he handled Wendover's Flores. Matthew is innovative and unpredictable in his handling of works of early history. He took the conveniently compiled prose Latin Life of Edward the Confessor ascribed to Ailred of Rievaulx and he reworked it in vernacular, octosyllabic verse form, making substantial additions and omissions. He took disparate material on King Offa of Mercia and wrote a Latin prose history from scratch, and from a knowledge of early English history he produced

199 f.38r.
illustrated genealogies and circular diagrams of the heptarchy, in which the seven kingdoms were geographically positioned around an elaborate portrayal of the bearded 'protomonarchus', King Alfred of Wessex. Matthew clearly did make use of a roll written by Adam or Bartholomew in his composition of the Gesta but the assumption that he inherited a fully blown domestic history rests on very little. Whilst the earliest extant version of the text remains that written by Matthew himself into N and whilst there is evidence that he substantially altered and added to his source, there are no obvious reasons why the Gesta should not be considered illustrative of Matthew's active interest in and approach to the distant Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman pasts. The next chapter will consider Matthew's portrayal of the Anglo-Saxon abbots of St Albans in the Gesta.

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200 See CCCC 16. f.iiirv and CCCC 26, f.iv v.
Chapter Two

THE ANGLO-SAXON ABBOTS OF ST ALBANS

So, the abbot, weighing up the dangers that threatened, to avoid the greater evil chose the lesser, and conceded to these same [insurgents], all that they asked. The villeins, therefore, realizing that their time of evil had come, made the petitions that we laid out previously, asking that new charters of liberty be drawn up for them and that the obligations that their fathers had owed to the monastery, be returned to them forthwith and without delay. The abbot, desiring to be free of their insolence, ordered that the obligations that they sought be handed over and that charters of the liberties that they desired be made according to their judgement. Consequently, in the market of the town, alongside the statue of the cross, they promptly burnt these obligations alongside certain of the muniments and rolls of the abbey that they had extorted from the archdeacon...'.

The year is 1381, the town, St Albans, the abbot, Thomas de la Mare and the 'villani', an insurgent peasant population who had derived their political aspirations and pyromaniacal tendencies from their counterparts at Brentwood in Essex. Their actions had devastating implications for our knowledge of the early history of St Albans abbey. With the fiery demise of those charters, rolls and

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1 G4 iii. 308. See also iii. 370 for a description of the tumultuous events of this year: 'Tunc non solum libros de officio Archidiaconi, eorum notantes excessus et vitia, scelera. et delicta, rapuerunt et incenderunt, sed multa munimenta monasterii in eadem furia combuserunt, quamquam tales praesumptiones eis nec profuissent nec prosperc successissent.' See also H.R Luard, *Annales Monastici* 2 vols. (RS, 1864-1869), iii. 416-417 for a general account of the damage wrought in 1381.
muniments, in the market place at St Albans, were lost many a cornerstone in the historical jigsaw of the town's early abbey. Of the twenty charters relating directly to the abbey in the Anglo-Saxon and early Anglo-Norman periods (up to 1100), one is a complete fabrication, three are fundamentally concocted, three probably contain spurious interpolations and only two are extant on a single sheet membrane in a hand contemporaneous with the transactions described. Similarly, only four of the twenty-four twelfth-century charters of St Albans survive in an original form. The *Gesta Abbatum*, written by Matthew Paris almost two centuries after the death of the last Anglo-Saxon king, has provided the basis for most reconstructions of the early history of the house. This chapter possesses a dual purpose. Primarily it gauges the historicity of information supplied in the early *vitae* of the *Gesta*. Was Matthew's vision of St Albans past rooted in fact or fancy? Does the *Gesta* contain the fruits of scholarly research or a consciously distorted image of St Albans' past? These questions can only be answered once the extant evidence relating to abbey in the years up to around 1066, has been gathered together and critically compared with the material provided by Matthew. It is hoped that an attempt to assess the depth and accuracy of Matthew's historical vision will open at least a chink in the curtains of obscurity behind which the Anglo-Saxon abbey lies hidden.

Systematic exploration of St Albans monastic past depends heavily upon an ability to hurdle one particularly formidable obstacle; the difficulty of accurately assessing the dates and chronology of the early abbots. The sequence of abbots presiding over the early abbey of St Albans is documented in numerous manuscripts. The sequences supplied by B.L. Cotton MSS. Vitellius A xx, Julius D vii, Additional MS. 62777, Claudius E iv, Nero D vii, Harley MSS. 3775, 7032, 7520, Lansdowne MS. 260, Lambeth Palace Library MS. 585 and San
Marino, California, Huntingdon Lib. H.M.26341 are all derived or extracted from the *Gesta Abbatum*. Only the lists in B.L. Cotton MS. Royal 13 E vi, Oxford, Magdalene MS. 53 and the manuscripts of Roger Wendover's *Flores*, Oxford, Bodleian, Douce MS. 207 are independent of the *Gesta*. By virtue of the detail it supplies and its status as the earliest extant domestic history of the abbey, the *Gesta* is the starting point or primary source of information relating to the chronology of St Albans abbots. From this information and the limited amount of independent evidence the following can be inferred. Offa, King of Mercia (757-796), committed his newly founded or refounded abbey to the care of Willegod in 793; a marginal note on f. 30r of Nero D i states that the abbey's foundation (and thus probably, Willegod's installation as abbot) occurred in the thirty-third year of Offa's reign. This would have been the year 789-790, yet we know that the *Gesta* really meant the year 793 because it assigns Offa's death to 'the year 795, that is, the thirty-fifth year of the reign of this Offa.' The *Gesta*'s erroneous assumption that Offa began to reign in 760-761 instead of 757 appears to rest upon the evidence of two charters contained in the *Liber Additamentorum* and Brussels cartulary, namely Offa's grant of fifty 'mansiones' at to St Albans abbey (S136) and Offa's grant of thirty 'manentes' to the abbey (S138) where 793 and 795 are likewise claimed to be the thirty-third and thirty-

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2 The list on f.23r of Royal MS.13 E vi is written in a hand of the early thirteenth century and thus predates the *Gesta*. See below pp.118-119 for evidence in support of the proposal that the list in Magdalene MS. 53 is more likely to have drawn upon sequence supplied in Royal MS.13 E vi rather than upon the *Gesta*.

3 Wats, p.22 (GA i. 4). Willegod's installation as abbot is depicted by Matthew in Dublin, Trinity College MS. 177, f. 60v. M.R. Kauffmann notes how this picture smooths over the issue of royal interference in an abbatial election in its portrayal of Offa as a model king: 'Hagiography, Pictorial Narrative, and the Politics of Kingship: Studies in the Matthew Paris Saints Lives and Illustrations to the Life of St Louis' (unpublished PhD thesis, Courtauld Institute, 1992), pp.167-168. The foundation of the abbey and Offa's role therein will be considered in the next chapter.

4 Wats p.23 (GA i. 6).
fifth years of Offa's reign respectively. The first of these charters alongside S151 (Ecgfrith's grant of five manenetes at Pinesfield Farm, in Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire to St Albans under Willegod, (A.D. 796) offers perhaps some independent evidence of the dates to be attributed to the abbey's first abbot.

There is evidence to suggest that Willegod was believed, in later centuries to have attained the abbacy in 793. B.L. Royal MS.13 E vi harbours early thirteenth-century St Albans copies of Ralph Diceto's *Imagines Historiarum* and *Abbreviationes Chronicorum*. On folio 23r, alongside the *Imagines*' annal for 793 occur the following two entries, written in different hands; Inventio sancti albani a rege offa kal. augusti. 'Rex Offa eadem die kal. augusti qua die beatus albanus inventus fuit Willegodum abbatem .1. monachis intro duobus ecclesie beati albani prefect. Et sub regulari vita vivere instituit.' The *Gesta* states that Willegod died 'within two months of the death of the king [Offa]' and 'in the same year' in which Ecgfrid, son of Offa granted land in Pynesfeld to the monastery, namely 796. This implies that Matthew believed that Offa must have died towards the *end* of 795, the year cited earlier in the text and yet the

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5 *CM* vi. 1-4 and 4-8. These charters are also to be found in *B*, ff.153r-154v and 154v-155v and the fourteenth-century Chatsworth cartulary at ff. 9r and 1-2r *B* also contains a vernacular combination of S136 and S138 on ff.155v-156v, which does not appear in *L*; this is of interest because it is dated 793, the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Offa, calculated correctly from 757. The dating of S136 and S138 appears to be dependent on a different and erroneous calculation adopted by the compiler of the Latin versions. All this is noted by S. Keynes, 'A Lost Cartulary of St Albans Abbey', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 22 (1993), 253-279.

6 *CM* vi. 8-10. B. f. 156v. M. Gelling has certain reservations about the authenticity of these charters; *The Early Charters of the Thames Valley* (Leicester, 1979), nos. 162, 144. 164.

7 Matthew displays some signs of uncertainty over the date of Willegod's installation. This is perhaps not surprising given the chronological blunders that he inherited from the Brussels cartulary. On f.41v of CCCC 16 (the first volume of Matthew's autograph of the *Chronica Maiora*), he notes that Willegod became abbot in 794.

8 Wats, p.23 (*GA* i. 6-7).
ASC claims that he died on 29th July 796. It seems probable that Willegod died around September 796.

St Alban's second abbot, Eadric, was, according to the Gesta, elected from the bosom of the church and raised to the pastoral seat without the inconvenience of delay or the potential scandal of schism, 'In the same year in which King Offa was carried from this world'. Little can be ascertained concerning the precise length of Eadric's abbacy. In the margin of f. 30r, alongside the statement that Eadric was related by blood to Offa and Ecgfrid, occurs a note telling of a certain King Aethelwulf, son of Ecgfrid, who ruled for twenty years and five months and was finally killed by the Danes in 828. No king ruling in England in the first quarter of the ninth century was called Aethelwulf. Neither is there record of a king of any name having been killed by the Danes in 828. Ecgfrid's son and successor was called Coenwulf. He ruled Mercia from 796-821 and was succeeded by Ceolwulf I (?821-823) and Beornwulf (823-825). It is possible that Matthew meant Aethelwulf of Wessex (839-855). This Aethelwulf was not killed by the Danes. Yet it cannot be mere coincidence that he died in the year in which the next king to be cited in the margins of the Gesta, King Edmund of East Anglia acceded to the throne, 855. Initially, the Gesta's marginal list of kings flows chronologically even though the kings themselves often ruled different kingdoms. Whatever the degree of truth underlying

9 Wats, p.23 (GA i. 7, 6) and ASC (D) s.a 796. ASC (E) claims that Offa died on 10th August.
10 Wats, p.23 (GA i. 8).
11 Wats, p.23 (GA i. 9 n.1 and N, f. 30v).
12 The reference to Edmund appears alongside a reference to Alfred the Great on N, f.30. Wats, p.23 (GA i. 10).
13 See chapter 4.
Matthew's charismatic reference to Aethelwulf, it is clear that he believed the abbacy of Eadric to have extended into and perhaps beyond the first quarter of the ninth century. No extant charters are witnessed by Eadric and the only piece of independent evidence that we have concerning him is the day of his death, May 15th, as noted in the martyrology of Belvoir abbey, Cambridge, Trinity College MS O. 9. 25. 14

Abbot Wlsig succeeded Eadric 'sine longi temporis intervallo'. The Gesta's account of his abbacy contains no precise clues as to the dates of his accession or death yet, marginal references to kings Edmund of East Anglia (885-870), Alfred of Wessex (871-899) and his son Edward the Elder (899-939), seem to imply that his abbacy spanned most of the ninth century. Either Wlsig lived to an age of which even Abraham might have been proud, or the marginal king list is not intended to tally chronologically with events described in the main text. It is also possible that an abbot or two are missing. All that can be gleaned from the Gesta concerning the abbacy of Wulnoth, Wlsig's successor is that it lasted for eleven years, two or three of which he spent correcting the errors of his predecessor. In the margin, Matthew noted that King Athelstan, having ruled


15 Wats, p.23 (GA i. 9).

16 Wats, pp.23-24 (GA i. 9-11) and N, ff. 30v - 31r. The total absence of primary documentation for ninth-century St Albans makes an independent assessment of the length of his rule impossible.

17 L. F.R Williams claimed that Wulfsig probably flourished in the middle years of the ninth century because the crimes he committed were compatible the decline of monasticism in pre-Alfredian England as chronicled by Asser and Fulcard of Rheims; see History of the Abbey of St Alban (London, 1917), pp.20-21.

18 Wats, p.24 (GA i. 11 and 20).
for sixteen years, died in 940. In fact, he reigned from the summer of 925 until October 939. It is possible that Wulnoth was abbot during the first half of the tenth century. In any case Matthew indirectly betrays his belief that Wulnoth's abbacy probably postdated 870. His account of the monk Egwin's recovery of the relics of St Alban from the monastery of Odensee, occurring on ff.25v-26r of Nero D i, makes passing reference to certain saints shrines distinguished for their miracle inducing powers; the shrine of St Edmund who was martyred in 870 is included.

The abbacy of Eadfrith, Wulnoth's successor appears to have spanned the second quarter of the tenth century for reference is made in the margin to the reign of King Edmund 'the pious', who ruled for eight years and who is probably to be identified with Edmund, King of Wessex October 939-May 946. The Gesta implies that the abbacy of Eadric was of a substantial length; Eadric, it states, installed in the oratory of St Germanus, Wulfa the Dane, who subsequently 'vitam longo tempore duxit heremitam'. Eadfrith survived him to resign his abbacy and adopt the life of a hermit, inspired by Wulfa's example. There followed a vacancy of one year during which time, Eadfrith still lived for he was finally buried 'inter abbates' by the next abbot Wulsin who had held his predecessor in great esteem.

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19 Wats, p.24 (GA i. 11) and N, 31r.

20 See below, p.123 n.111 for R. Vaughan's theory, however, that Matthew chronologically misplaced the Egwin story by some two centuries; he suggested that the events it described occurred in the late eleventh century and not in the ninth. The story is, however, internally consistent for the events would appear to fit into the allotted eleven years of the abbacy of Wulnoth.

21 Wats, p.24 (GA i. 20) and N, f.31r and Wats, p.24 (GA i. 20-22). No charter evidence survives for Eadfrith.

22 Wats, p.24 (GA i. 22).
the *Gesta* supplies nothing except the meaningless statement that he died 'plenus
dierum'. The next four abbots, Alfric I, Ealdred, Eadmar and Leofric appear to
occupy the second half of the tenth century. References to kings Edgar (959-
979) and Edward the Martyr (975-979) occur in the margins of the account of
Alfric I. That the abbacy of Alfric I did in any case postdate that of Eadfrith is
suggested by the *Gesta* 's statement that he bought a fishpool from King Edgar
with a cup that Eadfrith had presented to the abbey. Abbot Ealdred appears to
have ruled in the third quarter of the tenth century; this is not evident from the
*Gesta* which merely comments upon his premature death, but from charter
evidence; an 'Ealdred abbas' witnesses charters of 958, 959, 968, and 970. His
identification with the abbot of St Albans is by no means proven yet the
prominent position that he occupies in the witness lists of at least two of these
charters (S675 and S673), would have been fitting for an abbot of St Albans.

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23 P. Newcombe believed that the abbacy of Wulsin coincided with the reign of King Eadred
946-955; *The History of the Ancient and Royal Foundation called the Abbey of St Alban in the

24 Wats, p.25 (GA i. 23, n.5) and N, 31v.

25 Wats, p.25, (GA i. 23).

26 W de G Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum* 3 vols. (London, 1885-1893) and Index (1899), nos.
1042, 1047, 1220, 1266, (S675, 673, 806, 779) An abbot Aldred witnessed charters of 969 and
969/970, both granting privileges to Westminster. Yet in each case the charters are also
witnessed by 'Alfric abbas', possibly the Alfric who succeeded Ealdred to the abbacy.
Identification of 'Aldred' with the abbot of St Albans is problematic.

27 In both S675, (Edgar's grant of Wootton to Aethelric his minister) and S673, (Edgar's
confirmation of privileges and restoration of land to Abingdon abbey), Ealdred's signature is
relatively elaborate; 'Ego Ealdred abbas consensi et manu propria signum sanctae crucis
impressi' and 'Ego Ealdred Christo allubescence abbas crucis modum gaudens imposui' S675 is
a confirmation of privileges granted by King Edgar to the abbey, abbot Alfric 970-990 had
been a monk of Abingdon before he rose to the abbacy. As evidence for the significance of the
abbey or at least its patron saint in the Anglo-Saxon period, it is worth noting that St Albans
heads the list of saint's resting places, the Secgan, a list derived from a pre-Viking list of
Northumbrian and Midland interest, and a Wessex production relating to South and East
England in the period of West Saxon domination and tenth-century reform. See M.Biddle,
'Archaeology, Architecture and the Cult of Saints in Anglo-Saxon England', L.A.S. Butler and
R.K. Morris (eds.), *The Anglo-Saxon Church. Papers on History, Architecture and
All we know of his successor Eadmar is that he continued excavations of Verulamium begun by his predecessor and died 'post aliquorum annorum curricula' 28.

The Gesta's 'Leofric' (in reality Alfric II) appears to have reigned at some point in the third quarter of the tenth century for a famine referred to in the account of his abbacy could be that mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (D and E) under the annal for 976. 29 It is probable that the 'Leofric' or Alfric II of the Gesta is to be identified with the Alfric who was monk of Abingdon, abbot of St Albans from c.970-c.990, bishop of Ramsbury c.990-995 and archbishop of Canterbury 995-1005. 30 His identification with Alfric the Grammarians is

28 Wats, pp.25-26 (GA i. 26 and 28). See below p.110 for my proposition that Eadmar perhaps succeeded Leofric rather than Ealdred and that he flourished in the early eleventh rather than the mid tenth.

29 Wats, p.26 (GA i. 29). For discussion of Matthew's mistaken transposition of the names Leofric and Alfric II in the Gesta see below pp.111-119.

30 Although one manuscript of Florence of Worcester's Chronicon ex Chronicis suggests that our Alfric was a monk of Glastonbury, another manuscript testifies to his profession as a monk of Abingdon: B. Thorpe (ed.), Florentii Wigornensis Monachi Chronicon ex Chronicis 2 vols. (London, 1849), i. 158n.) William of Malmesbury in the De Gestis Pontificis, claims that Alfric rose to the abbacy of Abingdon. N.E.S.A.Hamilton (ed.), Willemi Malmesbiriensis Monachi De Gestis Pontificum Anglorum (RS, 1870) [henceforth GP], p.32. There is, however, no mention of this in the Abingdon Chronicle. William of Malmesbury is again the authority for Alfric of St Albans' rise to the bishopric of Ramsbury: GP i. 32 and ii. 181-2. Keynes argued that he later retained this see whilst archbishop of Canterbury; The Diplomas of Ethelred the Unready 978-1016 (Cambridge, 1980), p.119 n.115. Eadmer states that the Alfric who was made abbot of St Albans was the Alfric ' quem ecclesia Cantuariensis pastorem postmodum habuit ...'. J. Raine, The Historians of the Church of York 3 vols. (RS, 1879-1894), ii. 21-22. According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (F), Alfric was elected 'fram Aegelrede cinge. 7 fram eallan his witan' at Amesbury in Wiltshire, in Easter 995, and he visited Rome to collect the pallium in 997. He died as archbishop in 1005 according to B.L. Cotton Tiberius C i, Cotton Nero C ix f.21r, Vitellius C xii and CUL, Kk i 22; the latter notice of his death occurs as an addition to a thirteenth-century Abingdon calendar; Keynes, Diplomas, p.260. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle C, D and E have entries for his death under the annal for 1006 but Whitelock believes that 16th November 1005 is the correct date of death; D. Whitelock (ed.), The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (London, 1961), p.87, n.4. The Abingdon Chronicle includes Alfric in a list of archbishops who died in the reign of Ethelred (J. Stevenson,
popularly disregarded. The dates of his abbacy can be established upon the following grounds. Eadmer's *Vita Oswaldi* written in the early twelfth century, states that Oswald bishop of Worcester made Aelfric abbot of St Albans. That this event occurred in around 970 is suggested by the fact that Aelfric's promotion to the abbacy is noted by Eadmer alongside that of Brihtnoth's to Ely whose appointment was confirmed by King Edgar at a meeting of the Witan at Walmer in Kent in the year 970. Moreover, an abbot Aelfric witnessed several charters during the period 970-990, after which he became bishop of Ramsbury, although a proliferation of Alfrics in the tenth century makes firm identification problematic.

'Alfric II' (in reality Leofric), appears to be assigned an inordinately long abbacy; kings noted in the margin the account of him are Cnut (1016-1035), Harold Harefoot (1035-1040), Harthacnut (1040-1042) and Edward the Confessor (1042-1066). The account of his abbacy makes reference apparently to the

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32 S779.

33 'Alfrics' witness charter regularly from 921, through the 930s, 950s and 960s. During the reign of Ethelred there were abbot Alfrics of Malmesbury, Evesham and Athelney.

34 Wats, pp.26-28 (GA i. 31-38). N, ff.32v-33r. Leofric was the brother of Alfric. This is mentioned in the *Gesta* itself. S 916, Ethelred's grant to the monastery of land at Norton, 'Rodhanger' and Oxhey, makes reference to 'Alfric my faithful archbishop and Leofric his brother.' The relationship of the two men is noted again by Matthew in the short list of benefactors on f.63r of Nero D i and in the fourteenth-century list of St Albans abbots extant in Oxford, Magdalene College MS. 53, p.1. 'Leofricus abbas' is cited as one of two executors in the will of archbishop Alfric; Cotton MS. Claudius B vi, f.102v.
attempted invasion of Magnus of Norway in 1045 and it suggests that Edward was an old man during Leofric's time; he is said to have denounced the fraudulent behaviour of the monks of Ely over the relics of Alban 'cum funesto lecto decubuisset'. This seems to suggest that Leofric survived into the 1060s, a clear improbability if we date his accession to 990. The charter evidence suggests a abbacy of more modest length; Leofric witnessed charters in 993, 997, 1002 and 1005 and is referred to in documents dateable to 1002-1005 and 1007. The Belvoir obit list dates his death to 20 April. The period covered by the abbacy of Leofstan, Leofric's successor, is more easily ascertainable on the basis of evidence supplied by the Gesta. The text reveals that in his time five estates (named later as Studham, Grandborough, Redbourn, Langley and 'aet Thwangtune'), were given to the abbey with the consent of King Edward the Confessor, whose familiar, confessor and adviser Leofstan was. It is difficult to believe that Leofstan can have obtained such a position of trust, in Edward's final months or days. It must have been the work of several years. A wealth of evidence supports the notion that Leofstan's accession to the abbey considerably predated the Norman Conquest and that Leofric did not survive into the 1060s as the Gesta suggests. The Gesta tells of Leofstan's grant of the manor of Flamstead to Turnot in order to retain him as protector of the monastery; Turnot, it is learnt, fulfilled his side of the agreement and so too did his heirs, 'until the time of King William, who conquered England for himself. Clearly

35 Wats, p. 28 (GA i. 38).

36 S876, 891, 901, 911. Leofrics witness charters of 969, 970, 972 and 974, but these are probably the abbots of Exeter and Peterborough; Keynes, Diplomas, Table 5: 'Subscriptions of abbots 993-1016'. Nichols, The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester, Appendix, ii. 28.

37 Wats, p. 28 (GA i. 38-39).

38 Wats, p. 28 (GA i. 40).
there had been a substantial time lapse between Leofstan's grant to Turnot and the year 1066. There is good reason to believe that Leofstan's accession is to be dated to the late 1040s. Three transactions referred to under the account of his abbacy stem from documents incorporated into the Liber Additamentorum and the Brussels cartulary. All of them, Matthew states 'in chirographis Anglicis hujus ecclesie reperiuntur.' Two, in particular, enable the establishment of a 'terminus ante quem' for Leofstan's elevation to the abbacy. His 'conventio' with the widow Tova respecting land at 'Cyrictiwa' or Great Tew in Oxfordshire, can be dated to 1049 x 1052 on the basis of a reference to Ulf bishop of Dorchester whose episcopacy lasted these three years. The record of the second transaction, that in which Aethelwine the Black and his wife Wynflaed granted land to the abbey is preserved on f. 152r of Nero D i and ff 165rv of B). The document itself makes no specific reference to abbot Leofstan yet his involvement in the transaction it records is indicated in a miracle story to be found in B.L. Cotton Faustina B iv, a St Albans manuscript dateable to around 1200. It tells of a certain 'Egelwin niger', a pious man living in the time of King Edward, whose generosity led him to bestow upon St Albans, the four estates of Redburn, Langley, Grandborough and 'Hernangtunam' (the charter's 'Thwangetunam'). On his death however, a certain powerful and rich duke of Danish birth named Berno usurped one of the manors that he had granted to the abbey. Leofstan's pleas that Berno should fear for his soul met with angry swearing and the seizure of another manor, yet miraculously, Berno having lost all his landed possessions

39 Oswulph and Aethelitha-grant of Studham - B, ff 163rv.  
- N, ff 151v.  
Aethelwine and Winefleda-grant of four estates - B, ff 165rv.  
- N, ff 152r  
Leofstan-grant of Great Tew to Tova - B, ff 163v-164r.  
- N, ff 151v.  
These are all referred to at Wats, p.28, (GA i. 39).
died suddenly. Leofstan's attempted negotiations with Berno on Egelwin's death, perhaps suggest that the initial grant had been made during his abbacy and Matthew evidently believed it had for he as we have seen, he included mention of it in the Gesta's account of Leofstan's abbacy. More importantly, the charter recording that grant can be dated to 1042 x 1049 on the grounds that the witnesses include Edward the Confessor (1042-1065) and bishop Eadnoth of Dorchester (1034-1049). It therefore seems highly probable that Leofstan became abbot at some point in the 1040s and possibly in 1047 for alongside the annal for this year in MS. Royal 13 E vi (an early thirteenth-century manuscript containing Ralph Diceto's Imagines Historiarum and Abbreviationes Chronicorum) occur the words 'Lefstanus abbas ecclesie sancti Albani xii.'

Leofstan survived until early in 1066 for the Gesta states that he died 'swiftly after' ('cito post') King Edward, who himself died on 5 January 1066. The Belvoir obit lists enable even greater precision in this matter for the name Leofstan occurs next to 21 January. It seems that the abbot died some sixteen days after Edward. The charter evidence for the abbacy of Leofstan is slight and spurious. A Leofstan witnessed a spurious charter of 1062 and another witnessed a charter of 1061, but neither can be proven synonymous with the abbot of St Albans. It is possible that Leofstan resigned his abbacy sometime before his death for his successor Frederick is said to have been taken charge of

40 f. 35r.
41 Wats, p.29 (GA i. 41).
42 Nichols, The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester, Appendix, ii. 25.
43 S1036 (King Edward's the Confessor's grant of privileges and land to Waltham abbey, dateable to 1062) and S1033 (Edward's grant of Ottery St Mary, Devon to St Mary's, Rouen, dateable to 1061).
the affairs of the monastery some two years before the Norman Conquest, but this is problematic. 44

Leofstan's successor Frederick, is said to have been elected abbot and to have been carrying out the affairs of the abbey two years before the Conquest ('biennio ante conquestum') and his suggested abbacy of 'twelve years or more' ('annis duodecim et amplius') is compatible with this suggestion. 45 Yet the Gesta stated earlier that Frederick was created abbot in 1066 and blessed in the year 'quo dux Normannorum Willelmus applicuit in Anglia, contra Haraldum dimicaturus'. 46 Vaughan suggested that this paragraph sits awkwardly in the account of Frederick's abbacy (-it is a fair way into the account-) because uncertainty over his dates had resulted from Matthew's deliberate deletion of an abbot Ecgfrid, which will be discussed at a later stage. 47 This is possibly, although not necessarily the case for although the early thirteenth-century MS Royal Evi confirms his accession in 1066, he might have acted as abbot elect over a two year period of vacancy. 48 The Gesta appears to make a distinction between Frederick's election and subsequent creation and blessing as abbot. He

44 Wats, p.29 (GA i.44). Eadfrith had, after all, set a precedent for early retirement; Wats, p.24, (GA i. 21-22).

45 Wats, p.29, (GA i.44). The Gesta's claim that Frederick wrangled with the abbot of Westminster over the manor of Aldenham some twenty years after the initial grant of the lease does, however, contradict its statement that Frederick ruled for twelve years. Paul's accession in 1077 makes the former of these two claims a clear impossibility. See below pp.120-128 for the possibility that Frederick did not succeed Leofstan.

46 Wats, p.29 (GA i. 44 and n.2).


48 f.36v.
was elected ('electus') abbot in 1064 and created ('creatus') and blessed
('benedictus') abbot in 1066. 49 This scenario alone might account for the
awkwardly positioned dating paragraph in the *Gesta*, although, this is tentatively
proposed.

Evidence independent of the *Gesta* regarding Frederick is limited. He witnessed
the accord between archbishops Lanfranc and Thomas regarding primacy of the
see of Canterbury, in 1072 and he was present at the Council of London in
1075.50 He probably died in 1077 for the *Gesta* states that Paul was promoted
to the abbacy in this year and ruled for eleven years.51 The date of Paul's
accession is confirmed by entries in MS. Julius D vii and MS. Royal 13 E vi.52

The dates of abbots succeeding Frederick can be accurately established on the
basis of information supplied by the *Gesta* itself and marginal notes occurring in
MS. Julius D vii (containing John of Wallingford's precis of the *Gesta*) and MS.
Royal 13 E vi. Paul ruled from 28 June 1077 until 11 November 1093, Richard
from 1097- 16 May 1119, Geoffrey from 1119 - 25 February 1146 and Ralph
from 8 May 1146 - 5 July 1151.53 The chronological sequence of Anglo-Saxon

49 Wats, p.29 (GA i. 44). See also R. Vaughan, 'The Election of Abbots of St Albans in the
Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society,
xlvii (1953), (Cambridge, 1954), 1-12.
50 GR ii. 298 and 349-352.
51 Wats, p.31 (GA i. 52).
52 Julius D vii, f.117v and Royal 13 E vi, f.40v.
53 Wats, p.31 | GA | Julius D vii | Royal 13 E vi
Paul | p.31 | pp.52 + 64 | f.117v | f.40v
Richard | p.34 | pp.66 + 72 | f.117v | f.41v
Geoffrey | No dates in *Gesta* | f.118r | f.45v
Ralph | pp.41-42 | p.110 | f.118v | f.48r
The only exception to the general accuracy and clarity with which dates are assigned to later
abbots of St Alban, is the confusion which is to be found in the Winchester annals (B.L.
105
abbots supplied by the *Gesta* is as confusing and unviable as the later sequence is precise. An apparent dearth of abbots in the ninth century, is more than compensated for by the glut of abbots occupying the tenth. It is scarcely surprising that some have sought to provide alternative chronologies. William Page, contributor to the Hertfordshire volume of the *Victoria County History* was the first to do so, although his conclusions bear an uncanny resemblance to those reached by the antiquarian John Shrimpton some time before 1644.54 Declaring the *Gesta*’s list of abbots unreliable, he amalgamated the two Alfrics, noted the accidental transposition of the names Alfric II and Leofric in the *Gesta* and moved abbots Ealdred and Eadmar from the mid tenth to the early eleventh century.55 Richard Vaughan adopted rather different tactics. Allowing ‘a liberal twenty years’ per abbacy in the absence of other evidence, and conjecturing a forty year interregnum from around 930-970, he filled the ninth century with an abundance of abbots and generously freed the tenth of its heavy load. Moreover, having retained the mystical Alfric I, and having avoided teleportation of abbots Ealdred and Eadmar to the eleventh centuries, he prided himself on the fact that ‘the author has only found it necessary to invent one abbot’. This abbot was Ecgfrid, whom he slotted between abbots Leofstan and Frederick.56 L.F.R. Williams provided a chronological table at the front of his *History of the Abbey of St Albans*, but gave no detailed explanation of the methods by which he had

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55 W. Page, 'St Albans Abbey', pp 370-371.

56 These conclusions Vaughan reached in 'Anglo-Saxon Abbots', passim.
reached these dates. Stigand and Ecgfrid did not feature in his chronology and he did not allow for tenth-century interregnum. Unsurprisingly, the resultant chronologies varied significantly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VCH</th>
<th>WILLIAMS</th>
<th>VAUGHAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WILLEGOD - 793-796</td>
<td>fl. c. 796?</td>
<td>793-796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EADRIC - 796 - ?</td>
<td>fl. c. 810?</td>
<td>Died c. 810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WLSIG - Ninth century</td>
<td>fl. c. 830?</td>
<td>Died c. 830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WLNOTH - Probably early tenth century</td>
<td>fl. c. 860?</td>
<td>Died c. 840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EADFRITH - Tenth century</td>
<td>fl. c. 880?</td>
<td>Died c. 860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WLSINUS - Mid tenth century</td>
<td>fl. c. 900?</td>
<td>Died c. 870?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALFRIC (I and II combined) - 968x990</td>
<td>ALFRIC I fl. c. 920</td>
<td>Died c. 890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEOFRIC - 990x1007</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EALDRED - c. 1007</td>
<td>EALDRED fl. c. 940?</td>
<td>Died c. 910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EADMAR - Living 1045</td>
<td>EADMAR fl. c. 960?</td>
<td>Died c. 930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEOFSTAN - 1048x1066</td>
<td>LEOFSTAN fl. c. 1030x64</td>
<td>1040x1066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STIGAND - 1066</td>
<td>STIGAND-1066</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FREDERICK - 1066x1077</td>
<td>fl. 1064x1077</td>
<td>1071x1077</td>
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</tbody>
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For his amalgamation of the two Alfrics Page provided no clear explanation. Vaughan appears, quite rightly to have placed faith in the Gesta’s statement that

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57 For these tables see Page, 'St Albans Abbey' (VCH iv. 414-415 and Vaughan, 'Anglo-Saxon Abbots', p. 2. D. Knowles and C. Brooke drew up a chronology of the abbots from the time of Alfric I, amalgamating the arguments put forward by Page and Vaughan; they placed Eadmar after Leofric and Alfric II’s abbacy was positioned between that of Eadmar and that of Leofstan. D. Knowles, C. N. L. Brooke and V. C. M. London, Heads of Religious Houses, England and Wales, 940-1216 (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 64-66. Vaughan’s system of assigning twenty years per abbacy when there was no other available evidence resulted in a chronology that appeared to take no account of the kings noted in the margins of Nero D 1. Although this king list cannot be used as a definitive guide to the chronology and dates of the abbots, they provide a good clue as to when Matthew believed the abbots to have flourished; he was anchoring them to a background of national history. Given the paucity of evidence, we can scarcely afford to disregard this list.

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there were, in fact, two. Yet Page's proposition is not entirely lacking in plausibility. It is certainly intriguing that the two Alfrics appear to have shared a similar objective in the elimination of the threat presented by royal ministers in close proximity to the abbey. Alfric I's purchase of a royal fishpool and his draining of it to render it undesirable to future kings (and their ministers) is paralleled in Alfric II's purchase of royal lands at Kingsbury, his subjection of its people and his levelling of its royal mansion.58 It is also intriguing that whilst no clues whatsoever are provided as to the time in which abbots Ealdred and Eadmar ruled, Alfric I appears to have been active in the time of Edgar and his later namesake in the time of Ethelred.59 The abbacy of the abbot Alfric of St Albans who rose later to the archbishopric of Canterbury and whose biographical details were discussed above, spanned the reigns of both of these kings. It is certainly possible that the two Alfrics of the Gesta must be considered as one yet it is far from proven. And there is some evidence to suggest that thirteenth-century St Albans firmly believed there to have been two. The early thirteenth-century list of abbots occurring on f.23r of Royal MS.13 E vi firmly distinguishes between 'Alfricus' and the later 'Aluricus'. Roger Wendover preserved this distinction in the list of abbots that he included in his Flores Historiarum under the annal for 1214 and Matthew did not eliminate it when compiling his Chronica Maiora.60 In any case it is extremely difficult to explain why a short piece of the account of Alfric's abbacy should have come adrift in the Gesta if there really had been only one abbot of this name. The

58 Wats, pp.25 and 29 (GA i. 23-24 and 32-33).

59 Wats, p.25 (GA i. 23, n.5 and N, f.31r). Wats, p.26 (GA i. 29, n.4, N, f.32r). The marginal reference to Ethelred occurs alongside the account of 'Leofric' which, it will be proposed, was really the account of Alfric II.

60 CM ii. 283-284 (1214 annal) and CCCC 16, f.41v (text and left hand margin). 108
account of the earlier Alfric in the *Gesta*, although brief, is entirely self-contained and betrays no signs of textual dislocation. Having drained the fishpool and carried out many laudable deeds, Alfric died as abbot. Given the inadequacy of the evidence the question as to whether there was one or two Alfrics must remain open.

Page's belief that the Alfric's were one and the same had repercussions for his chronological positioning of two other abbots, Ealdred and Eadmar. He argued that there was no room for these two between Alfric and Leofric, although this depended upon his assumption that the account of Alfric I constituted that of the real Alfric and that that of Alfric II was an interpolation. He also suggested that since Verularniurn was not granted to St Albans until the time of Leofric, then the excavations conducted there by Ealdred and Eadmar, must be placed, along with their site directors in the early tenth century. He thus produced the following order of abbots; Alfric, Leofric, Ealdred, Eadmar, Leofstan. Vaughan saw no need to adopt this sequence since he believed there to have been two Alfrics and merely distanced abbots Ealdred and Eadmar from the reign of Alfric by a forty year interregnum. Evidence for such an interregnum is slight. A *Life of Oswald*, compiled in around 995-1005 by an anonymous monk of Ramsey, states that St Albans was one of the sites on which Edgar suggested that Oswald

61 Moreover, the thematic unity that was noted above between the accounts of the two 'Alfrics' is really a similarity between Alfric I and Leofric if the error of transposition is allowed for. This makes it unlikely that the account of Alfric I belongs with that of 'Alfric II'.

62 *G i* 24.

63 Page, 'St Albans Abbey', p.370.

64 Ibid., pp.370-371.

might build his proposed monastery and Vaughan argued that this must have occurred at some point between c.961 (Oswald's elevation to the archbishopric) and 970 (the date of the compilation of the *Regularis Concordia*). 66 That monastic life ceased at St Albans during the Viking period and that the abbey must be considered a refoundation of c.969 are, however, unsubstantiated elsewhere. 67 Moreover, there is some evidence to suggest that Ealdred at least must remain firmly planted in the middle years of the tenth century. As was shown above, an 'Ealdredus abbas' witnessed charters of 958, 959, 968 and 990 and his identification with the abbot of St Albans mentioned in the *Gesta* is certainly possible. No such charter evidence is extant for Eadmar, yet it is highly intriguing that a charter dateable to 1012, is witnessed by one 'Eadmaer', whom Keynes, Knowles and Brooke, considered to be the abbot of St Albans. 68 If Eadmer did indeed flourish in the first quarter of the eleventh century, then the tales of his archaeological activities would be wholly credible, since they would postdate Leoffric's acquisition of Verulamium. It may be that Eadmar succeeded Leofric rather than Ealdred and that Matthew's juxtaposition of Ealdred and Eadmar stemmed from a concern for thematic unity. Of the twenty three abbots in total for whom Matthew provides biographical details, these two alone appear to have shared an archaeological bent. 69

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66 Ibid., p.5. The anonymous *Life* is printed in Raine, *Historians of the Church of York*, pp.399-475. For its dating see A. Gransden, *Historical Writing*, p.78 and n.83.

67 P. Taylor, 'The Early St Albans Endowment'.


69 A positioning of the abbacy of Eadmar in the early tenth century would eliminate the need to assign Leofric an abbacy of some fifty years.
It is fortunate that for at least one of the *Gesta*’s chronological hiccups, independent evidence is sufficient to allow its detection. The accidental transposition of the names Leoffic and Alfric II, opening the accounts of these two in the *Gesta*, is generally agreed upon and indeed there is much to suggest that such a transposition did occur.\(^{70}\) The biographical details of the two supplied above disprove the *Gesta*’s clumsy and confused suggestion that Leoffic was elected archbishop of Canterbury, and strongly imply that he did in fact succeed Alfric as abbot of St Albans; his signatures to charters postdate those of Alfric, and he was cited as executor of the latter’s will.\(^{71}\) It seems that Leoffic gained the abbacy in around 990, the year in which Alfric was elected to the bishopric of Ramsbury. Moreover, nothing that the *Gesta* attributes to the abbacy of Leoffic, would appear out of place in the account of the abbacy of Alfric II or out of line with the events of c.970-990. The famine said to have occurred in the time of Leoffic, as we have seen, is probably to be identified with that which is described under the annals for 975 and 976 in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.\(^{72}\) Conversely, certain aspects of the *Gesta*’s account of the abbacy of 'Alfric II' suggest that abbot Leofric is the intended subject. It states for instance that 'Alfric II' bought the royal lands at Kingsbury 'cum adhuc secularis, et regis Etheldredi cancellarius extitisset'.\(^{73}\) Alfric cannot have been a secular in the reign of Ethelred because he became abbot of St Albans some nine years before the latter's accession to the throne. Leofric might well have been

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\(^{71}\) Whitelock, *Wills*, p.53.

\(^{72}\) Wats. p.26 (*GA* i. 29). *ASC C* places the famine under 976 and D and E place it under 975.

\(^{73}\) Wats. p.27 (*GA* i. 32).
given that he gained the abbacy only once Ethelred had been king for over a decade. Furthermore, references to Cnut and later monarchs in the account of 'Alfric', are nonsensical in view of the fact that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* dates his death to the year 1005.\(^7^4\) In the *Gesta*, Matthew states that, 'Alfric' paid King Ethelred one thousand marks for the pledge of 'Eadulfingtun'.\(^7^5\) In the *Liber Additamentorum* however, Matthew had transcribed a charter by which Ethelred granted fifty-five *mansae* at 'Eadulfingtun' and six at Flamstead and St Albans to the monastery on condition that abbot Leofric pay two hundred pounds with which the king might bribe the Danes.\(^7^6\) The charter notes Leofric's subsequent return of the land at 'Eadulfingtun'. The *Gesta*'s attribution to Alffic of the buying of 'Eadulfingtun' would appear to confirm notions that the names 'Leofric' and 'Alfric' have been accidentally transposed. Yet it possible that Alfric was responsible for the initial purchase. Leofric's return of 'Eadulfingtun', as noted in the *Liber*'s charter, was probably in implementation of the will of Alfric that preferred its return in exchange for royal confirmation of the abbey's possession of Kingsbury,

Et hoc apud ipsum suum dominium erat interveniens, ut concederet loco sancti albani terram apud cingesbiri, et ipse in commutationem reciperet eadulfingum.\(^7^7\)

\(^7^4\) Wats, pp.26-28 (*GA* i. 33-34) and ASC A s.a.1005

\(^7^5\) Wats, p.27 (*GA* i. 33).

\(^7^6\) S912. *LA*, f.150r.

\(^7^7\) B.L. Cotton MS. Claudius B vi, f.102v and Whitelock, *Wills*, p.53.
It is odd that Alfric, archbishop of Canterbury should have sought to dispose of an estate of the abbey of St Albans. Had he himself been responsible for its initial purchase he might well considered its disposal a personal prerogative. It is possible, therefore, that the charter S912, has merely kaleidoscoped events by making Leoffic responsible for both the purchase and return of the land. The question of Alfric's involvement in the purchase of 'Eadulfingtun' must remain open. Equally worthy of note is the Gesta's claim that 'Alfric' purchased 'Oxonage', or Oxhey in Hertfordshire and granted land at Tew to Leofsige in exchange for ten pounds. Tew at least, is mentioned in the will of archbishop Alfric, for it was to go to St Albans on the death of Ceolric. Moreover, it is possible that the Gesta's 'Oxonage' (Oxhey, Herts.) was a corruption of the 'osannig' (Osney, Oxon.), of Aelfric's will. 'Osannig' like Tew was to fall to the abbey on the death of Ceolric. It is perhaps safer to assume a certain degree of muddling of events attributed to Alffric and Leoffic alongside a simple transposition of their names for as it has been shown, some of the transactions recorded under the abbacy of 'Alfric II' might rightly have belonged to the time of Alfric, 970-990.

Vaughan assumed that the error of transposition was not Matthew's. He implies that Matthew copied it from the roll of Adam. Unaware of the nature of the error, yet fully familiar with the fact that Leoffic succeeded Alfric as abbot and

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78 It is unlikely that Abbot Alfric would have purchased 'Eadulfingtun' in order to supply Ethelred with Danegeld as the charter suggests that Leofric did, because the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, (D and F), records that 991 was the first occasion on which the Danes were paid tribute (£10,000). Alfric was no longer abbot in this year. It is possible however that Ethelred had begun the lengthy process of collection towards the end of his abbacy.

79 Wats, p.27 (GA i. 33). The will of Ulf grants Oxhey (Herts.) to the abbey in around 1042 x 1066; CM vi. 32-33, B, f.164rv and LA, f.151v.

80 Whitelock, Wills, p.53.
that it was the latter who rose to the archbishopric, Matthew, he suggested, interpolated a statement to the effect that Leofric, having been elected archbishop on account of his excellent merits, did not consent to his own promotion, claiming that his brother Alfric was more worthy of this.\textsuperscript{81} That Matthew was wholly convinced of the historical reality of Alfric's elevation to the archbishopric must be disputed. He displays extreme uncertainty as to the careers of the brothers in question. The \textit{Gesta} itself is ambiguous, whilst Matthew may have introduced the corrective statement noted above he left at least one mention of Leofric's elevation to the archbishopric unaltered.\textsuperscript{82} In addition, Matthew's concern for visual clarification of this issue, led to his sole marginal illustration in the autograph manuscript of the \textit{Gesta}, that of an archbishop, occurring alongside the relevant passage in the account of Leofric.\textsuperscript{83} His own uncertainty had fuelled that illustration and that illustration betrayed it. He had initially intended it to be a depiction of Alfric for beneath it there is a marginal note; 'Leofricus electus in archiepiscopum, non consensit, asserens fratrem suum Alfricum fuisse multo digniorem. [Al]fricus igitur effectus est archiepiscopus Cantuariæ.'\textsuperscript{84} This echoes the corrective statement that Matthew included in the main text, yet the subsequent erasure of the first syllable of Alfricus betrays indecision. The illustration of Alfric was to become an illustration of Leoffic. That the erasure of the 'Al' was carried out by Matthew himself is strongly suggested by his substantial erasure and rewriting of a section

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{81}] Vaughan, \textit{Matthew Paris}, pp.199-200.
\item[\textsuperscript{82}] Wats, p.26 (\textit{GA} i. 34).
\item[\textsuperscript{83}] N, f. 32v.
\item[\textsuperscript{84}] N, f. 32v.
\end{itemize}

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occurring in the list of abbots that he incorporated into his *Chronica Maiora* under the annal for 1214, following Wendover's *Flores*. It reads as follows.


The section of this note enclosed within square brackets is written over an erasure, a feature upon which neither Luard not Vaughan commented. Unfortunately, the resulting thinness of the scraped parchment makes a deciphering of the original impossible, although it is likely to have claimed, with Wendover's *Flores* that Leoffic succeeded Alfric as abbot and that Alfric became archbishop of Canterbury. 86

At this point it is worth pointing out the heinous crimes committed by nineteenth-century editors of Wendover's *Flores*. H.O. Coxe was the first to edit the text in the 1840s. 87 Basing his edition on only one of the two extant

85 CM ii. 283-284 and CCCC 16, f.41v.

86 Bodleian, Douce MS. ccvii. f.165v and B.L. Cotton MS. Otho D v. f.131r.

manuscripts, Bodleian, Douce 207, his version of the list of abbots incorporated in the annal for 1214 contained a peculiarly muddled section that coincided not unsurprisingly with the mention of Leofric and Alfric.

...Eadmaro ¹ Leofricus, iste factus est Cantuariensis archiepiscopus; huic successit Alfricus,² frater Leofrici memorati, Alfrico successit Leofstanus...

¹ 'Alfricus' in MS
² 'Leofricus' in MS ⁸⁸

He provides no explanation as to why he chose to reverse the order of Leofric and Alfric despite the reading of the one manuscript upon which his edition was based. I can only guess that he had 'corrected' the version of Wendover on the basis of the entry that Matthew wrote over the erasure in his Chronica of CCCC 16. He had probably checked Wendover against Wats' highly dubious edition of the Chronica for it was Wats that he used to construct his two volume Appendix of Lectiones Variationes.⁸⁹ It is somewhat dismaying that Coxe's collation of Wendover's abbot list with that of Matthew, is wholly inaccurate; he suggested incorrectly, that the section from Wlsius to Eadfrith was lacking in the Chronica and that Matthew had added the words 'qui propter suas virtutes' to his notice of the elevation of Leofric to the archbishopric. The words that Matthew in reality added were 'qui propter eius virtutes'.⁹⁰ H.G. Hewlett, who edited the text for the Rolls Series some forty years later was rather braver than Coxe for he based his edition not only upon the Douce manuscript of the Flores

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⁸⁸ Flores, iii. 294-295.
⁸⁹ Ibid., Appendix, viii.
⁹⁰ Ibid., Appendix 177. CM ii. 584.
but upon the later B.L. Cotton Otho D V that had been split and shrunken by the Cottonian fire of 1731.\textsuperscript{91} His edition of the abbots list is, however, even more confusing than that carried out by Coxe;

\begin{quote}
...Eadmaro Leofricus,\textsuperscript{3} iste factus est Cantuariensis archiepiscopus; huic successit Leofricus, frater Alfrici memorati; Leofrici successit Leofstanus...
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{3} 'Alfricus' in C and D.\textsuperscript{92}

Hewlett went one further than his predecessor by knocking Alfric out of the list altogether and for this editorial decision he provided no explanation, for his footnote indicates that both manuscripts preserved the accurate chronology of abbots. J.A. Giles translated the \textit{Flores} in the early 1890s and his translation reflected the editorial indecisions and blunders of the previous fifty years; Alfric succeeded Leoffic who became archbishop of Canterbury.\textsuperscript{93} Luard's edition of the \textit{Chronica} preserved the erroneous chronology that does indeed occur in CCCC 16 but it slips up by printing it in small type and thus attributing it to Roger Wendover.\textsuperscript{94} There appears to be no evidence whatsoever for the suggestion by the nineteenth-century editors of the \textit{Flores} and the \textit{Chronica} that Roger was uncertain of the chronology of abbots of late tenth-century St Albans. Both extant manuscripts preserve the correct chronology. The confusion

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[91] {H.G. Hewlett, \textit{The Flowers of History by Roger de Wendover From the Year of Our Lord 1154...} 3 vols. (RS, 1886-1889).}
\footnotetext[92] {Hewlett, \textit{The Flowers of History}, ii. 112-113. By 'C' and 'D', he meant the Otho and the Douce manuscripts of the \textit{Flores}.}
\footnotetext[93] {J.A. Giles, \textit{Matthew Paris's English History} 3 vols. (London, 1852-1854), ii. 304.}
\footnotetext[94] {CM ii. 584.}
\end{footnotes}

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appears to be wholly Matthew's and such was his confusion that he chose to erase his transcription of Wendover at this point and substitute a statement to the effect that Alfric followed Leofric with the latter becoming archbishop. As if to clarify the point further he added a list of abbots in the margin and next to the name Leofric, he added 'qui Cantuarie archiepiscopus [fuit]'.

That this confusion was wholly Matthew's is suggested not merely by the evidence of the erasures in his manuscripts. It is significant that at other times, other scribes and scholars of St Albans had avoided muddled interpretation of the Alfric/Leofric question and apparently, had considered it no question at all. For instance, there had been no doubt in the eleventh century that Alffic became archbishop. Lists of benefactors incorporated by Matthew in the Liber Additamentorum, and possibly dateable to the the abbacy of Paul on the grounds that this appears to be their cut-off point, are under no illusions as to the true succession to the abbacy and archiepiscopacy. Neither had there been any confusion in the early thirteenth century for the list of abbots in MS. Royal 13 E vi, reads as follows; 'Aluricus abbas. Hic factus est Archiepiscopus Cantuarie. Cui successit in abbatia Sancti Albani, Leofricus abbas, frater ipsius Aelurici.' Another list, the original of which was perhaps dateable to Matthew's own lifetime, also retains the correct order; this list occurring on page one of Oxford, Magdalen College, MS. 53 is written in a hand of the early fourteenth century. That it copied a list compiled originally in the middle years of the thirteenth century.

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95 CCCC 16, f.41v.
96 LA, ff.63r and 166v. Taylor, 'The Early St Albans Endowment'.
97 f.23r.
98 p.1.
century is suggested by the fact that it is written in one hand up until the names John de Hertford (1235-1260) and King Henry III for whom it fails to supply the customary dates, indicating that they were still alive when the list was originally made. Knowles's and Brook's claim in *Heads* that it was copied from the *Gesta* and was thus of no independent value is erroneous since it avoided the muddling of Leoffic and Alfric to which the former text fell victim.99 Furthermore, Matthew must have come into contact with the correct chronology of tenth-century abbots of St Albans for his hand appears at several points in MS. Royal 13 E vi and he transcribed into the *Liber Additamentorum* Ethelred's grant to the abbey of land at Norton (Hertfordshire), 'Rodhanger' (near Norton) and Oxhey (Hertfordshire) that made reference to 'Alfric my faithful archbishop and Leoffic his brother'.100 It seems that Matthew was a little perplexed with regards the historical careers of these two abbots. Confusion over Leoffic and Alfric is apparent only in manuscripts attributed to Matthew. This strongly suggests that the transposition of names in the *Gesta*, was not an error committed by a predecessor and of which Matthew was unaware, but an error generated by his own confusion. Moreover, Walsingham's *Liber Benefactorum*, perpetuated it for Leoffic is depicted holding a crosier, having laid down his pastoral staff. It remains the case however, that the names of Leoffic and Alfric must be silently reversed if the accounts of their abbacies in the *Gesta* are to make any historical sense.

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99 The Magdalen list, in fact, preserves the order of Royal MS. 13 E vi.

So Matthew was prone to a little chronological muddling. Was he also prone to the tactical omission of embarassing abbots? Vaughan believed that he was and to remedy this personal failing of Matthew's he proposed the insertion of an abbot Ecgfrid between Leofstan and Frederick, largely upon the evidence of the *Liber Eliensis*, a work compiled in the middle years of the twelfth century.¹⁰¹

The latter tells a harrowing tale. Archbishop Stigand, knowing his position to be in threat because of his uncanonical election, roamed the country and arrived at Ely with a sum of treasure. He summoned Ecgfrid, whom he had made abbot of St Albans, to Ely and demanded that he bring with him the treasures of his church and the relics of St Alban. There he was to wait upon the fate of the archbishop. Ecgfrid obediently fled to Ely with two monks Semannus and Aelricus and taking with him 'all the aforesaid things' (namely treasure and relics), and on arriving at the island and monastery of Ely he placed the shrine of St Alban in a certain small church. Remaining there for almost half a year Ecgfrid lost all hope of recovering the abbacy following the deposition of Stigand and the election of Paul as abbot of his house. He therefore arranged with abbot Thurstan of Ely that the body of St Alban be transferred from the small to the greater church and placed alongside the body of St Aetheldryde.

Thurstan later instituted a day for the celebration of the translation to Ely of the relics of the protomartyr.¹⁰² John of Tynemouth's *Life of St Albuan* written in the fourteenth century contains a similar episode, based it seems, not upon the *Liber Eliensis* but upon a common twelfth-century source that it shared with the *Liber*. It supplies several additional details; the date of Alban's translation to Ely ("iv id. maii"), the death at Ely of the abbot who brought the relics and the clever

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fraud of the Ely monks in returning fake bones to St Albans when requested by
William the Conqueror to return the true relics. The only serious discrepancy
between the two accounts is that John of Tynemouth names the abbot 'Alfricus'
instead of the 'Aegfridus' of the Liber Eliensis. Together, these accounts
appear to suggest that around the year 1070 (the year of Stigand's deposition),
an abbot of St Albans who had been appointed by this archbishop fled to Ely
carrying with him the relics of St Alban. This hypothesis requires closer analysis.

That Stigand did indeed hold the abbey of St Albans at some point in the middle
years of the eleventh century is confirmed by the evidence of four sources. The
Liber Eliensis itself states that he 'received into his possession the abbeys of
Winchester, Glastonbury, St Albans, St Augustine's and Ely, before abbot
Turstan and possessed them as if his own.' Furthermore, Domesday Book
contains the information that he held the St Albans manor of Redbourn in the
hundred of Dacorum in 1066 and his man Godric held the manor of
Napsbury. A charter of William I's concedes to the abbey sac and soc, toll and
team and all customs in all places 'tam bene et tam honeste, sicuti Stigandus
habuit illo die quo rex Aeduuardus mortuus est'. It seems certain that upon the

103 Blake, Liber Eliensis, pp.xxxvii-xxxviii. If John of Tynemout's work stems from a
twelfth-century source, then his account of the fraud committed by the monks of Ely might
have been formulated at St Albans in the twelfth century. Whether ultimate responsibility for
its appearance in the Gesta is to be attributed to Adam or Matthew is unclear. In any case,
John of Tynemouth was writing in the fourteenth century, he might easily have extracted this
tale from Matthew's Gesta; a twelfth-century origin for this tale is not proven.

104 Blake, Liber Eliensis, p.xxxviii. Vaughan considered John of Tynemouth to be the more
accurate source; Matthew Paris, pp.200-201.

105 Blake, Liber Eliensis, p.168.

106 Domesday Book, f.135d.

107 CM vi. 33-34.
death of Leofstan there had been a vacancy of some form; Cotton MS. Faustina B iv contains several miracle stories. The first concerning Aethelwine Niger and cited above concerns the time of Leofstan for it mentions him by name.\textsuperscript{108} The next two make no reference to an abbot and the involvement of archbishop Stigand in both these stories cannot be merely coincidental.\textsuperscript{109} In the first, the abbey grants a piece of land to a certain Turstan. Turstan, refusing to pay the rent and claiming the land to be his by right, found a friend and supporter in Stigand. By a miracle Turstan was stung into sudden repentance and returned the land. Cursing the monks he died suddenly. The second miracle story concerns a cleric said to be a familiar of Stigand. With the latter's support he became entangled in a dispute over a living that the abbey had granted him. The matter was taken to court yet the clerk fell from his horse and died suddenly. As a result Stigand began to venerate the abbey. That the cleric should have persuaded 'the brothers' to grant him the land and that it should have been 'the brothers' who protested to his subsequent actions strongly suggest that the abbey lacked an abbot.\textsuperscript{110} Moreover, the references to Stigand do much to strengthen the assumption that at some point after the death of Leofstan, the abbey was held by him. Thus his appointment of an abbot Ecgfrid is entirely conceivable. Yet, did such an Ecgfrid exist?

The dating of abbot Ecgfrid's flight to 1070 rests on the assumption that it roughly coincided with the period leading up to the deposition of Stigand in 1070. Vaughan argued that he must have fled \textit{in} the year 1070, for there would

\textsuperscript{108} ff.19v-22v.
\textsuperscript{109} ff.22v-23v.
\textsuperscript{110} f.23r.
have been no good reason for him to flee prior to this unless he did so much earlier in 1066-1067. Nor would he have fled much after 1070 for the Liber Eliensis states that he fled to Thurstan of Ely who died in 1073 so flight as a result of participation in the 1075 rebellion is ruled out. If then, as it appears, an abbot of St Albans did flee to Ely in 1070, then it cannot have been Frederick for he is known to have attended the settlement between Thurstan and Lanfranc over the primacy issue in 1072 and the Council of London in 1075. Vaughan noted also that none of the events described in the Gesta's account of the abbacy of Frederick occurred later than 1070; the account appeared to focus, he argued, on the years immediately following 1066. The reference to an oath taken by William upon the relics of St Alban is clearly a reference to the oath he swore at Berkhamstead in 1068; the presence of Lanfranc is an anachronism. Yet the revolt at Ely in 1071 and its protagonist Hereward the Wake receive no mention although they do appear in other accounts of the Conquest penned by Matthew. Vaughan concluded that in 1066 Stigand obtained the abbey of St Albans and appointed an abbot 'Ecgfrid' or 'Alfric' who subsequently opposed William the Conqueror. This ended with the Berkhamstead submission of 1068. In 1070, at the request of Stigand, Ecgfrid fled to Ely with the relics of St Alban hoping for the successful issue of the revolt against William. It is possible that the convent of St Albans disapproved of his rebellious stance for in his absence

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111 Vaughan argued that the Danish raid on the monastery of Ely that resulted in Egwin's journey to Odensee to recover the relics of St Alban (GA i. 12-19, although here the raid is said to be on St Albans), occurred in 1070 rather than at the mid ninth-century date as implied by Matthew in his inclusion of it in the account of Wulnoth. Vaughan, Matthew Paris, pp. 202-203. This provided him with a terminus ante quem for abbot Ecgfrid's alleged flight to Ely for the idea is that he would have taken with him the relics seized by the Danes in that year. However, see below, pp. 138-139 for the tentative suggestion that the theft of the relics in the time of Wulnoth is not an impossibility.

112 D. Whitelock, M. Brett and C. Brooke Councils and Synods, i (2), 612-616 and GR ii. 351.

113 For example, see HA i. 15-16.
they elected abbot Frederick. Matthew, so Vaughan claimed, had simply eliminated the embarrassing abbot Ecgfrid from his domestic history and had backdated the accession of Frederick to the abbacy by four or six years. What is more Matthew's cunning did not end here. In order to explain Ely's claim to the relics he shared out the 'deeds' of abbot Ecgfrid between abbots Alfric II and Frederick. The former, learning of a planned Danish invasion pretended to send the relics of St Alban to Ely yet secretly deposited them under the altar of St Nicholas. The latter, fled to Ely following heroic opposition of the tyrannical King William and the Gesta pointedly remarks that he fled 'assumptis secum quibusdam libris, et pannis, et viaticis necessariis', that is, without any relics.

There are four preliminary problems with this scenario. First, the existence of an abbot Ecgfrid of St Albans cannot be traced beyond the evidence of the Liber Eliensis and possibly an Ely calendar entry dateable to the same period. While Frederick is mentioned both in the Gesta and in documentary sources, Ecgfrid's historicity is far from proven. Second, according to the Liber, Ecgfrid despaired on the election of Paul to the abbacy. Given that Frederick preceded Paul, this clearly makes no sense unless it is to be assumed that Ecgfrid despaired for some seven years, whilst Frederick occupied the abbacy. Third, the Ely tradition assigns two names to this stooge of Stigand's; 'Ecgfrid' according to the Liber and 'Alfric' according to John. Given that the latter name

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115 Vaughan, Matthew Paris, p.204.

116 Blake, Liber Eliensis, p.xxxviii. A calendar contained in Cambridge, Trinity College MS O.2.1 records the death on 31st October of an abbot Aegfridus.

117 Blake, Liber Eliensis. p.176.
is that which the *Gesta* assigns to the abbot who cunningly tricked the monks of Ely, it is possible that it is Ely that has confused the tale rather than St Albans. Ultimately there is no reason why St Albans should have been prone to propagandist manipulation of the historical truth and Ely not. The *Liber Eliensis* is no less a vehicle of historical propaganda than is the *Gesta Abbatum*. It must have suited Ely to mar the good repute of St Albans abbey by linking the name of its first post-Conquest abbot with Stigand whilst at the same time 'proving' its claim to the relics. The *Liber* was written at a time when St Albans was rapidly accumulating ecclesiastical liberties. It obtained a number of papal bulls from 1122 onwards and during the years 1156-1157 seventeen were granted by Pope Adrian IV two of which sought to free further, the abbey from diocesan control. Ely's quest for freedom from episcopal jurisdiction and intervention, on the other hand, had resulted in little success. Jealousy alongside a claim to the relics of the protomartyr may have strongly flavoured Ely's unfavourable portrayal of St Alban's past. The fourth and largest obstacle in the way of a smooth acceptance of Vaughan's theory is that Ecgfrid is not to be found in the early thirteenth-century lists of MS. Royal 13 D vi or Wendover's *Flores*. This proves, in effect, that Matthew cannot himself have been responsible for the 'omission' of Ecgfrid from the *Gesta*, as Vaughan supposed. If Ecgfrid had ever existed, he had disappeared from the abbey's historical record before Matthew's time.

118 Wats, pp.27-28 (GA i. 34-38).

119 D. Knowles, 'Essays in Monastic History. IV The Growth of Exemption', *Downside Review* 31 (1948), part one, 201-231. 213-218 and more recently Taylor, 'The Early St Albans Endowment'.


Could it be that the *Gesta* is correct in believing that Frederick succeeded Leofstan and after heroic resistance to the first Anglo-Norman king, fled to the monastery of Ely? Need an unproven gap in the chronological succession of abbots be plugged by an 'unproven' abbot? Any answer to this question hinges on a precise dating of the abbot's flight. If it occurred in 1070 then the abbot cannot have been Frederick because as was shown above, there is evidence to suggest that he still occupied the position of abbot in 1072 and 1075. Yet might the *Gesta* be referring instead to a flight undertaken by Frederick following participation in the rebellion of 1075-1076? Had he been swayed by the plot hatched by Ralph Guader earl of Norfolk and Roger, earl of Hereford during the latter's drunken wedding celebrations. Two pieces of evidence indicate that he might well have been. Wulfstan, bishop of Worcester who had opposed the earls in the rebellion of this year, is to be found in the pages of the *Gesta*, offering to make peace between Frederick, the king and Lanfranc;

Et cum posset ipsum Wolstanus episcopus, cui ipse abbas sanctitate et aetate fuit simillimus, Regi vel archiepiscopo pacificare, ipse abbas, nolens credere ei, tristis venit in Capitulum...\(^{122}\)

Moreover, it is perhaps significant that when Ingulf arrived at the abbey of Croyland in 1076, he found there twelve monks of St Albans who desired to be enrolled into the brotherhood of the abbey.\(^{123}\) It is possible that they had

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\(^{122}\) Wats, pp.30-31 (*GA* i. 50). For an account of the wedding celebrations see *GR* ii. 313-314.

disapproved of Frederick's participation in the rebellion. That their desire to enter Croyland had something to do which the turmoil of that year is suggested by the fact that they are said to have chose the abbey 'having seen the safe situation of the locality'. Vaughan suggested that in neither 1072 nor 1075 had Frederick shown any signs of rebellion yet the documentary references to him in these years are far too short to be revealing in this context for they merely record his attendance at councils. Vaughan also argued that all the rebellious activities narrated in the Gesta's account of Frederick appear to belong to the years immediately following 1066, hence the participation of Edgar the Aetheling, Edwin and Morcar. It is entirely logical, however, that Matthew, given his considerable knowledge of and interest in the Norman Conquest and his loyalty to his house should have endeavoured to extend as far back as possible the rebellious activities of the heroic Frederick. It seems far more probable that Matthew deliberately or even accidentally backdated Frederick's political opposition to William than that he attributed him with the rebellious deeds of another abbot, of whose existence even Wendover had been unaware.

Frederick's involvement in the rebellion of 1075 is a possibility. Since the last recorded mention of Frederick belongs to the year of the rebellion, it is conceivable that his abbacy may have ended at this point, with his flight to Ely. The Gesta provides some support for this theory in as far as it notes an unspecified period of vacancy that preceded the installation of abbot Paul.

124 Ibid., p.153.


126 Ibid., p.13.

127 It is intriguing that the Winchester annals place Paul's elevation of the state of the abbey (culled from William of Malmesbury's De Gestiis Pontificum), in the year 1075. Vaughan
Rex igitur Willelmus, de morte abbatis Fretherici certificatus, cenobium sancti albani vacans in manu sua tenuit et, extirpatis sylvis et depauperatis hominibus oppressit...\textsuperscript{128}

William's ravaging of the monastery, razing of its woods and impoverishing of its monks would suggest an anger not easily assuaged. What better reason for such actions than that the abbot had participated in a major political rebellion. Those who would wish to protest that William's attack was perhaps part of his campaign of plunder in the spring of 1070 and that the consequential vacancy occurred after the flight of Ecgfrid, would need to wholly disregard the \textit{Gesta}'s highly plausible reference to Lanfranc's campaign for the election of Paul, a monk with whom he shared familial ties. In short, it is by no means certain then that flight of Frederick mentioned in the \textit{Gesta} must be equated with the notional flight of a notional abbot Ecgfrid in 1070. The \textit{Gesta} supplies ample evidence of Frederick's frosty relations with William and the turbulent state of the abbey's affairs after Frederick's flight to be wholly consistent with the notion that the abbot had participated in the rebellion of 1075. An abbot Ecgfrid need not be created.

\textsuperscript{128} Wats, p. 31 (\textit{GA} i. 51).
The chronology of the Anglo-Saxon abbots of St Albans is beyond accurate definition. Yet the evidence presented above would appear to support the following revised chronology:

- **WILLEGOD** - 793-796
- **EADRITC** - 796-First quarter of ninth century
- **WLSIG** - Mid ninth century - ?
- **WLNOTH** - First half tenth century
- **EADFRITH** - Second quarter tenth century
- **WULSIN** - Mid tenth century
- **EALDRED** - 950s and 960s
- **ALFRED** - 970x990
- **LEOFRIC** - 990x at least 1007
- **EADMAR** - First quarter eleventh century
- **LEOFSTAN** - 1047x1066
- **ECGFRIID (?)** - 1066x1070
- **FREDERICK** - 1066x1070/1077

Just as the chronology of the early abbots can only be verified to a certain degree, so too the deeds attributed to them are only partially substantiated by independent evidence. Yet this in no way diminishes the extraordinary value of the *Gesta* as a reservoir of potentially historical information about St Albans distant past. As will become evident, the *Gesta* rests, in part, upon a documentary substructure and some of the more lurid details that it contains militate against the notion that it is a wholesale concoction. Had Matthew lent free reign to his imagination, a greater loyalty to his forefathers might have been expected. This is not to say that *Gesta*, as a whole, does not encapsulate the historical vision of a thirteenth-century Benedictine. A brief journey through the *gesta* allegedly undertaken by each abbot will reveal the nature in which the documentary and imaginative components of the text are interweaved to produce a colourful tapestry of the abbey's early history.
The account of the abbacy of Willegod centres largely upon an adulation of King Offa. The *Gesta*’s Offa material will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter for its relationship with that supplied in the *Vitae Offarum* and the *Chronica Maiora* is complex. Willegod’s ‘deeds’ are few and far between. A nephew of King Offa, he was installed as abbot of St Albans in 793. All that is said of him is that he neglected to inter the body of Offa at St Albans, a claim that is fully explained by the thirteenth-century tradition of Offa’s burial at Bedford, preserved by Wendover and by the anonymous author of the chronicle in MS. Julius D vii. According to this tradition, Offa died in a town called Offeleia, having founded a most noble monastery after his invention of St Alban. His body was carried to the town of Bedford and buried in a royal manner, in a chapel outside the town, situated on the river Ouse. The chapel and his tomb were subsequently washed away by the river and summer bathers would often spy it in the deep water yet on closer inspection it could never be found.

Matthew’s criticism of Offa is therefore logical yet the evidence of the *Gesta* itself is somewhat contradictory for it reprimands Paul for neglecting to translate the remains of the king (‘tumbam et ossa’) to the new church that he had built.

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129 L.F.R. Williams considered the names of the first six abbots to have been invented to suit the needs of a later age, yet he gave no explanation for this belief. Willegod at least is documented beyond the pages of the *Gesta*, for he appears in a charter of Offa granting land at Cassio, Hamstead’s House and Stanmore, (S136) dateable to 793 and extant in B, ff. 153r-154v and LA, f. 149r and also in Ecgfrid's charter granting Pinesfield Farm to the abbey, (S151, B, f.156v and LA, f.149v).


131 *CM* i. 363.

132 Wats, p.33 (*GA* i. 62); ‘Ipse vero Abbas Paulus, humili progenie oriundus, forte illam sibi praetendens quaemqualem excusationem, quia multa, quae inclitus Rex Offa huic ecclesia
This strongly implies that the location of the relics was known in the time of the first Anglo-Norman abbot and that they were perhaps in the Anglo-Saxon church for archaeological evidence suggests that the Norman church was not built on the site of its predecessor, hence translation would have been necessary. To suggest, however, that the relics of King Offa may, to this day, lie beneath the grassy bank to the west of the abbey, would be leaping well and truly into the realms of whimsicality.

The *Vitae Offarum* supplies a few more details about Willegod. It claimed that his name derived from an Old English translation of the Latin 'volens bonum' or 'wishing good' and it declared him to be of royal stock and a blood relation of Offa's. He must have been a layman when he attended the invention of Alban for the *Vitae* claims that he subsequently adopted the monastic habit and was made abbot in the presence of Ecgfrith and Hygeberht, archbishop of Lichfield. Of greatest interest is the *Vitae*’s intimation that Willegod skillfully and faithfully preserved the kingdom that had been committed to him when Offa
had journeyed to Rome. If *Gesta* itself provides scanty details of deeds attributable to Willegod, it constitutes a neat summary of the foundation and early endowment of the abbey: its references to the gifts presented by Offa and Ecgfrith to the abbey are those for which documentary evidence survives in the *Liber Additamentorum* and Brussels cartulary; 34 mansiones at Cassio (Herts.), 6 at Hamstead's House (Herts.), 10 at Stanmore (Middlesex), 12 *manentes* at Winslow (Bucks.), 3 at 'Scelfdune sive Baldingcotum', 10 at 'Scuccanhlau vel Fenntun' with the wood called Horwood (Bucks.), 5 at Luton (Beds), 5 in Pinesfield Farm, Rickmansworth and 10 at Turville (Bucks.). Although many of the charters describing early grants of land to the abbey are spurious or contain later interpolations, Pamela Taylor recently argued for the basic credibility of the modest endowment they represent.

A little more detail is provided for abbot Eadric. Matthew states that he strenuously governed the church committed to his care and protected it 'by the shield of discretion.' Supported by the king, he opposed those who powerfully rebelled against him. The abbey of St Albans in its early days seems to have maintained close practical links with the kings of Mercia and Eadric depended on royal support to stabilize his position within the community. It is difficult to tell whether such dependence was the cause or result of the conventual

137 Ibid., pp. 19-20: 'Et saepedictum Willegodum praeuentibus filio suo Egfrido universorum haerede, Humberto quoque Lichfeldensi archiepiscopus cum aliis multis episcopis et terrae optimatibus praefecit in abbatem, quem fidellissimum in conservatione regni filio suo et ipsi commissi dum Romam pergeret.'

138 Wats, pp. 22-23 (GA i. 6-7).

139 Taylor, 'The Early St Albans Endowment'.

140 Wats, p.23 (GA i. 8-9).
turbulence that plagued the abbacies of both Eadric and his successor WIsig. That Eadric was a blood relation ('sanguine propinquus') of Offa and Ecgfrith may well have had something to do with it.

The account of Eadric like that of Willegod suffers from Matthew's obsession with King Offa; it describes for instance, the king's petition that abbots be elected swiftly from within the community, lest the church appear devoid of religion and religious men and it tells of certain murmured criticisms that the king's generosity to the monastery of St Albans was damaging to royal dignity. Matthew's reference to the king's petition neatly omits any mention of the role of a bishop that he had suggested was inappropriate in a marginal note to his transcription of Offa's foundation charter in the Liber. The criticisms of Offa, to which he refers are plainly anachronistic for they are suggestive of a tide of sentiment that preceded the Statute of Mortmain promulgated in 1279.

Eadric's successor WIsig possessed a frivolity that his predecessors apparently lacked. The inventory of crimes attributed to him was one in which even Chaucer's monk might have taken pride. He altered the shape and colour of the monastic habit, made use of silk vestments and ornamentation and engaged in hunting. Extravagant in food and drink, he liked to propitiate the powerful prince rather than serve God. Moreover he caused the abbey irreparable harm by

141 Wats, p.23 (GA i. 8-9).

142 CM vi. 2, LA, f.150r and B, ff.153r-154v.

143 See chapter one. The Statute of Mortmain forbade the granting of land to the Church without royal license. See M.Prestwich, English Politics in the Thirteenth Century (London, 1990), p.73.

144 L.F.R.Williams considered representative of the 'secular party' of the convent: History of St Albans Abbey, p.20.
squandering its wealth and treasure and disposing of palls, jewels and vases that had been the gift of Offa. Numerous too were his sexual misdemeanours. He invited aristocratic women to his table, he married off his female relatives whether widows or virgins to rich magnates and placed nuns in a house in close proximity to the church in order that, so Matthew claimed, he might 'disguise a weakness with the aura of religion'. He incited scandal, damaging his own integrity and that of his brethren. The scent of good repute that from the beginning had been fragranced by religion diminished and the fire of charity, and the devotion of the majority became lukewarm. It is scarcely surprising that he should have been struck 'Dei et martyris ulcione', departing this world with the hatred and abuse of the convent. He was allegedly poisoned. On his death the powerful men of the convent rose up in rebellion and those relatives whom Wulsig had fattened on the goods of the church were deprived of all they had obtained. Matthew tells us with no small degree of relish that they died in miserable poverty. 145

Matthew's depiction of the abbacy of Wulsig invites a number of observations. Once again the abbot of St Albans was of noble extraction. Wulsig 'regali sternmate procreatus' enjoyed secular support and the patronage of the rich in his endeavours to protect himself from criticism. Yet Vaughan's assertion that both Eadric and Wulsig were elected according to the suggestion of Offa seems to depend upon a misinterpretation of the Latin.146 It was not the elections per se that were 'according to the petition of Offa' but the speed with which they were concluded; Offa's insistence upon the latter is recorded under the abbacy of

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145 Wats, p.24 (GA i. 9-11).
146 Vaughan, 'Anglo-Saxon Abbots', p.2. 'The first three abbots all had some connection with King Offa and were all appointed, according to the GA, at his suggestion.'
Eadric. In any case, Matthew believed that the abbacy of St Albans had been the preserve of the well to do. Moreover the account of Wlsig says a great deal about the wealth of the ninth-century abbey of St Albans for his silk vestments, extravagant habits, taste for hunting and the squandering of treasure were reliant upon a considerable basis of material wealth. Like Eadric, Wlsig was immensely unpopular. The Gesta's account of the early days of the abbey suggests a tradition of conventual opposition to the imposition of royal candidates upon the abbacy. It may well be that Matthew's failure to disguise their 'negligences' stemmed from a desire to illustrate the unsuitability of these candidates. Matthew's obsession with the bad habits of the early abbots will be discussed more fully at a later stage. Suffice it to say that these critical passages in the Gesta can be extremely revealing; the reference to Wlsig's sinister motives in establishing nuns close by, for instance, indicates that St Albans was a double monastery from at least the ninth century onwards.

Wlnoth succeeded Wlsig whose errors he endeavoured to rectify in the ensuing two or three years. His efforts at reform did not last long. 'Peior priore effectus', he too changed the colour and shape of the monastic cloak and thus invited upon himself Matthew's condemnation for the Gesta regards this interest in designer habits as a gauge of evil. Unsurprisingly, Wlnoth's crimes did not end at a tampering with the habit. He reared hunting birds and dogs, adopted hunting ways and even wore the appropriate clothing.

147 Wats, p.23 (GA i. pp.8-9).
148 Wats, p.23 (GA i. 11).
149 L.F.R. Williams made an interesting comparison here with Chaucer's monk in the Prologue: 'Yaf nat of that text a pulled hen/ That seth that hunters been nat holy men.' See History of the Abbey of St Albans, pp.21-22. For his tampering with the habit see Wats, p.23 (GA i. 11).
say, of modesty, and dishonesty, and squandering the substance of the church, he utterly blackened the reputation of religion. Yet he avoids the accusations of sexual misconduct that Matthew levelled against Wlsig. Hoping to dispel suspicions of infamy, he placed those semi-secular nuns who had been so great a source of interest to Wlsig, in one house to live under a single rule. He placed restrictions upon their mobility and diet and confined their sleeping, eating, prayer and periods of silence to certain times and places. In addition, he ordained that they remain in the almonry, hearing Matins in the greater church and regularly attending canonical hours. Of his errors too he had the sense to repent; living a life of sanctity he 'made a virtue of necessity', so Matthew tells us with characteristic sarcasm.150

There are several observations to be made about the account of Wulnoth. First, it's reference to Wulnoth's decree that the nuns hear Matins in the 'greater church' suggests that there were two churches attached to the abbey in this time. Second, Matthew's criticism of Wulnoth's alterations to the monastic cloak would not have seemed at all strange to the abbot's contemporaries for Pope John VIII, advised the English clergy in this matter in the ninth century. 151 Perhaps the chief point of interest in this account, however, is the description of the theft of the relics of St Alban by the Danes and their recovery by Egwin.152

150 Wats, p.24 (GA i. 11).

151 P.Jaffe, Regesta Pontificum Romanorum, 2 vols. (1885-1888), (republ. Graz, 1956), i. 382. Item 2995; 'Adelfredum Cantuariorum et Uulfredum Eboracensem archiepiscopos, seu omnes episcopos et cunctum clerum Angliae admonet, ut laicala vestimenta deponant et resumant clericales infulas secundum Romanae ecclesiae morem, exemplum afferens Anglorum procern tunc Rœmae degentium, qui apostolicam sententiam acceperint, ut voluntarie omnes Anglorum clerici sub ipsis vigiliis S. Gregorii (Mart. II) laicalem et sinuosum, sed et curturn habitum deponentes talares tunicas Romanas induerent. (Fragmenta cum titulo 'Ex registro lœh. VIII')`

152 For the following account see GA i. 12-19.
The Danes, having ravaged Ely, seized the relics of St Alban and placed them in a precious shrine in the Benedictine house of Odensee. The monks of St Albans, mourning their loss, did penance and prayed for their return to the site upon which St Alban had spilt his blood for Christ. It was thus entirely fitting that the saint, noble of stature and sporting long hair and a beard after the noble manner of the ancient Britons, should have appeared to Egwin, a monk who had originated from the site of Alban's martyrdom. Egwin obeyed his instructions to travel to Denmark and fetch the relics. Journeying to the island of Luna, he entered the monastery of Odensee and soon surpassed all other monks in secular and claustral works. Gaining promotion to the position of custodian of the shrine, he prayed regularly by night at the shrine of St Alban whilst burrowing a hole in its interior. Having extracted the bones he wrapped them in palls, placed them in a repository and bribed an opulent sea merchant to transport them back to England, claiming they were a chest of books. This tale is firmly attributable to Matthew. It bears stylistic traits that characterize his other works; certain phrases, such as 'secundum illud poeticum' and citations from Ovid. The interest it shows in Alban's hairstyle is paralleled in the Historia Anglorum. Moreover, Matthew acknowledges personal responsibility for this tale; 'Hujus historialis eventus seriem ego, frater Matthaeus Parisiensis, duxi litteris commendare, ne iterum incuria vel vetustate, a memoria

153 In the thirteenth-century election dispute at Bury St Edmunds between Hugh and Robert of Gravely, one of the factors that determined the alignment of parties was place of birth. Hugh's party were largely from East Anglia and Norfolk, the heart of the cult of St Edmund. The supporters of Robert were 'foreigners' in the sense that they originated from outside these areas. See R.M. Thomson, The Chronicle of the Election of Hugh, Abbot of Bury St Edmunds Later Bishop of Ely, (Oxford, 1974), pp.xl-xliv. The Gesta's interest in Egwin's place of birth is suggestive of a belief that such factors determined depth of devotion to a saint.

154 GA i. 16.

155 GA i. 14. HA i. 11.
hominum deleatur'. That the relics were, at some, point, taken to Odensee is suggested by the fact that in 1917, when Williams wrote his history of the abbey the market place of Odensee was called St Albans and a church nearby was dedicated to him. There is some debate, however, as to when this occurred. Page and Vaughan were probably correct in their belief that Matthew had misdated this event by some two hundred years. Vaughan assumed that the Danish theft of the relics could only have occurred in 1070. The Peterborough version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (E), states that in this year King Swein of Denmark and his men removed certain treasures from Ely that had been deposited there by Hereward who had recently ravaged Peterborough. He dismissed the possibility that the tale might refer to the 1076 invasion of Cnut son of Swein and earl Haakon with two hundred ships because the Chronicle (D) specifically states that all they did was ravage St Peter's Minster, York. It is certainly possible that Matthew wrongly positioned his account of Egwin and the relics in his domestic history. Yet his assumption that a story set against a background of Danish invasions should have occurred in the late ninth or early tenth rather than the late eleventh century, is logical at least. In 1968 fifty-six silver coins were discovered in Abbey Orchard immediately south of the abbey. They dated mostly from the reigns of Alfred and Burgred and it has been suggested that they were buried in the face of the Danish attacks of 890-891, which may have coincided with the abbacy of

156 GA i. 19. The story is physically displaced in the manuscript - it occurs on ff. 25v-26r after the *Vitae Offarum* and before the *Gesta*. That Matthew intended its insertion in the account of Wulnoth is indicated by his use of a system of *signa* constituting two halves of a lion.


Perhaps the relics were seized during this attack. Matthew's insertion of the Egwin story into the account of Wlnoth is not as careless as it may seem and it would be fairer to assume that he muddled two periods of Danish contact rather than simply transferring a later event to an earlier century. It is the result of a process of logical historical thinking.

Eadfrith, the fifth abbot of St Albans, was Saxon in origin and of a height and elegance concomitant with his race even though his behaviour was vain and despicable. This introductory comment prefaces the usual expose in which Matthew delights. Eadfrith disregarded the rigour of the cloister and uselessly wiled away his time in eating and drinking. He was constantly in the chamber, rarely in the cloister and never in the choir. Unenthusiastic about protecting the possessions of his church and idle in acquiring new ones, he set a pernicious example as a pastor of sheep. The early abbots of St Albans it seems frolicked in all kinds of worldly indulgence. It is intriguing that Matthew should so blatantly condemn the early abbots of his house. He was not a Norman apologist and his works display the greatest affection for the 'gens anglorum'.

The Gesta enumerates amongst Eadfrith's deeds the presentation to the abbey of a desirable cup, admirable for its material and craftsmanship. The Liber Benefactorum also attributes such a gift to

159 HRO DEG m.90 (newspaper cuttings). Williams believed that the raid mentioned hereby Matthew occurred around the year 930; History of the Abbey of St Albans, pp.22-23
160 Wats, p.24 (GA i. 20). For the account of his abbacy see Wats, p.24 (GA i. 20-22).
Eadfrith. \(^{162}\) The cup is mentioned on a second occasion in the *Gesta* itself, for Alfric I used it to purchase a royal fishpond \(^{163}\) In addition the abbacy of Eadfrith witnessed the construction of a basilica on the site which St Germanus had occupied when visiting the shrine of St Albans in the fifth century. \(^{164}\) Therein dwelt a hermit of Danish origin named Wulfa, who lived a life of abstinence and untiring prayer. \(^{165}\) According to the *Gesta*, Wulfa was related to Eadfrith which suggests that Eadfrith was in fact Danish, although the *Gesta* had already termed him a 'Saxon'. It is possible that Matthew has muddled the Danes and the continental Saxons and if Eadfrith was Danish then this would lend credence to Matthew's story of contact between the abbey and the Danes during the abbacy of Winoth. Wulfa was buried amongst the abbots, and Eadfrith, repenting of his evil ways, as Winoth had done, adopted the life of hermit. \(^{166}\) On his death the abbey remained vacant for one year, its wealth was dissipated and there arose a schism between the prior's party and the rest of the convent solved only by the intervention of the bishop. \(^{167}\) This incident Williams considered demonstrative of the considerable degree of freedom from episcopal jurisdiction that the abbey

\(^{162}\) Wats, p. 24 (*GA* i. 20) and *LA*, ff. 11v-12r.

\(^{163}\) Wats, p. 24 (*GA* i. 23).

\(^{164}\) Wats, p. 24 (*GA* i. 20-21).

\(^{165}\) Vaughan argued that Eadfrith's dates (c. 840-850/860) did not accord with the presence in the monastery of a Danish monk; 'Anglo-Saxon Abbots', p. 3. If, as we suggested above, he flourished in the second quarter of the ninth century then this is entirely possible.

\(^{166}\) Wats, p. 24 (*GA* i. 21-22). The honour of burial amongst the abbots was bestowed also upon Robert of the Chamber (father of Nicholas Breakspear (Pope Adrian IV)) and Adam the Cellarer. The fifteenth century *Chronicon Rerum Gestarum in Monasterio Sancti Albani*, states that Adam was buried 'prope ostium capituli' - H. T. Riley (ed.), *Annales Monastici Sancti Albani a Johanne Amundesham...* (AD 1421-1440), 2 vols (RS, 1870-1871), ii, 435. The grave of Adam has been excavated; it lies on the north side of the west door of the chapter house. See M. Biddle and B. Kjolbye-Biddle, 'The Medieval Chapter House of St Albans Abbey and Its Excavation in 1978', *Hertfordshire Past* no. 11, (1981), 3-26, 10.

\(^{167}\) Wats, p. 24 (*GA* i. 22).
had already obtained, for episcopal intervention had here entailed little more than the reconciliation of the two parties. Given its possible interpretation, it is highly predictable that Matthew should have chosen to include this detail.

The account of the abbacy of Wlsin possesses a tangibility that the others lack, for archaeological evidence substantiates the deeds attributed to him. The *Gesta* tells us that he loved and promoted the town of St Albans and caused it to be inhabited by people from the surrounding area. Enlarging the market he constructed three churches on its northern, eastern and western sides, as much for decorative purposes as for the salvation of souls. The market lay outside the abbey gate and stretched north east towards St Peter's church. The three churches were dedicated to Saints Peter, Stephen and Michael and it has been suggested that they were built in order to increase the prosperity of the town of St Albans at the expense of that of Kingsbury. Yet if this is the case, then Wlsin's plan never succeeded; the area around St Peter's did become a residential area, but even in the 1970s, St Stephens lay in the middle of green fields and St Michael's lay on the edge of the countryside, by a winding hill road that followed a Roman mule track. Morris refuted the suggestion that the three churches betokened a plan by Wlsig to develop St Albans for the dispersed pattern of the sites, he argued, does not accord with this, indicating instead a preexisting pattern of small settlements, one of which was centred on the core of the Roman city. It is intriguing however that the lists of benefactors in Nero D i (ff.63r

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168 Williams, *History of the Abbey of St Albans*, p.25.
169 Wats, pp.24-25 (*GA* i. 22-23).
170 HRO DEG m. 90.
and 167v) and the fourteenth-century Liber Benefactorum (f.91r) speak of a place called 'Wlsintuna', that was bequeathed to the abbey by William Marlow and his wife. Moreover, S912, a charter of Ethelred's dateable to 1005, refers to the new 'habitaculis' of the town, 'which are usually called 'hagan' in the native tongue'. These may well have been the legacy of the efforts made by Wlsin.

St Michael's, which preserves architecture of the tenth and eleventh century, lies close to the Roman forum complex of St Albans and archaeological evidence suggests that a basilican building lies directly underneath it. The building of a parish church on the site of a Roman public building is paralleled elsewhere, notably at St Tathan in Caerwent. Further to the south east lies St Stephen's where excavations have yielded Roman cremation burials. St Peter's stands half a mile north east of the abbey. Morris suggested that there was some doubt as to whether Wlsin actually began the churches or whether they were redevelopments of existing sites. He found it intriguing however that the

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172 CM vi. 15-16.

173 The south and north walls of the Saxon church and features of the original Saxon windows remain. The church was about two thirds of its present size.

174 Morris, Churches in the Landscape, p.38

175 Ibid., p.39. Also see A. Whitford Anderson, 'St Stephen's Church', Transactions of the St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society (TSHAAS) (1905-1906), pp 157-167; nothing remains of the Saxon church. It was rebuilt in late Norman times and dedicated by Ralph, bishop of Durham during the abbacy of Robert. Portions of the Norman building still exist in the west wall with its quoins of Roman brick and two small round-headed windows.

176 Morris, Churches in the Landscape, p.39. St Michael's church is generally dated to the late tenth or early eleventh century placing it outside the time of Wulsin; Page, 'St Albans Abbey', p.369. Taylor, 'The Early St Albans Endowment'. T.P. Smith, The Anglo-Saxon Churches of Hertfordshire (London and Chichester, 1973), pp 23-26. St Stephen's church is assigned a similar date. H.O. Cavalier argued, however, that there were probably early timber buildings on the sites of both St Michael's and St Stephens; 'St Stephens Church, St Albans. Repairs to
Gesta could suggest that an abbot of St Albans created a group of local churches in a single swoop. This belief lingered on into the fourteenth century for the Liber Benefactorum depicts Wlsin balancing a church in each hand. 177

Wlsin's good deeds did not end here for he honoured and revered his predecessor Eadfrith whom he buried amongst the abbots and in whose oratory he frequently celebrated mass. Moreover, he constructed another oratory in honour of St Mary Magdalene. 178 Wlsin is possibly mentioned in the short list of benefactors that Matthew included in the Liber Additamentorum; a 'Wlsinus' is said to have presented the abbey with Aldenham and Oakhurst in Shenley. 179 He is also the first abbot for whom no misdemeanours are attributed. It is possible that Matthew felt a discussion of such matters out of place in the account of a founder of three churches, or perhaps a firmer historical and archaeological context for the abbacy of Wlsin removed the need for clichéd criticisms.

The vita of abbot Alfric I whose existence independent of Alfric II has been debated is brief. His drainage of a royal fishpond, purchased from the king for a large sum of money and the cup that Eadfrith had given to the abbey, occupies the Medieval Roof and Discovery of an Early Window, TSHASS (1934), pp.188-195, 195. More importantly, he dated the early window discovered during repair work, to the time of Wulsin, lending credence to the claims of the Gesta, p.193.

177 LB, f. 12r. See Page, 'The Origins and Forms of Hertfordshire Towns', pp 49-51. Cavalier argued that the statesmanlike work of this abbot in founding the market and town of St Albans and building a church for it and two churches on Watling Street, probably for pilgrims, gives us an impression of the kindly interest which was such a feature of the English monastic house before St Dunstan enforced the Benedictine Rule in 960, 'St Stephen's Church', p. 193.

178 Wats, p. 25 (GA i. 22-23).

179 LB, f. 63r and Taylor, 'The Early St Albans Endowment'.

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the whole of the account. He had sought to eradicate the threat posed by royal ministers and fishermen associated with the royal pond. Yet Williams also suggested that the citizens of Kingsbury would have derived sustenance from it too and therefore Alfric's interest was perhaps a further revelation of the rivalry between the two towns. The account of Alfric shares with the account of Wlsin an interest in matters archaeological; Matthew noted that the borders and steep banks of the pond were still apparent by the side of Fishpool Street leading west. He stated in the Gesta that not everything had been entirely destroyed, for a certain small fishpond remained to the abbot.

Alfric's endeavours to crush those damaging to the abbey was continued by his successor Ealdred. The latter, it appears, effected a complete eradication of the mafia of tenth-century St Albans. Stopping up the subterranean dens and caves of thieves, villains and beggars he set aside the building material that he found in the process for the construction of a new church. In digging the land he discovered poles of oak embedded with nails and smeared with pitch, which, the Gesta associates with the fabric of ships. He also found anchors wet with rust and oars made of fir. All these discoveries, the Gesta states, constituted a clear sign that this site had once lain beneath sea-water upon which a certain ship had

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180 The account of Alfric I is to be found at Wats, p.25 (G4 i. 23-24).

181 Williams, History of the Abbey of St Albans, p.26. In the early nineteenth century the earthworks of Kingsbury could apparently be traced and they showed there to have been a single entrance towards the abbey and a bulwark or 'propugnaculum' on the same side: Page, 'The Origins and Forms of Hertfordshire Towns', p.59.

182 Fishpool Street is now St Albans' oldest street name. Even in the eighteenth century it was the main road from London to the north.

183 Wats, p.25 (G4 i. 24).

184 Wats, p.25 (G.i i. 24-25).
sailed to St Albans. Matthew refers the reader to the 'History of St Alban' for details of how and by what miracle, this sea had contracted to the size of a stream and Matthew supplies further evidence in support of his belief that St Albans lay at one stage beneath the water. 185 Shells and shellfish were discovered during excavations. So too was the sand upon which the citizens of Verulamium had been accustomed to tread when hurrying to the shrine of their new saint. In addition the names of neighbouring places reflected these finds; Oyster Hill, Shellford, Anchor Pool and Fish Pool. Matthew continues this etymological excursus by stating with uncharacteristic credulity that the place-name 'Wormenhert', resulted from a dragon's occupation of nearby caves.

Ealdred's final 'deed' was his premature death which left his plans to build a new church incomplete, even though he had gathered a large quantity of stone and tile.

The account of abbot Ealdred presents several problems. First, the charter evidence suggests that much of Verulamium, the site of these excavations, was only granted to the abbey in the time of Leofric; A charter dateable to 996 (S888) grants eight 'mansae' in 'Uuatlinaceastre' (St Albans) namely, Burston in St Stephens, 'Wincelfelda' in St Stephens and Westwick in St Michael's to the abbey and another dateable to 1005 (S912) grants five cassatae in Flamstead and St Albans. 186 On the basis of this, William Page suggested that Ealdred must be moved to the early eleventh century, although as was argued earlier, charter evidence supports Ealdred's occupation of the abbacy in the middle years of the tenth century. It is possible that the archaeological investigations here

185 Wats, p.25 (GA i. 24).
assigned to Ealdred were in reality carried out by his successor Eadmar who may have been abbot in the early eleventh century. It is also worth noting that the charters S888 and S912 do not grant the whole of Verulamium which covered some two hundred acres. They grant merely portions of land. It is possible that St Albans was already in possession of land in Verulamium on which to excavate. Yet the abbots' deeds with regards Verulamium are intriguing from a different angle. Ealdred's attempts to cleanse the remains of the old city of its looters and vagabonds may suggest that the surplus population of an expanding St Albans had overflowed onto the Roman settlement. Ealdred's *gesta* would thus afford some evidence of the success of Anglo-Saxon St Albans's rivalry with neighbouring Kingsbury.

A little more startling is the *Gesta*'s suggestion that St Albans was once awash with seawater. Matthew can only have meant river water. The finds outlined by the *Gesta* are provided with such clarity of detail as to be reminiscent of the Anglo-Saxon ship burials at Taplow and Sutton Hoo. It would be wonderful to think that Ealdred had stumbled upon a ship burial and the tales of preserved oars and timbers need not have been a flight of fancy on the part of Matthew for anaerobic or boggy conditions might have preserved such features. Yet there are problems with this scenario. The *Gesta* suggests that the ship was Roman at the latest, for it sank in the deep water that had shrunk to a stream in the days of Alban, that is, in the early third century. The practice of ship burial associated

187 See above, p. 20.
188 Verulamium covered some two hundred acres.
190 Wats, p. 25 (*GA* i. 24-25). Alban was probably martyred in 209; see J. Morris, 'The Date of St Alban', *Hertfordshire Archaeology* i. 1-8.
with the Anglo-Saxons cannot therefore apply. It is not inconceivable that the
River Ver might once have allowed the passage of a ship even though it is not
now a navigable river. It would be safer to assume that Ealdred excavated the
remains of a sunken Roman vessel rather than the ceremonial vestiges of an
Anglo-Saxon noble burial. The Gesta makes further reference to the seafaring
ways of the Roman inhabitants of Verulamium in its account of Eadmar; they
worshipped Phoebus, god of merchants because most were pedlars and
merchants on account of the proximity of a river.\textsuperscript{191} Archaeological evidence
substantiates the close ties of the citizens of Verulamium with the river Ver for a
Roman mosaic depicting the head of Neptune was unearthed in 1931.\textsuperscript{192}

Archaeological exploration of Verulamium continued under the pious, gentle
and erudite Eadmar.\textsuperscript{193} The excavation of the foundations of a palace uncovered
a wall cavity in which lay hidden certain books and rolls. Most were written in
Latin, yet one book, beautifully penned, with a gilded title, was written in
ancient British. An old priest named Unwonam, 'imbutus diversorum idiomatum
linguis ac litteris', was called upon to translate it. It was found to contain the
History of St Alban, that was recited in the church 'up to the present day'. The
other books, containing the invocations and rituals of the idolaters of Roman
Verulamium were hastily destroyed. Matthew evidently possessed some interest
in such matters for he tells us that they worshipped the gods Phoebus and
Woden. The British History of St Alban was not tossed into the fire that

\textsuperscript{191} Wats, p.25 (GA i. 25). Page's asserted that the river Ver was not navigable even for Roman

\textsuperscript{192} The mosaic is dateable to AD 160-190. R.E.M. Wheeler, 'The Verulamium Excavations:
1930-1936', TSHAAS (1936-1938),15-25, 16. Durham market place has its own statue of
Neptune.

\textsuperscript{193} Wats, pp.25-26 (GA i. 25-28).
consumed the idolatrous works. It was placed in a treasury and Eadfrith caused its contents to be accurately and diligently explained to the convent by the more prudent brothers of the abbey. When the history had become known to many, the original exemplar suddenly and miraculously collapsed into dust.

Further probings of the earth of Roman Verulamium, produced stone tablets, tiles and columns. Eadfrith collected these for the church that he planned to build. Also found were pitchers, lathed clay amphorae, vases and glass vessels containing the ashes of the dead. In antiquity, Matthew tells us, people were accustomed to burn the bodies of the deceased. The remains of temples, upturned altars, idols and coins, were destroyed by Eadfrith. The abbot, handicapped by the common complaint, daily fatigue, never began work on his new church although he had collected a great deal of material towards it. Leaving the monastery greatly in debt so that subsequent abbots had to alienate land and level woods, he himself, through his death, paid his final debt to nature.\(^{194}\)

Most have remained rightly sceptical of the Gesta's tale of a History of St Alban written in British. Williams believed that the story probably began with the discovery of Roman remains that disintegrated on exposure to air. The Reverend Newcombe who wrote a history of the abbey in the eighteenth century, declared with characteristic charm, that the story possessed 'the air of monkish imposture'.\(^{195}\) Yet William of St Albans, who wrote a Passio of St

\(^{194}\) Wats, pp.25-26, (GA i. 27) for the story of the History of Alban and Wats, p.26 (GA i. 27-28) for the account of the other finds.

\(^{195}\) Williams, History of the Abbey of St Albans, p.27. P. Newcombe, The History of the Ancient and Royal Foundation called the Abbey of St Alban in the County of Hertford... (London, 1873), p.35.
Alban in the late twelfth century, claimed to be translating from a 'liber anglico sermone conscriptus'. There are problems with seeking to identify William's source with that work uncovered by Eadmar; the latter was written in British, not English and it disintegrated in the time of Eadmar. It is possible that the work had been translated not merely into Latin as implied by the Gesta but also into English. Levison felt however, that if an English text had existed, it was probably no more than a first draft based upon the Latin translation. Baring-Gould and Fisher claimed that between them, William and Matthew had engaged in subterfuge; they had proposed the existence of an ancient book containing a pagan, eyewitness version of the martyrdom of St Alban. And here, Matthew's historical imagination surpassed that of William for he had the sense to make the language British rather than English. It is impossible to say whether any truth underlay the claims of William and Matthew. Geoffrey of Monmouth had also after all claimed that his Historia Britonum was based on a 'librum vetustissimum' written in British. It would be safer to regard the Gesta reference to the ancient book as part of the popular process of 'legitimization' of works through claims to ancient source materials.

196 Dublin, Trinity College MS. E i 40, 20r.
198 W. Levison, 'St Alban and St Albans', Antiquity, 15 (1941), 337-359, 354.
The account of Eadmar's archaeological activities is of interest for two reasons. First the relatively detailed inventory of finds is suggestive of a basis in fact.\(^{201}\) There can be little doubt that at some point in the tenth or eleventh century, the abbots engaged in archaeological pursuits on the site of Roman Verulamium, whether out of antiquarian curiosity or a desire for building materials is uncertain.\(^{202}\) Second, their curiously irreverent handling of ancient books and rolls says something about Anglo-Saxon attitudes to the past but perhaps more about Matthew's for he in no way censors their behaviour although he betrays some interest in the contents of one of the destroyed books. Finally, the account of Eadmar is the first in which Matthew comments upon the financial state in which the abbot left the monastery upon death.\(^{203}\)

The abbacy of Alfric II is wrongly headed 'Leofric'.\(^{204}\) Alfric, elegant of stature and beautiful of face, was the son of the earl of Kent. Assuming the monastic habit he abandoned his paternal inheritance (bestowing it upon his younger brother), and sought instead, a heavenly inheritance. On account of his excellent merits he was elected archbishop of Canterbury. Matthew's confusion over this particular point has been discussed above; he claimed that Leofric had refused

\(^{201}\) Wright suggested that the idols were probably Roman statues and bronzes. He also suggested that from these and other excavations were probably derived the gems of the abbey; cited by W. Page, 'Notes on the Remains of Verulamium', TSHAAS (1893-1894), 49-67, 61.

\(^{202}\) Roman Verulamium was one thousand yards west of the medieval and modern town; M. Biddle, 'The Anglo-Saxon Church', R. Runcie (ed.), Cathedral and City: St Albans Ancient and Modern, (London, 1977), pp.23-42, 24. A clay amphora encrusted with oystershells and on display in the Verulamium museum is perhaps not so unlike the amphorae that Eadmar unearthed. It dates however from the first century AD and was sunk off the coast of Italy.

\(^{203}\) Wats, p.26 (GA i. 28).

\(^{204}\) See above pp.21-29. The account of 'Leofric' (Alfric II) occurs at Wats, p.26 (GA i. 28-31).
the honour, declaring his brother Alfric to be more worthy of the post. A famine raging throughout England, which as we have seen, was probably that described under 976 in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, caused Alfric to bestow upon the poor, certain treasures of the church (gems and engraved stones) that had been set aside for the work upon the church fabric. Yet he appears to have overstepped the mark in putting the consecrated ecclesiastical vessels of the church to the same use, for his action occasioned a brief digression in the *Gesta* upon the reasons why property devoted to public worship should not used to aid the poor. Matthew prefaced this discussion with one of his characteristic phrases; he stated that whether Alfric, in disposing of such property, acted well or not 'novit ille qui nihil ignorat'. Judas Escariot had criticized Mary Magdalene, for anointing the feet of Jesus with perfumed oil when she might have sold the oil to aid the poor. Jesus had replied thus 'You will always have the poor with you, but me you will not'. Matthew concluded that items devoted to the divine honour in the ecclesiastical ministry, should be inalienable.

Like all his predecessors without exception, Alfric was of noble birth and he manfully defended the possessions of the church and repressed rebels, supported by friends and noble relatives. He appears to have taken his social standing and that of the abbey seriously for he admitted no-one to the brotherhood unless they were of distinguished and legitimate birth, for he believed that the ignoble, the illegitimate and especially the lowborn, were more prone to commit enormities. For this snobbery he was rebuked by a certain monk Leofstan,

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205 Wats, p.26 (*GA* i. 28).
206 Wats, p.26 (*GA* i. 29).
207 Wats, p.26 (*GA* i. 30).
himself illegitimate and of lowly birth, yet wise and well mannered. 208 Leofstan must have been extremely young, when he challenged abbot Alfric, for he followed Alfric's brother Leofric as abbot of St Albans, and died in 1066.

The *vita* of abbot Alfric bears many hallmarks of Matthew's authorship; it contains phrases popularly employed by Matthew such as 'Novit Ille qui nihil ignorat', 'secundum illud Jacobi', and its subject matter is reflective of Matthew's interests and concerns. 209 Its reference to the cameos set aside by abbot Alfric betrays Matthew's interest in gems that manifests itself most obviously in the treatise on gems written by him into the *Liber Additamentorum*. 210 The discussion of the uses to which property devoted to public worship should be put is paralleled in a similar passage included in the *Chronica Maiora* 's annal for 1240. 211 The social status of the abbot again preoccupies Matthew and it is interesting to find that even after the monastic reform of the tenth century the nobly born abbot of St Albans, could seek to select for the brotherhood only those with the correct social qualifications. Leofstan appears to act as Matthew's mouthpiece in his criticism of Alfric's social discriminations. One particular document transcribed by Matthew into the *Liber Additamentorum*, provides some independent corroboration of the aristocratic context of the tenth-century abbacy of St Albans. The will of Aethelgifu, is dateable to c. 990. 212 A lady of

208 Wats, p. 26 (*GA* i. 30-31).

209 Wats, p. 26 (*GA* i. 29-30).

210 Wats, p. 26 (*GA* i. 30). LA, f.147r and printed CM vi. 198; *De Anulis et Gemmis et Pallis Que Sunt de Thesauro Ecclesie*.

211 CM iv. 14. Here, however, the gist of the argument is that property of the church should not be used for the purposes of war.

212 S. Keynes, 'A Lost Cartulary', p. 268.
considerable wealth and social standing, her close relationship with the abbey of
St Albans manifests itself in the generous bequests included in her will; land at
Great Gaddesden in Hertfordshire, thirty mancuses of gold, thirty oxen, twenty
cows, two hundred and fifty sheep, one swineherd, two silver bowls, two silver
horns, a book, a cauldron and a bench cover. Moreover, Standon and Offanlege
were to revert ultimately to the abbey. The abbey enjoyed an association with
its fair share of female aristocrats even into the thirteenth century for on the
second fly leaf of Trinity College, Dublin MS. 177, Matthew's Vie de Seint
Auban, are noted the names, Isabel Countess of Arundel and the Countess of
Winchester for whom Matthew was performing the duties of librarian.

Alfric's career is well documented beyond the pages of the Gesta. A skeletal
chronology of that career was provided above. He probably witnessed
numerous extant charters as abbot although, as we noted above, a proliferation
of Alfrics in the tenth century makes firm identification difficult. As bishop of
Ramsbury he continued to witness charters. Plummer believed him to have
been the Bishop 'Aelfstan' who led a naval fleet against the Danes in 992,
although Whitelock noted that there was a bishop Aelfstan of London at this

213 St Albans copies of the will are to be found in B, ff. 165v-167r, LA, f. 152. The earliest
extant manuscript (tenth-century, English) is owned by Morgan Grenfell and Co. Printed at
CMvi. 12-15. A facsimile of the will is included in S. Keynes, Anglo-Saxon Charters.
Supplementary Volume I. Facsimiles of Anglo-Saxon Charters (Oxford, 1991), no.15. The
original is in Princeton University Library, Scheide Library Libr. MS. M140. See D.
Whitelock et al, The Will of Aethelgifu: A Tenth Century Anglo-Saxon Manuscript. (Oxford,
1968)

214 See p.9, n.30.

215 The following charters are witnessed by an 'Aelfric abbas' during the supposed period of
his abbacy; S777, 779, 780, 781, 786, 788, 795, 799, 820, 805, 801, 802, and 800 and they
include grants and confirmations made by King Edgar to the monasteries of Bath, Ely,
Worcester, Wilton and Winchester.

216 S 876, 880, 881, 882, 1379, 883.
date. Thirty extant diplomas were witnessed by Alfric as archbishop. He appears as advocate for the widow of Ethelfric of Bocking, in the latter's will and he was protector of the foundation of Burton in the will of Wulfric Spot. His own will, compiled in around 1003-1004, is extant in Cotton Claudius C ix and Cotton, Claudius B vi (the Abingdon Chronicle). The latter source contains several references to Archbishop Alfric; his purchase of the 'gift' of Dummelton by Ethelred is noted in this source.

Alfric's brother Leofric is accidentally named 'Alftic II' by the Gesta. He was generous, learned, eloquent and prudent, an irreprehensible doctor and pastor, elegant of speech, prudent in counsel, lavish with guests, holy with the brothers, austere with rebels and frugal with paupers. A vision of St Albam led him to compose a history of the saint which he adapted to music. Matthew states that it was sung in church in his own day. By the authority of his brother, the archbishop, he caused the history to be disseminated throughout England and the day of the saint to be honoured. Leofric's talents extended beyond the purely literary. Whilst still a secular and chancellor of King Ethelred, he bought from that same king the town of Kingsbury with ponds and woods pertaining to it, to be held at farm. This town that had been so damaging to the abbey he razed to

217 Whitelock, Wills, pp.47-51. The will is extant as a later copy of c.1100 (Christ Church MSS The Red Book of Canterbury no.18) but was originally drawn up around 1002-1006. See also Stevenson, Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon, i. 411 for Alfric's connection with Wulfric Spot.

218 Claudius C ix dates to the twelfth-century and the will is extant at ff.127v-128r. Cotton Claudius B vi contains vernacular and Latin versions at ff.102rv. See Stevenson, Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon, i. 416-419.

219 Wats, pp.26-28 (GA i. 31-38).

220 Wats, pp.26-27 (GA i. 31-32).

221 Wats, p.27 (GA i. 32).
the ground, leaving one small fortification for King Ethelred had desired that at
least a vestige of the royal power remain. Matthew's comment upon Leofric's
role in the growth of the privileged exemption of the abbey is accompanied by an
interest in his territorial transactions. He purchased from the king for one
thousand marks Oxhey and 'Eadulfingtun'. He also acquired Norton, Upton and
'Becceswurth', having paid for them fifty pounds, and here Matthew refers the
reader to the testimony of certain 'chirographs of this church'. Furthermore,
Leofric gave land at Tew to Leofsige and his friends for life, in exchange for ten
pounds. The monks were to receive back the property if ever they returned the
money. 

That Leofric could succeed his brother as abbot signified in the words of
Thomson, 'an ambivalent end for St Albans' reform status'. Yet he may equally
well have risen to the abbacy on the strength of his own merits; he was clearly a
talented man, for the office that he composed in honour of St Alban is possibly
extant in New York, Pierpont Morgan Libr.926. Documentary evidence
relating to abbot Leofric is plentiful. He is named as an executor in the will of

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222 Wats, p.27 (GA i. 32-33). St Albans succeeded in removing the final symbol of royal
authority from within the territories of the abbey in Kingsbury, in around 1154. The Gesta
tells us that King Stephen visited St Alans early in this year and that abbot Robert seized the
opportunity to complain of the problems that the royal servants in Kingsbury caused the abbey.
As a result, Robert obtained permission to expel over zealous royal officers and raze the
fortification to the ground. See GA i. 122.

223 Wats, p.27 (GA i. 33).

224 R.M. Thomson, Manuscripts From St Albans Abbey 1066-1235 2 vols (Woodbridge,
1982), i. 8.

225 K.D.Hartzell considered 'composition' an exalted description for the lessons had been
lifted verbatim from the Mass for one Martyr although the music apparently shows greater
originality. See K.D.Hartzell, 'A St Albans Miscellany in New York', Mittellateinisches
Jahrbuch, 10 (1975), 26-27 and Thomson, Manuscript, i. 9.
his brother archbishop Alfric. His gifts of land to the abbey are recorded alongside those of the archbishop in the short list of benefactors that Matthew placed on folio 63r of Nero D i; between them they granted to the abbey Kingsbury, Childewick, Weston, Flamstead, Norton, Rodenhanger, Wyncelfeld, Burston and Upton. He witnessed several extant charters as abbot. Three were transcribed by Matthew into the Liber Additamentorum, Ethelred's restoration of four mansae at Burston and four at Wincelfelda, (996AD, S888), Ethelred's grant to the minister Aelfhelm of 5 mansae at Codicote, (1002AD, S900), Ethelred's grant of land at Flamstead and St Albans, (1005AD, S912). Leoffric is mentioned in the text of S916 (1007AD), Ethelred's grant of land at Norton, 'Rodhanger' and Oxhey. The latter charter is extant in single sheet form, Bodleian, MS Eng hist a.2, and includes vernacular bounds and endorsement. Of greatest interest, as we have seen, is S912 for Leoffric is said in it to have presented Ethelred with £200 with which to bribe the Danes in return for 55 hides at Eadulfingtun and 6 at Flamstead. Broader historical events could have a considerable impact on an abbey's local endowment. Moreover, it is intriguing that, on the basis of extant charters, Leoffric was a much less active subscriber than many of his contemporaries such as Wulfgar of Abingdon, Leoffric of Muchelney, Aelfweard of Glastonbury and Aelfsige of New Minster, Winchester.

The Gesta swings from a concrete narration of the business dealings of Leoffric to a muddled and possibly whimsical story of abbot 'Alfric' and the relics. Threat

226 Whitelock, Wills, p.53.

227 S916 verbally echoes S888, Keynes, Diplomas, pp.122-123.

228 Keynes, Diplomas, Table 5: Subscriptions of Abbots 993-1016.
of Danish invasion during the reign of Edward the Confessor, had caused Alfric to secrete the relics of St Alban in a safe wall under the altar of St Nicholas. Wrapping the relics of a certain saintly monk in a hairy rag that he claimed to be the cloak of St Amphibalus, he sent them to Ely, pretending that they were the relics of Alban himself. The threat of Danish invasion vanished with the drowning of King Olaf and the monks of Ely refused to relinquish the supposed relics of England's protomartyr. Matthew generously suggested that there lay the minimum of fraud or impiety in such an act. He cited the Virgilian claim that the pious and evil deed can often seem one and the same. Threats by the monks of St Albans to appeal to king and pope caused schism amongst their counterparts at Ely. Ely, still reluctant to lose their holy catch yet eager to appease, sent St Albans certain adulterine bones which Alfric placed in a painted chest on the altar of St Oswin so as not to generate scandal. Matthew observed, with no small degree of smug satisfaction, that Ely had thus been deceived by Alfric's pious trick. The true relics of Alban Alfric placed in the middle of the church and with the testimony of twelve senior monks, disclosed the malice of the monks of Ely. Matthew found it in himself to rationalize the whole gruesome incident. Ely's conviction that it possessed the true relics of Alban could only be a good thing for it guaranteed the saint's veneration in another location.

The story of Alfric and the relics that appears in the account of Leoffric was considered by Vaughan to be a clumsy fabrication that sprang from Matthew's endeavours to bypass the deeds of abbot Ecgrith in the mid eleventh century. He did not doubt that Ely's claim to the relics arose from the actions of an abbot Alfric of St Albans. As we have seen, a variant manuscript of John of

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Tynemouth's *Nova Legenda*, names the abbot who fled to Ely, 'Alfricus' rather than 'Ecgrifrid'. He suggested that Matthew had taken the correct name of Alfric, attributed some of Ecgfrid's deeds to him by concocting the story of the relics, and subsequently inserted it into the *Gesta*'s account of 'Alfric II', not suspecting the error of transposition that made this account in reality that of Leofric.\(^{230}\) The story is sufficiently contrived to lend credence to Vaughan's theory although, as was suggested above, there appears to be little reason why Ely cannot have fabricated its own version of the tale. The problem is largely unsolvable. Yet given Vaughan's assumption that Matthew rather than Adam was responsible for the Alfric story, it seems odd that Matthew should have been seeking to counteract the claims of the *Liber Eliensis* over a century after the latter's composition. This perhaps supports the notion that twelfth-century St Albans possessed no substantial body of propagandist material pertaining to the domestic history of the abbey.

Leofstan, surnamed Plumstan, succeeded Leofric in around 1047.\(^{231}\) His *vita* opens with the statement that five estates were given to the abbey in his time and by the permission of King Edward, whose familiar, confessor and adviser Leofstan was.\(^{232}\) The *Gesta* elaborates upon this statement. From Oswulph and his wife Aethelgyth the abbey obtained Stodham and from Aethelwine the Black and his wife Wynflaed the four estates of Redburn, Langley, Grandborough and

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\(^{230}\) Vaughan considered Matthew's insertion of the Alfric story in the account of Alfric II proof of the notion that Matthew was unaware of the error of transposition in the *Gesta*, that must therefore have been committed by a predecessor. Yet it was suggested above that the 'error' of transposition was one that stemmed a very personal confusion that plagued Matthew's and his apparent state of oblivion in no way frees him of the burden of responsibility for it.

\(^{231}\) See above, pp.100-104.

\(^{232}\) For the *vita* of Leofstan see Wats, pp.28-29 (*GA* i. 38-41).
'Thuantonam' along with other rents, gifts and ornaments. The *Gesta* also records Leofstan's grant to the widow Tova, of land at Great Tew, Oxon, in return for payment of three marks of gold and an annual render to the minster on lammas day (11 August) of one sester of honey (32 ounces). Matthew states that details of these transactions may be found 'in chirographis Anglicis huius ecclesie'.

Leofstan did rather more than tend to the territorial affairs of the abbey. He sought, for instance, to make the roads safe for all travellers, pedlars and also pilgrims who travelled to the church of St Alban for the expiation of their sins and bodily health. He cut back the forest that stretched from the Chiltern district almost as far as London, lining Watling Street. He smoothed ruts in the road, built bridges and reduced the gradients of steep roads. For at that time so Matthew tells us, the Chiltern district was covered in dense and copious forest, inhabited by wild beasts, robbers, and fugitives. So Leofstan took a second precaution, that was intended, so Matthew stresses, to aid the church and not to harm it. He conceded to a knight named Turnot and his two companions Waldef and Thurman, (Williams's 'three stout Saxon thanes') the manor of Flamstead, for which the said knight secretly presented the abbot with five ounces of gold, one beautiful palfrey and a desirable greyhound. Leofstan stipulated that Turnot and his heirs guard the western parts of the district that abounded in robbers. If damage should happen to the church through their idleness, the manor would revert to the abbey. If widespread war broke out, they should do all in their power to guarantee the safety of the abbey. Turnot and his heirs faithfully

233 Wats, p.28 *(GA i. 39).*

234 Wats, p.28 *(GA i. 39).*
fulfilled these conditions up until 1066 when they lost the said manor, fled into the forest and prepared ambushes upon the enemy who had invaded their lands, burnt their houses, and killed many of their number. A Norman noble, distinguished in arms, called Roger de Thorney, received the manor of Flamstead in William's subsequent redistribution of land, yet undesirous of depriving St Albans of it endowment, fulfilled the service that Leofstan had requested of Turnot. The Gesta closes the vita of Leofstan with the brief mention of certain ornaments and liberties that the abbot bestowed upon the church. He died swiftly after Edward and left the church overflowing with possessions. 235

The territorial acquisitions attributed to Leofstan by the Gesta are well substantiated in the documentary sources. The record of the conventio between Oswulph, Aethelgyth and the abbey, concerning land at Studham was transcribed by Matthew into the Liber Additamentorum. 236 Upon entry into the fraternity of the abbey, Oswulph and his wife gave twenty shillings. Their gift of Studham had resulted from Aethelgyth's desire that the soul of her former husband Ulf be commemorated, since he had given her the land. Yet they wished to retain a life interest in the estate, for which they would pay twenty shillings per annum towards the monks' victuals. Furthermore they asked Leofstan to give them wood with which to build a church in honour of Christ and St Alban. The grant of Aethelwine Niger and his wife was similarly recorded by Matthew in the Liber. 237 He presented the abbey with five hides at Grandborough, seven

235 Wats, pp.28-29 (GA i. 40) and Wats, p.41 (GA i. 41).


237 CM vi. 28-29. LA, f.152r. S1228.
hides and one gyrd at Redburn, five and a half hides at Langley, three and a half hides at 'Thuantuna' - a total of twenty-one mansas and one virga. The charter is probably substantially genuine.238 Aethelwine's grant of the four named estates is the subject of a miracle story included in Cotton Faustina B iv and outlined above.239 Leofstan's grant to Tova, widow of Wihtric is also included in the Liber.240 In return for three marks of gold he allowed her and her son Godwinus to hold Great Tew, for life. Upon their death the land was to be returned to the abbey without dispute and in the condition in which they had received it. The document states with the Gesta that Tova was required to pay a sextarium of honey (thirty-two ounces) to the abbey on the day of St Peter ad Vincula.

Matthew's documentary transcripts in the Liber are written wholly in Latin. Yet the Gesta intimates that the above transactions are recorded 'in chirographis Anglicis huius ecclesie'. Matthew might well be referring to the twelfth-century cartulary that underlay his own Liber and that is possibly extant in B. The Brussels charters are preserved in the same order as those in the Liber, yet they incorporate vernacular bounds and are frequently followed by the original vernacular text; this is the case with all three of the transactions noted in the Gesta.241 The Liber harbours further documentary material that probably relates

238 Although Robertson felt that the use of the double name Aelfgytha Imma was suspicious (Anglo-Saxon Charters (Cambridge, 1939), p.417), T.J. Oleson believed that the charter was probably genuine; The Witenagemot in the Reign of Edward the Confessor (Oxford, 1955), p.155.


240 LA, f.151v. CM vi. 29-30.

241 B, f.163rv, B, f.165rv, B, ff.163v-164v. Keynes argued that the Latin version of the grant of Aethelwine constituted an attempt to recast the vernacular version in a form more appropriate to a royal diploma; Keynes, 'A Lost Cartulary', p.18. C. Brooke deduced that an Old English version lay behind the Latin version in the Liber, on the basis of the opening notification, uses of nickname and the absence of a date; in M. Gelling, The Early Charters of the Thames Valley (Leicester, 1979). p.89.
to the time of Leofstan and yet is not mentioned in the *Gesta*. Ulf, a noble of Anglo-Scandinavian origin, bequeathed to the abbey Aston and Oxhey in Hertfordshire, one of his better vestments, one chalice, one missal, one dorsal and one lady's robe sometime before the death of Edward. 242 Ulf states moreover, that he wishes to be buried in the abbey of St Albans. 243 The dating of the will is, however, problematic for Keynes noted that the reference to Edward the Confessor appears only in the Latin version and not in the vernacular text that underlay it. 244 The Latin version omits much material not relevant to St Albans. 245 A second will dateable to the early years of abbot Leofstan, that of Eadwine of Caddington, granted Watford and other lands to St Albans. 246 The abbey also received twenty oxen and twenty cows. The chief beneficiary however was his son Leofwine to whom he gave Sundon, Caddington, Streatley, 'Haerlea', 'Pirian', Putnoe and Barley. 247 The latter place would fall to the abbey

242 *CM* vii. 32-33, *LA*, f.151v. Keynes concluded that Ulf was probably an prosperous Anglo-Scandinavian noble. He noted the Scandinavian features of the vernacular version of the will; the use of 'feolagan' for 'associates' and the presence of Scandinavian personal names - Thorod, Dagfinn, Saxa. It also uses the terms 'marks' and 'ores' to express weights of silver. Keynes tentatively identified him with bishop Ulf who became bishop of Dorchester in 1049. For all the above see S. Keynes, 'The Will of Ulf', *Old English Newsletter* 26.3 (1993), 16-21.

243 His will is extremely detailed; apart from gifts to St Albans he presented another lady's robe to the monastery of Ramsey, 4 marks of silver to the church of St Peter, Rome, 4 shillings for the singing of masses for his soul, 4 shillings to the principal churches of the land and 4 marks of gold and his remaining land to his companions. He names individuals; to Dagfino 1 mark of gold, to Aefino 2 marks of silver, to Edward 1 horse. Thirty of his servants were to have their freedom.)


245 For example, the grant of Othin of 2 marks of weighed silver and to earl Sihtric one half a mark of gold. He made a bequest also to Osgod (6 ores of gold and 4 marks of silver).

246 *LA*, f.151v. B, ff.164v-165r and *CM* viii. 33. Gelling dates the will to c.1053; *The Early Charters of the Thames Valley*, p.21. Keynes dates it to c.1050; 'A Lost Cartulary', pp.275-279.

247 Keynes suggested that Eadwine's will proves the exception to the rule for the Anglo-Saxon landed aristocracy usually disposed widely of their estates. Eadwine however left most of them to his son Leofwine; 'A Lost Cartulary', p.30.
Keynes argues that the heriot mentioned in this will suggests that the writer was a king's thegn. Leofstan, as we have seen, witnessed two extant charters, dateable to 1061 and 1062. Thus the documentary evidence pertinent to the abbacy of Leofstan is rich and it confirms the notion that St Albans maintained close and highly beneficial contact with aristocratic figures as indeed it appears to have done in previous centuries. Yet the account of Leofstan allows us a glimpse of the less desirable side of life in and around eleventh-century St Albans for the abbot continues the crusade against the thieves who hugged the popular route along Watling Street. In his concern for the security of the abbey he continued the pattern set by Alfric I and II and Ealdred, and the *Gesta'*s account of the measures he undertook says much about the importance of the abbey as a centre for pilgrim traffic in the middle years of the eleventh century. 249

The *Gesta'*s account of Leofstan begins the localized description of the Norman Conquest that is continued into the account of Frederick. Its tale of the flight of Turnot and his heirs into the forest and their ambush upon the Normans, effectively anchors to a local context the statement of Wendover that in 1067, many English nobles fled to deserted and wooded locations with the same purpose in mind. 250 Although no documentary evidence supports Leofstan's grant of Flamstead to Turnot, Domesday Book supports the *Gesta'*s suggestion

248 Ibid., p. 30.

249 St Albans was after all only twenty miles from London. Wheeler, 'The Verulamium Excavations' pp.15-25, 15; excavations in 1930 revealed that the main axis of the Roman City, Watling Street had been diverted at St Stephens in Saxon times, for the greater convenience of traffic to the abbey on the neighbouring hill-top. For a concise account of the pilgrim traffic in and around St Albans in the twelfth century, see Gordon-Taylor, 'The Hagiography of St Alban and St Amphibalus', passim.

250 Wats, p.28 (GA i. 40). CM ii. 2.
that Robert of Tosney subsequently acquired it.\textsuperscript{251} The Domesday reference appears to bypass Turnot altogether for it states that Aki, a thegn of King Edward had held the manor.\textsuperscript{252} The Gesta's reference to Leofstan's presentation of numerous other gifts and liberties to the abbey cannot be corroborated. It may have served merely to preface the closing statement of the comfortable financial position in which Leofstan left the abbey on his death.

The account of abbot Frederick opens with the customary declaration of the racial origins of the incoming abbot. Frederick, an 'Old Saxon', was related to King Cnut.\textsuperscript{253} From general comment upon the political turmoil that followed the death of Edward the Confessor on 5 January 1066, the Gesta turns to more focussed discussion of the deeds of abbot Frederick. This abbot possessed the paranoic tendency that appears to have afflicted most of the Anglo-Saxon abbots of St Albans. Concerned by the threat posed by the wooded manor of Aldenham to travellers journeying to and from London, he leased it to the abbot of Westminster. The latter was to keep the roads safe and if he were found guilty of negligence he would be deprived of his holding. When twenty years had elapsed the manor was to return to the abbot of St Albans. In essence, this agreement parallels that made between Frederick's predecessor Leofstan and the knight Turnot.\textsuperscript{254} In any case, when the twenty years had elapsed, the manor was to return to the abbot of St Albans. Yet the abbot of Westminster suffered the same

\textsuperscript{251} ff.138a-b.

\textsuperscript{252} Flamstead answered for four hides before 1066 and two after. It had land for twelve ploughs as well as seven cottager, four slaves and woodland valued at one thousand pigs. Before 1066 it was worth £12, dropping subsequently to £9 and rising to £11 by 1086; ff.138a-b.

\textsuperscript{253} Wats, pp.29 and 31, (GA i. 41). Frederick's \textit{vita} occupies GA i. 41-51.

\textsuperscript{254} See above p.101 and Wats, p.29 (GA i. 40).
attack of greed that had afflicted the monks of Ely and he could afford to do so because he was a member of the royal curia and a familiar of the William I having bestowed many gifts upon the king on the occasion of his coronation at Westminster. Puffed up with pride he failed to fulfill the terms of the lease and, in addition, set his sights on a wood called 'Bruteite' which he claimed was attached to the manor of Aldenham. He sowed the seeds of discord between the king and abbot Frederick and when the allotted twenty years had passed he predictably refused to return the said manor. Matthew elegantly likened his troublemaking to the seeking of a knot in a bullrush. Frederick's constant protests fell on deaf ears for Aldenham remained for several years in the hands of his opponent. Weakened by age and despair and weary of the injuries he had sustained, Frederick ceased litigation.

From this point on the account of the abbacy of Frederick is set firmly against the historical background of the Norman Conquest. Matthew's handling of this event will be considered in detail in chapter five. It is sufficient for the moment to note that Matthew considered Frederick a core figure in English resistance.

The people of the south elected him their leader and he proceeded to offer aid and refuge to English nobles and prelates. He was 'inter omnes Anglos dux et promotor efficacissimus' and he had administered the oath sworn upon the relics of St Albans abbey by William at Berkhamstead in which he promised to observe the good old laws that Edward and his ancestors had decreed. When the

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255 Wats, p.29 (GA i 43).
256 Wats, p.29 (GA i. 45).
257 Wats, p.29 (GA i 44-45).
258 Wats, pp.29-30 (GA i. 45 and 47-48).
Gesta returned for one last time to the tale of abbot Frederick, having indulged in vicious condemnation of William's character defects, he was no longer the 'vir generosus, opibus et viribus non mediocriter formidabilis' of English resistance. Instead he was racked by the firm conviction that William or Lanfranc would hurl him from the height of his dignity, fling him in prison, or kill him, pure and simple. 

Wulfstan's endeavours to make peace between him and the king or Lanfranc, were met with cynicism on the part of Frederick who tearfully announced his planned departure in the Chapter. With the permission and advice of the Convent he fled to the island of Ely with certain books, garments and essential provisions. There he died and there, so Matthew tells us, his body was believed to be buried.

Matthew's claim that Frederick was of Saxon race yet related to Cnut is intriguing. It is possible that Matthew merely assumed him to have been Saxon on the grounds that the name Frederick was rare outside Germany. His familiarity with the exploits of the emperor Frederick II, upon which he had dwelt at great length in the Chronica might have made this association easier to make. Knowles and Brooke, noting that the only other Frederick of the period was brother-in-law of William of Warenne, suggested that the abbot of St Albans was a representative of the invaders. Matthew's tale of Frederick's role

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259 Wats, p.30 (GA i. 50).

260 Wats, pp.30-31 (GA i. 50-51).

261 Wats, p.31 (GA i. 51).

262 The Gesta had believed Eadfrith to have been of a similar racial concoction.

263 Knowles and Brooke, Heads, p.66, n.1.

264 Ibid. 66, n.1.
in resistance to the Conqueror would thus be reduced to wholesale fabrication of incredible proportions. Knowles and Brooke did not note that Matthew assigns precisely the same mixture of racial origins to Eadfrith. It may well be the case that the abbey had possessed strong links with Scandinavia and the continent from an early period and that these occasionally provided recruiting ground in the search for a new abbot.

The account of Frederick displays considerable similarities of style and subject matter with other works attributed to Matthew. It lent itself easily to cross referencing and verbal and stylistic echoes for it possessed the historical anchorage of a major event such as the Norman Conquest in which Matthew evidently sustained an interest and which he was to relate in seven works in all. The opportunities for reverberence between the earlier lives and other works of Matthew simply weren't there. Edward's vision of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus was recounted in some detail by Wendover in his Flores Historiarum, transcribed by Matthew into his Chronica, versified by him in the Estoire and severely abridged by him in the Abbreviatio Chronicorum. The vita of Frederick further parallels other works by Matthew in the interest that it shows in the English hairstyle; it notes that the English grew their hair and beards after the manner of the Trojans and laments their being forced to wear them short in accordance with Norman tradition. The Historia, perhaps drawing upon the Gesta, declared that those who once grew their hair in locks now had it cut to the shoulder; 'and thus daily expired the ancient custom of men

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265 See chapter five.


267 Wats. pp.29-30 (G:i i. 42 and 48).

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of approved holiness and honesty'. The Historia also shares with the Gesta its description of the fortifying of houses in the provinces to guard against civil unrest. Moreover, the Gesta's claim that William had exiled the sanctity and nobility of the kingdom finds a counterpart in the Historia's claim that William had driven the nobilitas of the English kings to Scotland so that up until the time of writing, that is 1250, no king of England was bestowed with the title of holiness.

The Gesta's account of Frederick also displays linguistic parallels with other works of Matthew. Its statement that Stigand changed sides 'similis arundini ventis agitate', parallels Matthew's accusation in the Flores that the Pope and cardinals supported Harold and then William as if 'harundinis exagitate ventorum turbine'. The Flores's description of the English in the throws of defeat was stylistically influenced somewhat ironically by Matthew's account of the growth of English resistance in the Gesta.

268 HA i. 11. It is intriguing, however, that William of Malmesbury's Vita Wulfstani suggests a rather different English taste in hairstyles; Wulfstan, it is said, carried around with him a little knife with which he would cut off wanton locks from the heads of the brothers. He would enjoin them subsequently to shorten the rest of their hair to amcht. 'If any man thought fit to refuse he would frankly blame his softness and threaten him with evil to come. It shall come to pass he said, that men who were ashamed to be men, and men themselves like women with flowing tresses, should be no better than women in defence of their country against men from overseas.' J.H.F. Peile, The Life of St Wulfstan by William of Malmesbury (London, 1934), pp.34-35.

269 HA i. 14 and Wats, p.29 (GA i. 42). See chapter five.

270 Wats, p.30 (GA i. 48), speaking of exiled nobles and prelates; 'Quibus exulantibus pristina regni sanctitas, ac nobilitas, irremediabiliter exuavit'. HA i. 9; 'Ex tunc ergo regum Angliae nobilitas, a propriis per Normannos expulsa finibus, ad reges Scotorum est infelici sidere devoluta, et aureis seculis successerunt luteis deteriorea. Nec usque ad tempora haec scribentis, videlicet annum gratiae MCCL, est inventus rex Angliae titulo sanctitatis insignitus'. This claim is also paralleled in the Estoire II.3443-3446. The Gesta's portrayal of William as a crafty tyrant is mirrored in the Historia and passages on the rise of vice and the general state of the kingdom occur in the Gesta, Historia and Chronica.

271 Wats, p.30 (GA i. 45. FH i. 598).
Similarly, both the *Gesta* and the *Estoire* term Edgar the 'darling of England'.

Extensive similarities between the account of Frederick and sections of the *Flores*, *Historia*, *Estoire* and *Chronica* draw this vita firmly into the corpus of historical writing attributable to Matthew and its subsequent influence on Matthew's patterns of historical thought and composition can be clearly traced.

Whilst the *vita* of Frederick is very clearly related to other works by Matthew, it is also the first to display some dependence upon earlier literary source material. Its claim that the imprisonment of Stigand was justified 'quia vivente Roberto archiepiscopo, cathedram ascendit episcopalem', appears to be dependent upon the statement of John of Worcester in the *Chronicon ex Chronicis*, that Stigand was deposed at the Council of Winchester in 1070 because 'vivente archiepiscopo Roberto, non solum archiepiscopatum sumpsit, sed etiam eius pallio, quod Cantariae remansit'. Similarly, the *Gesta's* account of Lanfranc's

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272 Wats, p. 30 (GA i. 47).

273 FH i. 596.

274 Wats, p. 30 (GA i. 47); 'Engelondes dereling' and *Estoire* 1.830; 'drugun d'Engleterre'.

journey to Rome draws upon that included by Miles Crispin in his *Vita Lanfranci*. In the *Vita*, Pope Alexander II informs Lanfranc that, 'Non ideo assurexi ei quia archiepiscopus Cantuarie est, sed quia Becci ad scholam eius fui, et ad pedes eius cum aliis auditor sedi'. 276 In the *Gesta* his words are 'Assurgo tibi, tanquam magistro et deosculor tanquam pedagogum et non tam archipresulem'. 277 Occasionally, the *Gesta* appears to adopt literary role models in its depiction of Frederick. The support lent by the abbot to harassed English nobles parallels that which abbot Aethelwig of Evesham provided for the poor fugitives from the counties wasted by the Conqueror. Frederick, 'inter omnes Anglos dux et promotor efficissimus' resembles more than a little Aethelwig 'Pater... pauperum, judex viduarum, pupillorum, orphanorum, peregrinorum, omnium miserorum consolator...'. 278 The account of the abbacy of Frederick is thus the first that has a traceable literary context.

Yet Frederick's *vita* possesses several other interesting features. The dispute over the manor of Aldenham to which it makes reference, is substantiated by independent documentary evidence. 279 A charter of Offa to abbot Ordbriht, two copies of which are extant on single sheet parchment at Westminster, grants ten cassates of land at Aldenham for which the abbot had paid one hundred mancuses of pure gold and an armlet. 280 Edgar's Great Charter and Edward the

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276 *Vita Lanfranci* of Miles Crispin in *Patrologia Latina* cl, col.49.

277 *Wats*, p.30 (GA i. 46).


279 For the following see F.E Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, (Manchester, 1952).

280 Ibid., pp.500-501. S124 (785AD)
Confessor's First Charter confirmed this grant. Harmer reproduces a charter issued by Edward in 1045x1049, and extant on f.185b of Westminster Domesday, that makes a similar confirmation. William the Conquerer made a further confirmation of the grant to the abbey. All, except the charter issued by Offa stress the antiquity of Westminster's possession of the estate. The writ of Edward the Confessor glances back over the former history of the estate; the king declares that the abbey is to have the land as fully and completely as earl Sihtric held it of the monastery, who subsequently presented it before witnesses to abbot Aelfric and the brethren. The abbey was also to hold the land as abbot Ordbriht had held it for the abbey in the days of Offa and Cenwulf. This element of antiquarianism Harmer considered indicative of the need felt by the monks of Westminster to support their claim to Aldenham by documentary evidence of their age-old possession of the estate.

Domesday Book refers to two manors of Aldenham. One, held by the abbot of Westminster, lay in the hundred of Dacorum and was rated at nine hides. The other, held by a tenant of the abbey of St Albans, lay in the hundred of Albanestou and was rated at one hide. The abbot of St Albans appears, at some point to have laid claim to Westminster's manor of Aldenham and it is

281 Harmer, Anglo-Saxon Writs, pp.338 and 111. S774 (969) and S1043 (1066). See also S1040 (1065AD).


284 Harmer, Anglo-Saxon Writs, pp.313-314.

285 Ibid., p.499. Domesday Book, f.135b: 'This manor lay and lies in the lordship of St Peter's Church, Westminster.' f.136a: 'Black, St Albans man, held this land, he could not sell.'
important to stress that the dispute was over rights of hundredal and public jurisdiction rather than feudal tenure. This is made clear in the terms of the accord reached in 1256, three years before Matthew's death. His interest in Frederick's contribution to the dispute stemmed from the currency of the issue in his own lifetime. Contemporary affairs moulded his vision of the past, and dictated those aspects of the abbey's history that he would include and exclude.

The preceding journey through the early vitae of the Gesta has hopefully indicated the extent to which the details they contain concerning the Anglo-Saxon monastery and its abbots can be substantiated. Persistent themes and prejudices that link the early lives, remain to be explored. The lives are pervaded by an interest in racial origins and nationality. Abbot Eadfrith it seems was a continental Saxon with Danish connections. 'Ex Saxonum magnatibus originem ducens', he was also related to Wulfa the Dane. Frederick, as we have seen, possessed the same rather unique racial credentials. He sprang 'ex veteribus Saxonibus' yet was related to king Cnut (Dacis, Cnutoni Regi fuit consanguineus, et linealiter descendendo propinquus).

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287 Ibid., p.499. The township of Aldenham was to do suit to the hundred of Cashio wherever it should be held, every three weeks with a penalty of 4s 8d for every default in attendance. Tenants of the abbey of Westminster were to be kept in prison if arrested for crime and tried at Aldenham before bailiffs of St Albans and other freemen of the hundred and manor. Thieves condemned at St Albans were to be hanged on gallows common to both abbots.

288 The abbacy of St Albans first Norman abbot Paul and the impact of the Norman Conquest upon workings of the monastery will be considered in chapter five.

289 Wats, p.24 (GA i. 20). Matthew appears to be differentiating between the continental 'Saxoni' and the Anglo-Saxons whom he terms simply 'Angli', see for instance Wats, pp.29-30 (GA i. 44 and 45) and Wats, p.59 (GA i. 184).

290 Wats, p.29 (GA i. 41). That Matthew considered Frederick at least to have been of continental origin is probable on the grounds of his use of the adjective 'veteribus' before
characters of the *Gesta* have their nationalities disclosed. The monk Egwin, famed for his retrieval of the relics from Odensee, was said to be 'de pago eiusdem martyris (Alban)...oriundus'.\(^{291}\) He was thus of English origin. Roger of Tosney whose receipt of the manor of Flamstead from William the Conqueror was documented in the account of Frederick was 'natione Normannis'.\(^{292}\) This tendency to place the personalities of the *Gesta* in a racial context is evident throughout the work as a whole. Richard derived 'ab egregia Normannorum stirpe'.\(^{293}\) Geoffrey was 'ex illustri Cenomanensium et Normannorum progenie exortus'.\(^{294}\) Robert was 'ex nobili Normannorum Cenomanensiumque prosapia'.\(^{295}\) The last five abbots whose careers Matthew immortalized were all English.\(^{296}\) The *Gesta*'s interest in the origins of the abbots has wide implications for our understanding of the cultural environment of Anglo-Saxon St Albans; two of the abbey's early abbots were possibly of continental birth. The early community, far from being conservative and insular was relatively cosmopolitan.\(^{297}\) The abbey's Danish connections are corroborated to some

\(^{291}\) GA i. 13.

\(^{292}\) Wats, p.29 (GA i. 40-41).

\(^{293}\) Wats, p.34 (GA i. 66).

\(^{294}\) Wats, p.35 (GA i. 72-73).

\(^{295}\) Wats, p.42 (GA i. 110).

\(^{296}\) See for example, Wat, p.59 (GA i. 184)- 'natione Anglus', Wats, p.61 (GA i. 194)-'de cantebrugia stirpe mediocri oriundus', Wats, p.67 (GA i. 217)-'non procul a viculo qui 'Stodham' dicitur, ex mediocri prosapia oriundus', Wats, p.92 (GA i. 312)-'Prior quandoque de Hertforde, et inde oriundus....'.

\(^{297}\) In the second half of the nineteenth century a coin of Charlemagne (768-814) was found in the west end of the abbey; *VCH* ii. 260. It is also worth noting that St Albans parallell towns in

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extent by the independent documentary evidence for Ulf's will, dateable to 1050 and discussed above. Not all contact with the Danes was beneficial. The Danish noble Berno had led the abbot Leofstan a merry dance through his seizure of a manor that had been granted to the abbey by Aethelwine niger. Yet, in general, St Albans escaped the worst of the Viking raids and seems to have sustained little lasting damage. Roger Wendover did not even include it amongst his list of monasteries destroyed by the Danes. Plentiful evidence for later contact between the abbey and Scandinavia suggests a relationship with deep and long growing roots. Anketil, the monk who constructed a shrine of St Alban during the abbacy of Geoffrey (1119-1146) had been a 'custos' of the mint for the King of Denmark. Odo, treasurer to King Waldemar II of Denmark (1202-1241), Edward the Clerk, Privy Councilor to the same sovereign and Nicholas, also a former moneyer to the king of Denmark were among Matthew's informants about his story concerning Egwin and the relics. It is possible that Matthew's own involvement in the affairs of Norway in the middle years of the thirteenth century was the inevitable outcome of centuries of

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299 B.L. Cotton MS. Faustina B iv, ff.19v-20v.

300 D.J. Fisher, 'The Church in England Between the Death of Bede and the Danish Invasions', TRHS, (1951), 1-19. D. Knowles, The Monastic Order in England (Cambridge, 1966), 2 vols, i. 69 and Flores, i. 303. Williams believed that St Albans immunity from the early Viking raids was proof of its relative anonymity and poverty. Other factors at play were its distance from the nearest navigable river and the absence of any major town nearby apart from the long deserted ruins of Roman Verulamium; History of the Abbey of St Albans, p.22.

301 K.D. Hartzell noted liturgical links between the abbey and Odense: 'A St Albans Miscellany', p.24.

302 Wats, p.38 (G4 i. 84).

303 G4 i. 19.
contact between St Albans and parts of Scandinavia, rather than being purely illustrative of the reputation that Matthew had acquired.  

Matthew's sensitivity to issues of nationality colours the early vitae. With his account of the first Norman abbot Paul, simple statements of racial origin are supplemented with comment upon the cultural conflict that followed in the wake of the Norman Conquest. Paul's failure to translate the relics of Offa to his new church, his loss of an estate through criticism of an Englishman and his smashing of the tombs of his Anglo-Saxon predecessors were acts of negligence with a racial flavour that Matthew chose to incorporate at the expense of unswerving loyalty to an early abbot of his house. Yet it says much about Matthew's true concerns that he considered Paul's malicious handling of his predecessor's tombs to have stemmed possibly from the abbot's sense of their social inferiority rather than a simple contempt for 'Anglicos'. The Gesta is obsessed with the social status of its protagonists; Wulsig was 'regali stemmate procreatus'. Eadfrith's ancestors were Saxon nobles. 'Leofric' (Alfric II) was the noble son of the earl of Kent and 'generosus'. Even where direct comment upon social standing is

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304 For Matthew's involvement in Norway see Vaughan, Matthew Paris, pp.4-7. Hertfordshire had never been extensively settled by Scandinavians but it did become part of the Danelaw; the place-names Tring and Dacorum suggest Danish influence. Hertfordshire was on eof the counties that had been reconquered from the Danes by the time of the reign of Athelstan; P.H. Blair, 'The Place-names of Hertfordshire', TSHAAS (1938), 222-232, 227.

305 Wats, p.33 (GA i. 62).

306 Wats, p.33 (GA i. 62); 'Quod vero nullo modo excusari, tumbas venerabilium antecessorum suorum, Abbatum nobilium, - quos rudes et idiotas consuevit appellare, - delevit, vel contemnendo cos quia Anglicos, vel invidendo, quia fere omnes stirpe regali, vel magnatum praeclaro sanguine, fuerant procreati.'

307 Wats, p.23 (GA i. 9).

308 Wats, p.24 (GA i. 20).

309 Wats, p.26 (GA i. 28 and 30).
lacking, Matthew makes it plain that the Anglo-Saxon abbey of St Albans functioned in an aristocratic environment and maintained close contacts with the secular nobility; the infamous Wulsig entertained well to do ladies at his table and married off his female relatives to rich nobles.\textsuperscript{310} Leofric snobbishly admitted only those who were of good birth or at least legitimate.\textsuperscript{311} Moreover, the account of the Norman Conquest that is contained in the \textit{vita} of abbot Frederick, possessed an unashamed obsession with the fate of the English nobility. It is their degradation, exile, retaliatory deeds, and the aid lent them by Frederick, that constitute the backbone of the Conquest narrative.\textsuperscript{312} Grants of land made to the abbey in the time of Frederick’s predecessor Leofstan, were the profitable result of a healthy relationship with the landed nobility. Extant wills such as those of Aethelgifu, Wulfric and Eadwine of Caddington point in the same direction. So healthy was the relationship that Richard of Tosney ‘natione Normannis, ab illis famosis militibus trahens propaginem, qui a Cygni nomine intitulantur’ could choose voluntarily to do the customary services for the manor of Flamstead that William had expropriated.\textsuperscript{313}

The \textit{Gesta} strives to emphasize too the closeness of the relationship that bound the abbey first to the Mercian dynasty and then to that of the West Saxons. Like most other monastic institutions it benefited considerably from the generosity of successive kings and the \textit{Gesta} is riddled with a sense of the growing prosperity of the abbey. It is vague in its reference to gifts that Offa presented to the abbey

\textsuperscript{310} Wats, p.23 (\textit{GA} i. 10).

\textsuperscript{311} Wats, p.28 (\textit{GA} i. 31).

\textsuperscript{312} Wats, pp.29-30 (\textit{GA} i. 42, 44 and 48).

\textsuperscript{313} Wats, pp.28-29 (\textit{GA} i. 40-41).
in 795, (sic 793)\textsuperscript{314} It indulges in a little more detail concerning the grant made by his son Ecgfrid of five \textit{manensia} at Pynesfeld.\textsuperscript{315} It says surprisingly little about Ethelred's numerous bequests to the abbey that are documented in the Brussels cartulary and the \textit{Liber Additamentorum}.\textsuperscript{316} There is nothing at all unusual in such royal participation in the establishment and enlargement of a monastic endowment. Yet the \textit{Gesta} suggests that the relationship between St Albans and the royal line was closer still. Willegod had been installed as abbot by Offa and grieved greatly upon his death.\textsuperscript{317} Both Eadric and Wulstig were related to members of the royal house.\textsuperscript{318} Leofstan was 'familiaris, confessor, et consiliarius' of Edward and Edith and the king's grief on learning of the fraud committed by the monks of Ely was one befitting a king who 'Beato Albano fuit amicissimus'.\textsuperscript{319} Frederick loved King Harold 'praecordatiter'.\textsuperscript{320} Yet the relationship between king and abbey had had its low points; friction between royal ministers and the abbey had caused Alfric I to purchase and drain a royal fishpond and his later namesake to level a royal manor.\textsuperscript{321} Moreover, William the Conqueror firmly supported the abbot of Westminster in the latter's dispute with

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{314} Wats, p.22 (\textit{GA} i. 6) for reference to the deeds of gifts that Offa presented on the altar of the abbey, p.9 for mention of his over generosity to the abbey and p.10 for details of the some of his portable gifts; Wats, pp.22 and 23.
  \item \textsuperscript{315} Wats, p.23 (\textit{GA} i. 6-7).
  \item \textsuperscript{316} It says a little about the enlargement of the monastery's endowment under later abbots; for example, 'Alfric II's' purchase of Kingsbury, Wats, p.27 (\textit{GA} i. 32). Leofstan acquired five estates with the permission of King Edward, Wats, p.28 (\textit{GA} i. 38).
  \item \textsuperscript{317} Wats, pp.22-23 (\textit{GA} i. 7).
  \item \textsuperscript{318} Wats, p.23 (\textit{GA} i. 9-10).
  \item \textsuperscript{319} Wats, p.28 (\textit{GA} i. 38).
  \item \textsuperscript{320} Wats, p.29 (\textit{GA} i. 44).
  \item \textsuperscript{321} Wats, pp.25 and 27 (\textit{GA} i. 23-24 and 32-33).
\end{itemize}
abbot Frederick over the manor of Aldenham. Yet, these exceptions do not disguise the lengths to which Matthew went in conveying a sense of the intimacy that bound the Anglo-Saxon abbots of St Albans to reigning royal house.

The aristocratic 'mores' of the early abbots of St Albans are thrown into high relief against a background of mafia crime in and around the town itself. The Gesta bestows upon successive abbots an acute awareness of the threat presented to the abbey by rebellious looters, vagabonds and exiles haunting surrounding areas. There emerges another common theme; the practical steps adopted by the abbots to counteract these potential sources of harm. Abbot Ealdred wholly restructured the town of St Albans stopping up dens of thieves. Abbot Leofstan conceded the manor of Flamstead to Turnot and his companions in order that they might serve as military retainers, guarding certain 'partes occidentales'. Similarly, Frederick had leased Aldenham to the abbot of Westminster in the hopes that the latter would guard certain roads. Anglo-Saxon St Albans was evidently a dangerous place, although it is possible that Matthew was eager simply to illustrate the extent of the abbot's control over surrounding territory.

Yet, like the robbers and miscreants whom they sought to crush, the early abbots of St Albans, despite their nobility of birth, were themselves prone to

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322 Wats, p.29 (GA i. 44).

323 Wats, p.25 (GA i. 24).

324 Wats, p.28 (GA i. 40). Page argued for a systematic programme of wood clearance in west Hertfordshire by Wulsin and then Leofstan. He suggested that it was probably around this time that settlements were made at Sandridge, Abbots Langley, Rickmansworth, Cashio and Bushey: 'The Origins and Forms of Hertfordshire Towns', p.60.

325 Wats, p.29 (GA i. 43).
misdemeanours. One of the most readily observable features of the *Gesta* is the apparent ease with which it broadcasts the 'negligentia' of its subjects. The *vitae* swing between eulogy and damning criticism and this feature is preserved throughout the *Gesta* as a whole. The early abbots are criticized for sexual misconduct, indulgent living, snobbery, and indifference to the expansion of the abbey's landed endowment. The later abbots are censured for the rather more tyrannical acts of despoilation of abbey property and the unconstitutional banishment of monks to distant cells. The charges of generosity to relatives and leaving the abbey in debt surface throughout the work. That Matthew should have been so frank in his biographies of the abbots of his own house is intriguing. 326 He wished perhaps to suggest that, despite hiccups in the good behaviour of its abbots, the abbey could boast a continuous history from 793 until 1255, dependent perhaps upon divine favour. The very structure of the *Gesta* is geared towards this theme of continuity; abbacy upon abbacy unfolds with a rolling momentum that carries the reader through decades and centuries. It may be on the other hand, that, through inclusion of 'negligentia' Matthew hoped to lend his domestic history an exemplarist flavour. Wlsig was allegedly poisoned for his crimes whilst his successors Wulnoth and Eadfrith narrowly escaped a similar fate by repentance. In its fluctuating eulogy and criticism, the *Gesta* exudes an Orosian view of history which considered the world to have been disciplined since the creation by alternating periods of good and bad fortune.327 The *Gesta'*s apparent disloyalty to its early abbots and an absence

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326 Matthew's interest in the 'neglegentia' of the Anglo-Saxon abbots is intriguing when set against the historical backdrop of an Anglo-Saxon sense of sin and personal failing; see for instance Bede's letter to Egbert of York in C. Plummer, *Historiam Ecclesiasticam Gentis Anglorum*, 2 vols, i. 414-416, the letter of Fulco, archbishop of Rheims to King Alfred, dateable to c.885 in Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, ii. 190-194.

from the early *vitae* of verbatim quotation of documents that we know to be extant, place this work outside the twelfth century. It is not until the account of Robert that the text begins even slightly to resemble those grand domestic chronicle-cartularies of this century that constituted a defensive response to Norman attacks on land and liberties. As a vindication of St Albans claim to much of its early endowment the *Gesta* would be useless and where it does seem to be 'validating' St Albans claim to a manor (Aldenham), the dispute that required this validation belonged to the thirteenth century. The *Gesta* lacks that sense of political purpose that characterise the chronicles produced by Ramsey, Abingdon and Ely in the twelfth century.

Whilst the *Gesta* may lack the solidity and density of content that accompanies extensive quotation of documents, it is a great deal more than a whimsical yarn. A noticeable feature of the work is its paucity of miracle stories and miraculous incidents. These are a common feature of twelfth-century domestic histories. According to the *Gesta* the only miracle that occurred in the abbey in Anglo-Saxon times was the crumbling of the book containing a British *History of St Alban* that was unearthed by Eadmar. This is hardly impressive. The reader must wait until the account of Richard for the tale of how his withered arm was

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*of Malmesbury's criticism of abbot Thurstan for his role in an armed assault on the monks of Glastonbury is rather more measured than anything than we find in the *Gesta*: 'But let us admire Thurstan's other deeds rather than linger over this one, in which he stumbled accidentally but did not sin by design.' J. Scott, *The Early History of Glastonbury by William of Malmesbury. An Edition, Translation and Study of William of Malmesbury's De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie* (Woodbridge, 1981), p.159.

*It is possible that Matthew considered verbatim quotation of documentation in the *Gesta* unnecessary given that he had transcribed much of the relevant material into the *Liber Additamentorum*. Although, it may also be the case that St Albans had simply never felt the need to vindicate it claims to much of its early endowment. P. Taylor argued that forgery of the record of that endowment is not greatly in evidence; 'The Early St Albans Endowment'.

*Wats, p. 26 (GA i. 27). The word 'miraculum' appears as a rubric outlined in blue in the margin of Nero D i, f.30r.*
healed by contact with the body of Cuthbert on the occasion of the latter's translation in 1109. The *Gesta* 's concerns are quite literally more down to earth. It devotes much space to the archaeological and antiquarian pursuits of the abbots. The Anglo-Saxon abbots of St Albans possessed an inquisitive yet irreverential attitude to the past. Investigative excavations on the site of Roman Verulamium, produced idolatrous texts, and pagan statues, altars and coins that they consigned hastily to the fire. They showed the greatest reverence, however, for the British *Life of St Alban* that they hastily translated into Latin and which was ultimately set to music by Alfric. Much of the archaeological work undertaken by the Anglo-Saxon abbots sprang not from intellectual curiosity but from a need for building material. The abbots seem to have collected a great deal. Yet there is little suggestion of work upon the abbey itself. Both Ealdred and Eadmar are said to have collected large amounts of building material with the intention of building a new church but both died before work could begin and after the account of Eadmar the project is never mentioned. Small churches and oratories, however, were built by the abbots; Eadfrith built an oratory of St Germanus and Wulsin allegedly built the churches of St Stephen, St Peter, St Michael and an oratory in honour of Mary.

330 Wats, p.35 (*GA* i. 70).

331 Wats, pp.25-26 (*GA* i. 24-28).

332 Wats, pp.26 and 27 (*GA* i. 27 and 32).

333 In 1178 the monks excavated seventh-century burial mounds at Redbourn with the 'invention' of St Amphibalus in mind; *VCH* i. 256-258.

334 Wats, pp.25-26 (*GA* i. 25 and 28). One whole tower of the Norman abbey was built of Roman brick; C. Brooke, "The Great Abbey". R. Runcie (ed.), *Cathedral and City. St Albans Ancient and Modern*, pp.43-70, 51.
In this way, souvenirs of Roman Verulamium were to surface once more in the walls and portals of Anglo-Saxon St Albans.

It is hoped that this rather lengthy voyage through the early *vita* of the *Gesta* has revealed a little of the richness and depth of information that they contain and the degree to which that information can be verified by independent evidence. It is the sole authority for many of the details it provides and while it would be dangerous to consider it an accurate and trustworthy source for the Anglo-Saxon history of the abbey, it would be foolish to reject it out of hand. This would be an indulgence that we could ill afford. It is unlikely that Matthew possessed either the capacity or even the desire to invent from scratch the early history of his house. It is clear too that his interest in and emphasis upon matters such as the appearance of the monastic habit and the abbot's 'negligentia' were wholly compatible with the obsessions and concerns of his Anglo-Saxon subjects. This empathetic appreciation of the past Matthew displayed in his handling of Offa as the next chapter will show. Yet in a real sense the value of the *Gesta* does not hang or fall on the issue of the historicity or veracity of the information that it supplies. It encapsulates a thirteenth-century monk's vision of a piece of the Anglo-Saxon past, a past separated from him by some two centuries. To Matthew, Anglo-Saxon St Albans was a town whose crime rates might rival those of modern day New York. Its abbey was constantly engaged in bickering disputes over relics and its abbots possessed a healthy tendency towards 'negligentia' of the most colourful kind. That his vision of St Alban's past should display such cynicism and lack of idealistic gloss, militates against

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335 Wats, pp. 24 and 25 (GA i. 20 and 22-23). W. Page argued that the chapel of St Andrew first mentioned in the twelfth century, was probably founded in the twelfth century when the inconvenience of the presence of the laity in the monastic church was first felt; 'On Some Recent Discoveries in the Abbey Church of St Alban', *Archaeologia*, Ivi (1899), 21.
the theory that the work is purely a concoction. We must, I think, be grateful to
the arsonists of 1381 who left unscathed Matthew's autograph manuscript of the
*Gesta Abbatum*, for it might so easily have crumbled to ashes in the market
place of St Albans just as the *History of St Alban* had collapsed into dust in the
time of abbot Eadmar many centuries earlier.
Chapter Three

MATTHEW PARIS AND OFFA OF MERCIA

When Matthew Paris first sat down in the dusty recesses of St Albans's scriptorium to build upon the *Flores Historiarum* of Roger Wendover, he would no doubt have enjoyed the annals for the late eighth century. ¹ The political turbulence of the kingdom of Northumbria rubbed shoulders with the illicit love affair of the West Saxon king Cynewulf, with lunar eclipses, bloody rains, stars falling from the skies and serpents springing from the earth. Yet even the most bizarre of natural and astronomical phenomena could not have overshadowed the chronicling of the reign of Offa of Mercia that dominates these annals, for Offa would have had a far greater claim upon the affections of a monk of St Albans than would any number of murdered Northumbrian kings or supernatural snakes. He is reputed to have founded and endowed the abbey of Alban, protomartyr of England and it is in the works of Matthew Paris that this reputation is most securely grounded. Matthew's interest in the Mercian king is earliest manifested in the additions that he made to Wendover's *Flores* when compiling his own *Chronica Maiora*. Rubrication in his hand of a manuscript of William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum* betrays a similar interest. ² His *Gesta Abbatum* and his rubrics to the *Vie de Seint Auban le Rei* bear witness to his growing fascination with and appreciation of the role assigned to Offa in the foundation of his house. At the age of fifty he penned what was to be the full

¹ CM i. 342-63.

² B.L. Royal MS. 13 D v.
bodied culmination of the Offa legend at St Albans, the *Vitae Offarum*. Notions about the eighth-century past and about the kingship of Offa that he had carefully nurtured for well over a quarter of a decade were enshrined in the cleverly structured biographical history that, whilst preceding the *Gesta* in B.L. Cotton Nero D i, was written at a later date. The purpose of this chapter is to

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3 W. Wats (ed.), *Vitae duorum Offarum sive Offanorum*... (London, 1644) [henceforth simply 'Wats']. The *Vitae Offarum* achieved a limited popularity in later medieval England - it was heavily abridged, possibly in Matthew's lifetime, in B.L. Cotton MS. Vitellius A xx, a manuscript that contains Matthew's hand. In the early years of the fourteenth century it was copied into B.L. Additional MS. 62777; see *Catalogue of the Bute Collection of Forty-Two Illuminated Manuscripts and Miniatures* (Sotheby's, 1983), lot no.5. Thomas Walsingham included it in B.L. Cotton MS. Claudius E iv and Lawrence Nowell, in around 1565, incorporated an abbreviated version of the text into his historical miscellany extant as San Marino, California, Huntington Library, HM. 26341; see C.W. Dutschke, *Guide to Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Huntington Library*, ii (Huntingdon Library, 1989), 658.

I have accepted Vaughan's argument that the *Vitae* was the work of Matthew and that he employed Roger Wendover's *Flores* as copied into his own Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MSS. 26 and 16 as his source; *Matthew Paris*, pp. 43-48. Luard had considered the author of the *Vitae Offarum* to have been a St Albans monk writing towards the end of the twelfth century: CM i. lxxix-lxxx and xxxii-x: xxiii). E. Rickert and R.M. Wilson both agreed with him: E. Rickert, 'The Old English Offa Saga', *Modern Philology*, ii (1904-1905), 29-76 and 321-376, 30 and note 5 and R.M. Wilson, *The Lost Literature of Medieval England* (London, 1952), pp. 10-11. Luard and Rickert both proposed abbot John de Cella as author: CM i. xxxii-xxxiii. 'Old English Offa Saga', p.39. L. Theopold was the first to attribute the work to Matthew: *Kritische Untersuchungen uber die Quellen zur angelsachsische Geschicht des achten Jahrhunderts* (Lwoff, 1872), pp. 112ff.

4 See introduction, p.11. The *Vitae Offarum* contains the two separate Lives of Offa I, a fourth-century king of the continental Angles and Offa II, the eighth-century king of Mercia. The *Life of Offa I* was originally constructed from a lost Old English epic, will not be considered here in detail because it lies beyond the chronological and geographical scope of the thesis. Suffice it to say that forged historical parallels between the careers of the two kings are a central theme of the work as a whole. The account of Offa II's childhood echoes that of Offa I and is almost wholly derived from it, their early military careers are mirror images of each other (the descriptions of Bensington and Otford are again drawn from the *Life of Offa I*) and the bridge between the two lives is Offa II's fulfilment of Offa I's promise to found a monastery. Rickert examined the process, in the *Vitae*, whereby epic material centring on Offa I was converted into a romance in which Offa of Mercia was a central figure: 'Old English Offa Saga', pp.50 and 375. '...ancient tales antedating the coming of the Angles to England were reinforced and modified by the historical career of an eighth-century king and after about three centuries of confusion, reached the compiler in twelfth-century forms': p.7. The relationship of the *Life of Warmund*, father of Offa, in Vitellius A xx with *Vitae* or the corpus of epic material surrounding Offa I is obscure. The concept of the two Offas, I and II, in itself, appears to have predated Matthew for Offa of Mercia is referred to as Offa II in a note at the bottom of f.23r, Royal MS. 13 D vi, a St Albans manuscript of the early thirteenth century. Although, in this case, Offa I may have been the seventh-century king of Essex rather than the fourth-century king of the Angles.
assess the nature and extent of Matthew's enchantment with the reign of King Offa and the accuracy of the historical vision which that state of enchantment engendered. Close consideration of six aspects of the reign of King Offa, as narrated in the *Vitae Offarum* will enable an assessment of the extent to which the *Vitae* adheres to or deviates from the corpus of historical material that Matthew had inherited: i. Offa's defeat of Beornred and his accession to the throne, ii. the elevation of the see of Lichfield to archiepiscopal status, iii. the murder of Aethelbert King of East Anglia in 794, iv. Offa's alleged journey to Rome resulting in his 'institution' of Peter's Pence and his establishing of the *Schola Anglorum*, v. his foundation of St Albans and finally vi. his relations with Charlemagne. Can the *Vitae* justifiably be termed 'the culmination' of the Offa legend that St Albans had been cultivating in the wake of the historiographically heady days of William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon? How far, by the middle years of the thirteenth century, had it departed from the evidence of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Asser's *Vita Alfredi*, the letter's of Alcuin and the charters of Offa?

The raw ingredients of the *Vitae Offarum* were varied, if not plentiful. He had before him the *Flores Historiarum* of Roger Wendover, that he had already incorporated into his *Chronica Maiora* and as Vaughan suggested, he made use of CCCC 26 rather than a manuscript of Roger's *Flores* in his composition of the *Vitae*. Because the *Vitae Offarum* frequently resorts to verbatim quotation of the *Flores*, the latter must, to all intents and purposes be considered Matthew's base text and the foundation of his knowledge about the eighth-century. That foundation had been well laid by Roger who drew upon Henry of

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Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum*, William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum*, Florence of Worcester's *Chronicon ex Chronicis* and Simeon of Durham's *Historia Regum*. Matthew would undoubtedly have had access to those sources to which Roger had turned some twenty years or so earlier. His direct acquaintance with William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum* is proven by the occurrence of rubrics and marginalia in his hand in the early thirteenth-century copy of the text extant in B.L. Royal MS. 13 D v. All three of the additions that he made to a text spanning some one-hundred and one folios, concern Offa. That he drew directly upon the *Gesta Regum* in his compilation of the *Vitae* is certain for the latter copied William's abridged version of the letter of Charlemagne to Offa dateable to 796. He would also have been familiar with Henry of Huntingdon's account of Offa for he had used the *Historia Anglorum* in compiling his genealogical chronicles in CCCC 16 and Claudius D vi. It is unlikely however that he made direct use of the primary evidence (the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Asser's *Vita Alfredi*, the letters of Alcuin and Charlemagne) and it is probable that his knowledge of the charters of Offa extended only to the

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7 William of Malmesbury was the first to make use of the correspondence of Alcuin and others and the first to appreciate the importance of the relationship between Offa and Charlemagne. S.D. Keynes, 'Changing Faces. Offa of Mercia' in *History Today*, 40 (1990), 14-19, 15. Thus Matthew had indirect access to highly reputable primary source material.

8 Roger and Matthew's interest in Offa was not automatically shared by all attached to St Albans in the thirteenth century. The abbreviated version of the *Gesta* contained in B.L. Cotton MS. Julius D vii, a manuscript associated with Matthew's friend and contemporary John of Wallingford, omits almost all references to Offa except the account of his placing of a gold circlet upon the head of Alban (f.118r). The early fourteenth-century abridgement of the same text found in B.L. Cotton Additional MS. 6277 similarly edits out a great deal of the Offa material.

9 See chapter 4.
two that he included in the Liber Additamentorum. It cannot be said that Matthew possessed a broad understanding of or familiarity with the primary sources. Many of Matthew's sources, however, are probably now lost. It is possible that Matthew may have used a lost tract on the foundation of the abbey that Thomas Arnold believed underlay Henry of Huntingdon's account of this event. Rickert suggested that the Vitae's account of Offa's wars with the Welsh king Marmodius were derived from a Welsh ballad from the border region. Matthew may also have depended upon oral traditions concerning King Offa which we know were in existence. The anonymous author of the chronicle extant in Cotton MS. Julius D vii refers to the popular tales of King Offa that he has taken down from oral tradition; 'Multa quidem et alia his aque

10 In the twelfth century, St Albans library appears to have contained seven works of Alcuin for they are mentioned in a catalogue compiled by Walter the Chanter and known as the Indiculus: R.W. Hunt, 'The Library of the Abbey of St Albans', M.Parkes and A.G. Watson (eds.), Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries. Essays Presented to N.R. Ker (London, 1978), pp.251-277, p.262. It is possible that Matthew had greater access to primary material for the reign of Offa than is suggested above, although his direct use of it in the Vitae is not in evidence.

11 Rickert, 'Old English Offa Saga', pp.324 and 322. She suggested that the Vitae's mention of Offa's dyke stemmed from the tradition conferred by Simeon, Walter Map, John of Salisbury and Gerald of Wales and derived ultimately from Asser's Vita Alfredi: p.322. Todd suggested that Matthew probably had access also to the lost Northumbrian annals and materials relating to Kent of which Roger had made use: 'Vitae Duorum Offarum', pp.7-8. See Todd, 'The Vitae Duorum Offarum', pp.9-14, for a useful discussion of other lost sources of information on Offa, which may have included an old English epic poem. W. Davies suggested that the St Albans writers made use of a collection of lost annals from a Midland or East Anglian archive when they came to write their accounts of sixth and seventh century Mercia and Todd tentatively proposed that these annals had extended as far as the eighth century and that Matthew may have had access to them: W. Davies, 'Annals and the Origins of Mercia', A. Dornier (ed.), Mercian Studies, (Leicester, 1977), pp.17-29 and Todd, 'The Vitae Duorum Offarum', p.10. Matthew's vagueness when referring to works that he has consulted does not facilitate the attempt to decipher source materials underlying the Vitae. To Wendover's claim that the place and memory of the martyrdom of Alban had been thoroughly destroyed some three-hundred and forty-four years after Germanus and Lupus had visited Britain, he added the corrective statement that the memory of the martyr was represented here and there in the books of histories: CM i. 356-357 and Wats, p.17.
commemoranda de viro isto audivi, quae cum veriora esse constiterit, alias Deo, largiente explicabo'. 13

Did Matthew lean heavily upon his corpus of raw materials for his understanding and reconstruction of the conflict between Beornred King of Mercia and Offa, that resulted in the latter's accession to the throne in 757? The accounts in Malmesbury's Gesta Regum and Huntingdon's Historia Anglorum exhibit a bald brevity that is characteristic of entries in the Chronicle. 14 William said of Beornred that he left nothing memorable unless it could be said that by his death he put an end to the troubles that had plagued Mercia. 15 Henry stated merely that Beornred reigned only a short while for 'in the same year Offa put him to flight and reigned over Mercia for thirty-nine years'. 16 It is intriguing that Wendover appears to have deployed neither of these sources for his account of the deposition of Beornred and the accession of Offa. The people of the kingdom of the Mercians, he claimed, rose against their king Beornred, because he governed his people not by just laws, but by tyranny. Nobles and commoners alike gathered together under the leadership of Offa, a most strenuous youth and expelled Beornred from the kingdom. This completed, clergy and people crowned Offa, king of the Mercians with unanimous consent. 17

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13 R. Vaughan (ed.), 'The Chronicle Attributed to John of Wallingford', Camden Miscellany, xc (1958), ix-79, 12. See also p.11: 'Solent autem de isto Offa multa narrari, que etiam relinquimus pro incertis et apocriphis; ea tamen in cedulis notavimus, ut si quando vera possint vel probari vel certe deprehendi, maiori operi commendemus'.

14 ASC (F), s.a.755 states that 'And Offa ge feng Myrcena 'rice', geflymdon Beornrede.' ASC (A), s.a.755 states merely that '7 Beornraed feng to rice, 7 lytle hwile heold 7 ungefealice'.

15 GR i. 79.

16 Historia, p.123.

17 Flores, i. 234-235.
Beornred surfaces once more in Wendover's annal for 768, where he is discovered burning the city of Catterick. 18

Matthew rethought Roger's account of the accession of Offa and this process of rethinking is detectable in the relatively polished pages of the Vitae Offarum, in his additions in the Chronica, and in his rubrics to Malmesbury's Gesta Regum and the Vie de Seint Auban le Rei. First, he deepens the characterization of Beornred. Beornred remains the unpopular tyrant. Knowing he was hateful to the community of the kingdom, he destroyed rather than ruled his kingdom. 19 A rubric to the Vitae Offarum is devoted to the 'tiranide Beornredi regis Merciorum' and a rubric that Matthew added to Malmesbury's Gesta notes that Offa triumphed having defeated the tyrant Beornred. 20 Yet Matthew's Beornred is more than simply a tyrant. This king is saddled with the ignominy of an illegitimate birth. The Gesta informs us that Offa put to flight certain bastard petty kings. 21 A rubric accompanying the Vie, dispels any doubt that we may have as to Beornred's intended inclusion in this category, for it describes his defeat in the following terms:

Descunfit s'en vunt li bastard  
Dunt li rois fait grant assart. 22

18 CM i. 346. This is culled from Simeon of Durham's Historia Regum which assigned it to the year 769: T. Arnold (ed.), Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia 2 vols. (RS, 1882-1885), ii. 44.

19 Wats, p.7: 'Erat in eadem regione (Merciorum videlicet), quoddam tyrannus potius destruens et dissipans regni nobilitatem, quam regens, nomine Beormredus.'

20 Wats, p. 7. A rubric added by Matthew to Malmesbury's Gesta Regum noted the point in the narrative 'Ubi occiso Beornredo tiranno triumphant': B.L. Royal MS. 13 D v, f.64v.

21 Wats, p.23 (GA i. 8): 'fugatis quibusdam nothis regulis'.

22 Estoire, p.62 (f.56a).
Matthew's association of bastardy with bad kingship reached its zenith, as we shall see, in the *Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei*. Harald Harefoot who 'abased the English;' is termed the 'bastard son Cnut'. Cnut himself 'filled the land with bastardy', when he slew the English royal line. Harold Godwineson is one of the three bastard kings who succeeded King Edward and the *Estoire* makes no attempt to disguise its disapproval of his rule. That Harold in particular should have been considered a 'bastard' by Matthew is of considerable interest in the present context for in the *Historia Anglorum* Matthew drew an implicit parallel between William's defeat of Harold and Offa's of Beornred. Given Matthew's implicit mental association of Harold with Beornred, the bestowal upon the latter of 'illegitimate' status was perhaps predictable. Yet Matthew's concern over the alleged bastardy of Beornred was not so very out of touch with the concerns of the contemporaries of the unfortunate king; chapter twelve of the report of the papal legates to Pope Hadrian in 786 concerned the ordination and treatment of kings;

In the twelfth chapter we decreed that in the ordination of kings no-one shall permit the assent of evil men to prevail, but kings are to be lawfully chosen by the priests and elders of the people, and are not to be those begotten in adultery or incest; for just as in our times according

23 Ibid., ll.450-453.
24 Ibid., ll.768-773.
25 Ibid., ll.3823-3833.
26 *HA* i. 8. Here, Matthew likens the tyrannical injustices and exactions of Harold to those of Beornred.
to the canons a bastard cannot attain to the priesthood, so neither can he who was not born of a legitimate marriage be the Lord's anointed and king of the whole kingdom and inheritor of the land. 27

Matthew's concerns in the middle years of the thirteenth century uncannily echo those of five hundred years previously.

Beornred's illegitimacy was coupled, according to Matthew, with his general disregard for nobility. The *Vitae Offarum* is unique in its suggestion that Beornred dissipated and destroyed the nobility of the kingdom, persecuted those of royal stock and feared his own replacement by one of blue blood. 28 Matthew had, however, employed the weapon of 'ignobilitas' elsewhere. When Matthew documented the smashing of the tombs of the Anglo-Saxon abbots of St Albans by the monastery's first Norman abbot Paul, Matthew considered Paul's jealousy of the royal blood of his predecessors as likely a motive as racial hatred. 29 Ignobility and bastardy were to Matthew, personal guarantees of bad rule. Alongside tyranny they constituted the literary blade with which Matthew was able to carve the dramatic character of Beornred in sharper relief and ultimately destroy it. Offa by contrast, 'de stirpe regum oriundus' was noble through and through. 30 The verses that Matthew added to the *Chronica's* annal for 775 made further reference to his royalty. 31 In the *Vitae Offarum* his father was said

27 EHD i. 171 (no. 191).
28 Wats, p.7.
29 Ibid., p.33 (GA i. 62).
30 CM i. 343.
31 Although it is interesting that Matthew deleted the original first line of this verse that read 'Offa restauratus regali stirpe creatus' and replaced it with 'Offa recordatur quod ab indignis reprobatur': CCCC 26, f.57v.
to be of the royal line and on the victory of Offa in 757 'all sprung of the royal seed breathed again'.

A broadened and unfavourable characterization of Beornred served to legitimate Offa's expulsion of him in 757. Yet Matthew sought Offa's legitimization through other means. Neither the primary sources nor the works of Malmesbury, Huntingdon or Wendover make explicit Offa's motives in opposing Beornred aside from an implicit desire for the throne. It is left to Matthew's *Vitae Offarum* to do so and it is scarcely surprising that Offa's political ambitions do not feature at all. Matthew ensured that the motives underlying the conflict were charged with emotion. The *Vitae* cast the conflict in the likeness of a personal vendetta. Offa was fully justified in opposing a king who had laid snares for his father and mother (Tuinfi-edus and Marcelline) in an attempt to either kill or exile them. Moreover, as a child, Offa, deaf, blind and dumb had suffered the scorn of Beornred. Offa's defeat of Beornred was to Matthew, an act of justifiable revenge and he revelled in it. In the *Vitae Offarum*, Matthew describes

32 Wats, p.1, 'Natus est igitur memorato Tuinfredo (qui de stemmate regum fuit) filius videlicet Pineredus' and p.8, 'Coronato igitur Offa, in soliique culmine constituto, refloruit pax Merciorum, et prosperitas populus respiravit, seminis regii propago restauratur, leges pacificae suscitantur, et nobiles quos Beormredus tyrannus expulerat a regno revocantur. Matthew's sensitivity to the distinction between 'nobility' and 'ignobility' is evident in the *Vitae*. After his defeat of Marmodius Offa, he tells us, allowed those who were noble and well born to be decently buried. Commoners were buried amidst bloody severed limbs in the ditch that Offa had dug in the construction of his dyke.

33 Ibid., pp.7-8.

34 Ibid., p.7, 'Puerum autem Pinefredum sprevit, nec ipsum quaerere ad perdendum dignabatur, reputans eum inutilem et valetudinarium... Matthew believed Offa's true name to have been Pinefred. Rickert suggests that he probably looked on the name 'Offa' as a cognomen given by reason of some personal quality and that he might have supposed the name to have arisen from Offa's physical defects in childhood. In Latin, 'Offa' means monstrosity or shapeless lump: 'Old English Offa Saga', p.75. The *Vitae*'s account of Offa's youth and the oppression of Beornred is wholly unsupported by the primary evidence.
the battle between the two in lavish detail. The army of each was large and 'cruentissimus'. Many were killed or lethally wounded and collapsed to die a miserable death. Matthew's account of the battle scene is clearly derived from his account of the battle of Hastings in his Flores Historiarum and it appears again in the Chronica's description of the war between emperor Frederick II and the Milanese in 1237 and Conrad's defeat of the landgrave of Thuringia in 1247. That Matthew appears to have employed one battle template in several of his works does not lessen its impact on each occasion. Cries of exhortation rose to the stars, the air was turbulent with dust, spears clashed, swords rang and the groaning of the wounded was accompanied by the sounding of horns and trumpets. The scene might have struck fear even into the hearts of the great, as the wounded, vomiting blood, miserably lost their lives under the trampling of horses hooves. Beornred, lethally wounded, crawled from the battle scene on hands and knees and collapsed to lament his life. Before darkness had fallen the army of Beornred was exhausted and dispersed. Those of the enemy who had not hidden or fled were slaughtered so that within three days neither Beornred nor his accomplices were to be found in the kingdom of Mercia. And what greater a sign of divine favour than that God should have chosen to restore to health a weak and pitiful youth to expel the 'tyrannus' Beornred. The events of 757 and the nature of Offa's victory are lent a sharper profile than that to which the versions of Malmesbury, Huntingdon or Wendover gave rise.

35 Wats, p.8.
36 FH i. 595-596 and CM iii. 408; ibid. iv. 610-612.
37 Wats, p.8.
38 Ibid., p.8.
For Matthew, the illegitimacy of Beornred's birth, his ignobility and the injustice of his tyrannical rule contrasted with the indisputable legality of Offa's succession. That legality, he suggested, was based on heredity, election and divine favour. In a verse that he wrote in the lower margin of the autograph Chronica, he termed Offa a king by right. Rubrics to the Vie claim that he 'retook his inheritance' as part of his 'natural birthright'. In addition the Gesta states that Offa put to flight those petty kings who had occupied the land on account of the inertia of his elderly father. The Vitae Offarum claimed that Mercia had fallen to Offa by right of blood 'ratione sanguinis'. Blood-right did not, however, constitute the sole basis of Offa's legality. Offa's rule over Mercia, according to Matthew rested, in addition, on the dual foundation of election and divine favour. Offa's miraculous recovery paralleled that of Offa I and Matthew interpreted it as 'election by God'. When, in the wake of his son's victory, Tuinfredus had endeavoured to bestow on Offa his earldom, the Mercian nobles rushed forward and made him their king instead. God and the people had consented to his kingship, yet this was not enough. Not content with merely emphasizing the legitimacy of Offa's rule, Matthew attempted to erase Beornred from the historical record altogether. A rubric to William of Malmesbury's Gesta Regum in Royal 13 D v (f.63v) reads 'Ethelbaldo regi Merciorum successit Offa'.

39 CCCC 26, f. 57v. CM, I, p.348, 'Ergo coronatur, ex tunc rex jure vocatur'.

40 Vie, p.62 (f.56b) E remeint en l'heritage Reis of sun naturel barnage.

41 Wats, p.23 (GA i. 8): 'pro inertia patris sui'.

42 Wats, p.20, '...illud solum regnum, illi ratione sanguinis contingebat.'

43 Ibid., pp.1-2 and 7-8.

44 Ibid., p.8: 'Congregati igitur universi Merciorum potentes, Offam supra se constituunt solemniter coronatum.'
This is accompanied by a marginal *nota* again in Matthew's hand reading 'immediatam successionem'. 45 Offa's legitimacy had been proven. It did not matter that 'proof' had required historical distortion. A basis in the primary evidence for Matthew's belief that Offa's kingship was legitimate is wholly lacking. Primary sources do not disguise the insecurity of Offa's position or the dubious circumstances under which he acquired the kingship. The Canterbury epitome of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (F), for the year 755 [757], states quite firmly that 'Offa seized the kingdom of Mercia, having put Beornred to flight. Alcuin famously confides in the Mercian ealdorman Osbert his belief that Ecgfrith died prematurely for the bloodshed that Offa had caused in securing the kingdom for his son. 46 Neither Offa's father, nor his grandfather had been king before him and he would have to have gone back five generations to produce a legitimate claim to the throne. 47 The comfortable image that Matthew creates of the legality of Offa's accession could scarcely have deviated more from the primary sources during the five hundred intervening years.

Yet could it be that Matthew's insistence upon Offa's right to rule was the product of a considerable degree of historical insight on his part, rather than constituting a piece of the propagandist jigsaw of the *Vitae Offarum*? Had Matthew tuned in to Offa's own well documented desire to seat himself and his heirs more firmly upon the throne of hereditary kingship? Offa's consecration of

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45 To be fair to Matthew, his ideas at this point were influenced by the text of the *Gesta Regum*: 'Veruntamen ut historiam repetam, successit Ethelbaldo Offa, quinto genu Pendae abnepos...'. p.84.

46 *EHD* i. 786-788 (no.202).

47 D.P.Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings* (London, 1991), p.163. Kirby termed Offa 'another example of an aetheling competing successfully for the kingship from outside the innermost core of royal power'. He suggested too that Offa may well have benefited from Hwiccan aid: p.163
his son Ecgfrith, in as far as it sought the bestowal of divine sanction upon Offa's 'elected' heir, was a step towards this objective. Furthermore it is likely that he encouraged the compilation of genealogies that lent support and authorization to his own kingship by 'proving' the nobility of his blood and the ancestry of his lineage.  

Almost two generations after the completion of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* there appears to have been a systematic collection of royal genealogies represented by the Vespasian group of manuscripts (Vespasian B vi, CCCC 183 and Tiberius Bv), Nennius's Historia Britonum and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. 

It has been suggested that Vespasian B iv, the earliest of the Vespasian group emanated from Lichfield in Mercia. Penned according to Sisam in around 812, it contains tabular genealogies (clearly reworked in the last decades of the eighth century), of the kings of Northumbria, Mercia, Lindsey, Kent and East Anglia, all reaching back to Woden and Frealaf. The suggestion that Vespasian B vi is a Mercian compilation reflecting Mercian interest, is not improbable: only the Mercian kings are brought up to date with Cenwulf (767-821?) and all the non-West Saxon genealogies are drawn up to the accession of Offa entered at 755. In addition, the selection of royal genealogies that it

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50 Sisam's suggestion that the genealogical collection emanated from Mercia and reflected Offa's desire to consolidate his kingship, has been challenged recently by David Dumville who made the tentative suggestion that the collection originated in Northumbria during the reign of king Ahlred (765-74) or that of his successor (774-9): Sisam, 'Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies', p.147 and Dumville, 'The Anglian Collection', passim. Sisam's case however was not disproved and cannot be discounted.

51 Dumville suggests a date of 805x814 and probably nearer 814: 'The Anglian Collection', p.24.
included might be seen to represent the notional extent of Offa's political sway. The absence from Vespasian B vi of a genealogy for Wessex is noticeable and perhaps predictable. Offa's glorification of hereditary kingship would have provided the ideal conditions for compilation of the Vespasian pedigrees. In support of the notion that Offa engaged in literary propaganda of this type, it is worth noting that the eulogy of Offa I in Beowulf has suggested to some that the work passed through the court of Offa of Mercia. 52 Matthew would probably not have come into contact with Offa's genealogy through the Vespasian group of manuscripts or even through Nennius or Bede. 53 Yet Roger Wendover included just such a genealogy (culled from William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon and Simeon of Durham) in his Flores. 54 There are two points worth noting with regards the Wendover genealogy. First that it retains the English order of names as employed by the Vespasian group; hence the most recent names appear first. This allowed the addition of names at the more remote end of the genealogy and of this, Roger took full advantage, because, under the influence of Geoffrey of Monmouth, he added the names of Wagon and Frethegeat before that of Woden. Second it is supplied in three sections which suggest that the genealogy was extended in stages. That the genealogy of Offa in Wendover's Flores should have shaped and influenced Matthew's belief in the hereditary and legitimate of Offa's kingship as expressed most lucidly in the

52 See Todd, 'The Vitae Duorum Offarum' p. 11. J. Campbell (ed.), The Anglo-Saxons, (Oxford, 1982), p. 128. In Beowulf, Offa is described as a 'mighty young champion/Of valiant lineage...', 'a leader of heroes/the outstanding man.' 'So it was that Offa/brave with the spear, was spoken of abroad/For his wars and his gifts; he governed with wisdom/the land of his birth. M. Alexander (ed.), Beowulf, A Verse Translation (Harmondsworth, 1973). pp. 112-113.


54 CA i. 343.
Vitae Offarum is highly probable. In his passion for genealogical chronicles, witnessed by the several that he included in his manuscripts, is implicit his susceptibility to the notions of hereditary kingship that they contain. Moreover, it says much about the efficacy of Offa's propaganda that a genealogy aimed at inclining minds of the late eighth century to a belief in the legitimacy of his rule should have found its power to influence no less diminished in the middle years of the thirteenth century.

In his imaginative handling of the conflict of 757 and the accession of Offa, Matthew's deepening of the characterization of Beornred, his emotive glorification of the conflict and his suggestion of the divine, elective and hereditary nature of Offa's kingship, were geared towards a sole purpose; the legitimization of Offa's actions, the dispelling of any suggestion that in 757 like had battled like. It is intriguing too that his clear belief in the hereditary, legitimate nature of Offa's kingship was not far removed from the belief that Offa himself had sought to cultivate. Is the same degree of mental agility, imaginative thought and historical acumen evident in Matthew's account of Offa's dealings with the church? Here we are concerned primarily with his creation in 787 of the archiepiscopal see of Lichfield, and Canterbury's consequent relegation within the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Matthew would have been familiar with another genealogy of Offa copied into the margin of Diceto's Imagines Historiarum in Royal MS. 13 E vi, f.23r that echoed precisely the versions of the Parker Chronicle and Henry of Huntingdon.

Matthew's glorification of Offa's kingship occasionally assumed a non-literary form. A large flourished initial on folio 9r of the Nero D i (containing the autograph copy of the Vitae Offarum), marked the accession of Offa II.

ASC (A) s.a. 785 [787].
William of Malmesbury and Roger Wendover leave us in no doubt as to their opinion of Offa's motives in the elevation of Lichfield to the status of an archiepiscopal see. Wicked Offa, greedy, envious, violent and stubborn, deprived Jaenberht of his due honour. His objective, his illicit perversity, sprang from nothing other than animosity. To William he was a king obstinate in the face of God and jealous of the power of Canterbury. Nor did the greed of this public plunderer stop at the withdrawal of the honour of Canterbury; he seized 'praedia' from many churches, including that of Malmesbury. Where William claims that this 'perversity' persisted through the episcopacy of Jaenberht, Roger substitutes the word 'violence'. Moreover, under the influence of William of Malmesbury he spoke of the wickedness inherent in Offa's 'mutilation' of the diocese of Canterbury.

Matthew would have none of this. His account of Offa's handling of the Lichfield affair in the Vitae Offarum displays Matthew's ample talent for whitewashing unpleasant historical scenarios. At this point in the tale, Matthew's Offa bears scarcely any resemblance to the Offa of sounder historical tradition. Fearing no more the attacks and rebellions of his enemies, Offa assumed the functions of a religious prelate and ecclesiastical pastor, showing care and

58 William would have gleaned the notion of animosity from the letter of Cenulph to Pope Leo III (798) that he transcribed into his Gesta Regum: GR i. 86-89: 'Cujus itaque, sicut vos scitis, dignitatis honorem primum rex Offa, propter inimicitiam cum venerabili Janberto et gente Cantuariorum acceptam, avertere, et in duas parochias dissipare, nisus....' See EHD i. 791-793 (no. 204).

59 GR i. 85.

60 Ibid. i. 86.

61 Ibid. i. 85 and Flores i. 238.

62 Ibid. i. 263 and GR i. 17.
solicitude for the flock of the Lord. His division of the see of Canterbury had been inspired by his eagerness to better arrange the sees of the cathedral churches. Yet Offa's pious interest in the ecclesiastical map of England did not, according to Matthew, fully explain his actions in 787. It comes as little surprise that Jaenberht should have been subjected to the harsh treatment that had effected the literary downfall of Beornred. Jaenberht's crime was treachery. The Vitae Offarum is sole witness to the treaty that the archbishop allegedly arranged with Charlemagne to the effect that he would allow the latter free entry into the diocese of Canterbury should he choose to invade Britain. Viciously hammering nails into the coffin that he had built for Jaenberht, Matthew described these accusations as 'thoroughly valid' (pervalidus). As if in

63 Wats, p.14, 'Roboratus igitur suo Rex Offanus, nullas formidans hostium insidias vel rebelliones, formam induit praelati religiosi, et pastoris ecclesiastici, curam et solicitudinem gerentis de grege Dominico.'

64 Ibid., p. 14, 'Quarundam igitur ecclesiarum cathedralium sedes in melius studet ordine, et salubriter, ut conscivit, transmutare'. Both Roger and Matthew included in their Flores and Chronica respectively lists of sees subject to Lichfield and Canterbury: Flores i. 238 and CM i. 345. These were drawn ultimately from William of Malmesbury's Gesta Regum and De Gestis Pontificum, GR i. 85-86 and GP, p.16. William's authority for these lists is unknown. N. Brookes, The Early History of the Church of Canterbury (Leicester, 1984), p.119. To Lichfield were subject Denebert, bishop of Worcester, Werenberht of Leicester, Wulheard of Hereford, Alheard of Elmham, Titfrid of Dumnoc, and Edulf of 'Sinacrestrensis' the seat of the bishops of Lindsey; see Sarah Foot, 'The Kingdom of Lindsey' in A. Vince (ed.), Pre-Viking Lindsey (Lincoln, 1993), pp.128-140. p.136. However, both Roger and Matthew failed to eradicate the error that had crept into the works of William; William named as archbishop of Lichfield in 787, Aldulfus, who was in fact archbishop at the somewhat later date of 801-815. Chronological difficulties in William's narrative remain unaltered by Roger and Matthew; Pope Hadrian was not a contemporary of Aldulf for he died in 790 and four of the bishops listed, Denebert, Werenberht, Wilferd and Titfrid, did not acquire their sees until after Hadrian's death. Roger and Matthew made one inexplicable alteration to William's list of sees subject to Canterbury. With William they listed London, Winchester and Rochester yet they substituted his Selsey with Sherbourne. It is intriguing that Matthew's frequent use in the Vitae, of two names for Kent (see for example Wats, p.10) is paralleled in a document of the late eighth century; The report of the legates to Pope Hadrian in 786 states that 'we were first received by Jaenberht, archbishop of the holy church of Dorovernia, which is called by another name, Kent....' EHD i. 770-774 (no.191), p.770.

65 Wats, p.14, 'Accusatus est autem Lambertus Archiepiscopus Cantuariensis, coram rege Offa, accusationibus pervalidis.'
momentary embarrassment at the severity of his attack on Jaenberht, he provided a less sensational reason for Offa's desire to establish an archiepiscopal see at Lichfield. Offa, he states, was persuaded that such a see should be founded on or near the site of his victory over his enemies. Harmless enough, yet the phrase 'was persuaded', ('persuasum erat') cleverly removes the full burden of blame from the shoulders of Offa. Matthew would stop at nothing to prove his case, for he even suggests that Jaenberht consented to the royal proposals regarding Lichfield. Jaenberht, he said, resigned part of his episcopal see willingly ('sponte').

The scale of Matthew's endeavours to disguise Offa's motives in creating a midland province at the expense of Canterbury can only be fully appreciated when considered against the background of primary evidence. That Lichfield itself was situated near the Mercian royal centre of Tamworth is perhaps the most obvious indication that Offa's motives were anything other than purely religious. Hostility to an archbishop whose political affiliations may have bred in him incompliance, appears to have underpinned the ambitions that Offa had for Lichfield. Jaenberht was not a Mercian. His ties with Canterbury, first as abbot of St Augustine's and then as archbishop, his sympathies with the native dynasty and his apparent support of Kentish independence gave rise to his friendship with Egbert of Wessex, a man whom Offa and Beornred had sought eagerly to

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66 Ibid., p.14, 'Praeterea, persuasum erat regi Offae, ut ubi gloriose de inimicis suis triumpharat, ibidem vel prope, locum cathedralem archiepiscopatu et primatu reverenter merito foret sublimandum.'.

67 Ibid., p.17. The Vitae refers to the synod of Chelsea 'ubi etiam Lambertus Archiepiscopus Cantuariensis, partem sui episcopatus, archiepiscopo Lichfeldensi, sponte quam postulaverat, resignavit.'.

It has been suggested that Jaenberht and his Kentish kinsmen were 'the enemies' of whose attempt to sow discord Pope Hadrian had spoken in letter to Charlemagne. Moreover, Matthew, as we have seen, openly accused him of plotting with the Frankish king. Brooks argued that such a plot need not have emanated from Matthew's fertile imagination but instead, may have been based in a genuine tradition preserved at St Albans; lack of evidence for hostility between Offa and Charlemagne in the late 770s and early 780s, scarcely weakens the possibility that Jaenberht and Egberht had hoped to obtain Charlemagne's support and evidence of contact between their courts might even strengthen it.

Jaenberht's political antagonism towards Offa is likely. Hence, Brooks proceeded quite reasonably to the assumption that Jaenberht had opposed Offa's

69 See Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, pp. 114-115; in the years after the battle of Otford 776, when Mercian rule had been thrown off, Egbert granted to Christ Church in return for a payment of great treasures a huge estate of thirty sulungs at Charing and another ten sulungs at Great Chart. Four sulungs at Bishopbourne near Barham were sold by Egbert in 780 for two thousand shillings to Ealdhun, his reeve who subsequently gave the estate to the community at Christ Church.


71 Wats, p. 14. Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, pp. 115-116. Kirby believed that the notion of a plot between Jaenberht and Charlemagne was probably fanciful and certainly without basis in contemporary record. Yet, he argued that Jaenbert's alienation from the King of Mercia might have been very real given Offa's suppression of Kentish independence after 784-785: *The Earliest English Kings*, p. 171. Charlemagne's known harbouring of English exiles might be seen to lend weight to the notion of such a plot: Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, pp. 176-177.

72 Disputes between kings and their archbishops were nothing new. The early ninth century had witnessed quarrels between King Eardwulf of Northumbria and his archbishop Eanbald and between King Cenwulf of Mercia and his archbishop Wulfred. See D. J. V. Fisher 'The Church in England between the Death of Bede and the Danish Invasions', *TRHS* (1951), 1-19, 5-6. Nor was Mercian hostility to Kent anything new for Ethelred of Mercia had overrun Kent in 676 and plundered its churches and monasteries: Fisher, 'The Church in England', p. 7. That all Jaenberht's coins have 'Offa rex' on the obverse, is perhaps some measure of the political ambitions that Offa harboured towards Kent and the personal rivalry that he may have had with Jaenberht in particular.
plans to consecrate Ecgrith. The support of an archbishop so closely allied with Kentish independence for any scheme that aimed at the consolidation and establishment upon a hereditary basis of Mercian kingship, would have been odd indeed. Yet Brooks used the synod of Chelsea (787), to clinch his argument. It was no coincidence, he suggested, that the division of the province of Canterbury, the establishment of an archiepiscopal see at Lichfield and the consecration of Ecgrith were pushed through the same 'contentious' synod. Offa's motives were not those of a kindly pastor but an astute politician and ambitious king. Neither is it probable that Jaenberht resigned part of his see willingly for the general popularity of Offa's Lichfield scheme is scarcely in evidence.


74 Kirby however suggested that Offa had never intended Jaenberht to crown Ecgrith. Offa, he argued, had intended the ceremony to be a Mercian affair aimed at securing support for Ecgrith within Mercia: The Earliest English Kings, pp. 173-174.

75 Brooks, The Early History of the Church of Canterbury, p. 118. Offa's desire for a controllable metropolitan was illustrated on the death of Jaenberht; Offa installed his own nominee Aethelheard who was consecrated by the archbishop of Lichfield. Aethelheard attests after Hygeberht in several charters. See ibid., p. 120.

76 Brooks, however, considered the creation of an archiepiscopal see at Lichfield to be a withdrawal from unrealistic ambitions and an admission that Offa could not command the loyalty of the people of Kent: ibid., pp. 119-120.

77 The unpopularity of the Lichfield scheme is well-documented. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (A) had itself described the synod of 787 at which Lichfield was made an archiepiscopal see as 'geffit fullic' or 'wholly contentious'. A letter of Alcuin to Aethelheard, archbishop of Canterbury, dateable to 797, claimed that the unity of the church '...is torn asunder, not, as it seems, by reasonable consideration but by a certain desire for power'. In the same letter he advised that 'the ordination of bishops is to revert to the holy and original see'. See EHD i. 790 (no. 203). King Cenwulf of Mercia in a letter to Pope Leo, dateable to 798 blamed Offa's animosity towards the Kentish people for the creation of the see at Lichfield: EHD i. 791-793 (no. 204). Furthermore, the decree of the synod of Chelsea claimed that 'Offa, King of the Mercians, presumed in the days of archbishop Jaenberht with very great fraud to divide and cut asunder the honour and unity of the see of St Augustine our father in the city of Canterbury.' It suggested that the division had been 'wrongfully... made' and that the charter 204
Yet were Offa’s motives in creating the archiepiscopal see of Lichfield so far removed from those inclinations towards ecclesiastical reform so generously attributed to him by Matthew/Was Offa’s desire to incorporate the religious leadership of the country south of the Humber within the kingdom that enjoyed political hegemony, not in itself an attempt at the type of ecclesiastical organization that Matthew believed to have been his objective. That Offa possessed religious incentives in his handling of the Lichfield affair cannot be wholly disregarded. The Carolingians had set a precedent in increasing the number of their metropolitans. 78 By the 780s Offa might well have considered the subdivision of a province containing twelve suffragans desirable in pastoral terms. Leo III intimated in a letter to Cenwulf that the ‘most excellent king’ Offa had desired the elevation of the see of Lichfield to archiepiscopal status because ‘it was the united wish and unanimous petition of you all, both on account of the vast size of your lands and the extension of your kingdom, and also for many more reasons and advantages’. 79 What is more, Offa need not have cast his eyes across the channel for an example of the kind of ecclesiastical reorganization that he intended for Canterbury and Lichfield. A mere twenty-two years prior to

78 Kirby, The Earliest English Kings, p.169. Wallace-Hadrill suggested that Offa must have been aware or recent Carolingian policy in the creation of archbishoprics for it involved Englishmen. ‘Charlemagne and England’, p.158.

79 EHD i. 793-794 (no. 205).
his accession, Egbert bishop of York had obtained the pallium. 80 Offa's desire in
the words of Fisher 'to create a new ecclesiastical order for the Angles of the
Midlands and East England' need not have been borne of political ambition
alone. 81 Once again, Matthew's portrayal of the past depended to a greater
degree upon distortion than concoction but that distorted portrayal was never
far removed from historical probability. And even he, occasionally, could indulge
in a little attentiveness to the historical record for he ends his claim that Offa
desired to better arrange England's ecclesiastical sees with the haunting words,
'or so he thought'. 82

Offa's murder of King Ethelbert of East Anglia in 794 presented perhaps the
biggest challenge for Matthew. 83 The sources upon which he might have drawn,
apart from Roger's Flores, left little room for cunning manoeuvre. Ambiguous
they were not. William of Malmesbury's Gesta Regum stated that Offa, having
lured Ethelbert into his palace with great promises and fraudulent flattery
unexpectedly caused him to be deprived of his head. The kingdom of the East
Angles, that Ethelbert had held, he invaded. One of many powerful men slain by
Offa for the 'confirmation of the kingdom', Ethelbert died an innocent death for
which, said William, the short reign of Offa's son Ecgfrith was punishment. 84 A
similar tale occurs in this same author's Gesta Pontificum; having killed King

80 ASC (E) sa.735 'Her onfeng Ecgbriht b pallium aet Rome'.
82 Wats, p.14: 'ut conscivit'.
83 ASC (A) places this event in 792 although in all the extant versions of the Chronicle the
annals from 754 until 845 are chronologically dislocated and describe events two years in
advance of their true dates.
84 GR i. 84, 98 and 262. This is quite an elaboration upon the bald entry in the Parker
Chronicle, ASC (A) sa.792, Her Offa Myrccena cining het Aedelbrihte p heafod of slean.'
Ethelbert, Offa invaded the kingdom of the East Angles and transferred the inheritance to his successors. The relics of the king and martyr served to adorn the episcopal see of Lichfield. 85 William claimed that no other extant causes, bar that of advancement of the kingdom of the Mercians, had underlain Offa's actions. 86 Henry of Huntingdon adhered more faithfully to the versions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. 'At that time (792), Offa, King of the Mercians ordered to be amputated the head of St Ethelbert'.

Not all twelfth-century writers were so heavy-handed in their condemnation of Offa. Some four hundred or so years after his death the literary cogs of the twelfth-century renaissance had cranked into action in an attempt to cleanse his less-than-perfect reputation. A Passio of Ethelbert, written by a Hereford man in the early years of the century provided an explanation for Offa's deed. 88 Offa, it claimed, heard false rumour that Ethelbert planned to invade Mercia and that, having accomplished the wicked deed, Offa believed himself to have ended the plot to usurp his kingdom. 89 Offa's murder of Ethelbert thus ceased to be the action of a crazed tyrant and became reasoned self defence. In addition, he shared the blame with his wife Quendrida who had fuelled the false rumours. Florence of Worcester had been the first to implicate Quendrida when he stated that 'Gloriosissimus ac sanctissimus rex Orientalium Anglorum Aegelbertus, vero Regi Christo bonarum virtutum merito acceptabilis, omnibus blando

85 GP, pp. 16 and 305.
86 Ibid., p. 305.
87 Historia, p. 129.
88 M.R. James edited the Hereford Passio in 'Two Lives of St Ethelbert, King and Martyr', EHR, xxxii (1917), 214-244, 236-244.
89 Ibid., pp. 239-40 and 241.
alloquio affabilis, Offae, praepotentis regis Merciorum, detestanda jussione, suaeque conjugis Cynethrythe reginae nefaria persuasione, regno vitaque privatus est capitis absisione.... 90 The Hereford Passio seized the notion of Quendrida's complicity and developed it further, voicing its criticisms of the queen through the words of her daughter Aelfleda, 'Quid', inquit, 'genitrix impia sic in innocentem insanisti'?91

Ethelbert was ever the innocent and holy victim. His departure from East Anglia to visit the court of Mercia is likened to Abraham's exit from his homeland. 92 An earthquake, eclipse and a thickening of the clouds foretold his gruesome demise and he himself experienced a prophetic nocturnal vision whilst staying at Sutton.93 His assassin, named for the first time here as Winberht, a familiar of Ethelbert's father, is paralleled with Judas.94 The Hereford Passio, provided the basis for the Lives of both Osbert de Clare and Gerald of Wales, the former of which is extant only in the later work of Richard of Cirencester. Gerald of Wales, Vita Sancti Ethelberti was written towards the end of the twelfth-century and is extant in Cambridge, Trinity College B II 16 and Cotton, Vitellius E vii. 95


91 James, 'Two Lives', p.240.

92 Ibid., p.238.

93 Ibid., pp.238-239.

94 The name of Ethelbert's assassin is not supplied by either Roger or Matthew. The Hereford Passio is discussed by James in 'Two Lives', pp.214-221. James suggested that it represented in part a homily or poem in the vernacular: p.219. It is intriguing that Ethelbert's reluctance to marry and his subsequent decision to accede to the advice of his nobles, for the good of his kingdom, parallels the actions of Edward in the Estoire: 'Two Lives', pp.237-238 and Estoire, II.1058-1278.

Gerald of Wales retained the version of Osbert yet added a prologue, a digression from Asser on the evil Eadburga, daughter of Offa and a few moral reflections. Osbert and Gerald saddled Quendrida with a greater proportion of the blame than she had carried in the Hereford Passio. It was Quendrida who now alerted Offa to the dangers of Ethelbert's alleged plan to conquer Mercia under the pretext of seeking a wife.

Nosti quod Orientalium Anglorum tyranni Merciorum populis ab antiquo imperare desiderant. Nosti antiquas gencium inimicicias et mutuas plerumque regnorum subiecciones. Fallor si non iuvenem istum plus ambitus huc quam amor adduxit. Sub uxoris namque ducendi pretestu et palliate amicicie fuco, captata tue senectutis occasione, callisus in hos fines explorator et expugnator advenit. Non itaque ducendi <sed seducendi> causa hospes advenit; nec hospitis ille cum tanta militum et armorum copia, sed verius hostis ymaginem gerit. 96

Quendrida warned her husband that he would be making a rod for his own back were he to allow Ethelbert to become his heir and she placed little faith in the Mercian people who she believed would overthrow Offa in favour of a younger king. He was, she said, already halfway towards this goal.

Terrarum nostrarum aditus et exitus iam novit, exploratore non indigens alieno: etatis tue defectum et infirma nostra consideravit...97

96 Ibid., p.226.
97 Ibid., p.227.
Quendrida, the spreader of false rumour, was also a failed seductress. Her inability to win the saintly Ethelbert led Gerald to compare her with Potiphar's wife. 98 Yet Osbert and Gerald did not free Offa of all guilt. Offa's complicity is never in doubt. He did not spurn Quendrida's advice as he was later to do in Roger's Flores and Matthew's Vitae. Instead he consented to Ethelbert's murder. It was he who ordered Ethelbert's truncated body and head to be secretly buried on the banks of the River Lug and it was he who finally repented of the murder and given tithes to the church. 99 Offa was actively involved in the murder. Quendrida had paved the way. The head of the slaughtered king was presented to them both and their daughter's falling by the wayside had stemmed from the twin evils of paternal tyranny and maternal cruelty. 100 Osbert and Gerald had cast blame jointly upon king and queen. Their grey portrayal of Quendrida had done little to alleviate the problem of Offa's historical image. The anonymous author of the early thirteenth-century chronicle in Julius D vii had certainly not helped matters for he had let it be known that

In the next year [794] he [Offa] slew St Ethelbrith, king of the West Saxons [sic] in a pitched battle, after declaring war against him. The fact is certain although the cause is not known. This one blemish alone he left on the glory he had before acquired; nor did he long rejoice over the death of his rival, for he died himself three years after, in the seven hundredth and

98 Ibid., p.228.
99 Ibid., pp.227 and 229-230.
100 Ibid., pp.228 and 232.
ninety-sixth year of the Incarnation of our Lord... 101

Wendover turned out to be a more effective publicity agent. Upon these relatively unfavourable twelfth- and early thirteenth-century accounts of Offa's involvement in the murder of Ethelbert, Roger Wendover completed a remarkable feat of distortion. He set in motion Offa's wholesale vindication and Quendrida's wholesale implication in the crime. Ethelbert, journeying to Offa's court against the wishes of his mother, requested the hand of Offa's daughter in marriage. 102 Offa received him with honour and agreed to this request. Enter the wicked Queen Quendrida, wife of Offa, who advised him to kill Ethelbert and seize his kingdom. Offa's disgust at her suggestions was a revelation in part, of his belief that such a deed would bring eternal opprobrium on himself and his heirs. Once his anger had subsided, the king dined with Ethelbert amidst the joyful sounds of lutes, drums and choirs. Not to be deterred, Quendrida caused Ethelbert's bedchamber to be fitted with a deep pit over which she placed a chair. Having been led into the chamber to sleep after a blissful day, Ethelbert sat upon the chair and tumbled instantly into the pit to be suffocated with pillows and curtains by Quendrida's assistants. 103 For Roger Wendover, the king and


102 The notion that Ethelbert's mother had been reluctant to consent to his plans for marriage appears earliest in the Hereford Passio although it also surfaced in Gerald's Life. The Hereford Passio named her Leofruna and Gerald named her Leoverina: James, 'Two Lives', pp. 237 and 225. Its inclusion in Roger's Flores is not proof that he knew of the Hereford Passio, as Todd suggested ('The Vitae Duorum Offarum', p. 57). Matthew's account of the restoration of sight to a blind man who had stumbled upon the decapitated head of Ethelbert does seem, however, to draw upon the more vivid account of the Hereford Passio than the shorter and relatively matter of fact account supplied by Gerald: James, 'Two Lives', p. 230 and 243. Wats, p. 16.

103 Roger's statement, at this point, that Ethelbert entered the chamber 'cum post laetum diem membra sopori dari proposuisset' echoes Gerald's account of Ethelbert's vision of his own death: 'Eadem vero nocie cum fatigata labore dedisset membra sopori, visiones vidit terribiles valide': Flores i. 250 and James, 'Two Lives', p. 226.
martyr, innocently killed, would receive the crown of eternal life. His companions, scarcely so lucky, fled in fear from the perilous clutches of the treacherous queen. Offa's discovery of the crime thus perpetrated, caused him to fast for three days. With unsurprising generosity, Roger declared Offa immune from guilt. Yet despite this the king 'united the kingdom of the East Angles to his own dominion' having sent ahead an expedition force.\textsuperscript{104} Roger's account of the murder of Ethelbert is novel in its attempt to absolve Offa of all blame and for the sole purpose of carrying that blame he carved out the supremely wicked shoulders of Quendrida with greater fervour than any of his predecessors.

Matthew took up the challenge with even greater enthusiasm than had Roger, seeking further to implicate Offa's queen in the murder of Ethelbert. This he did in four ways. First he created for her a lurid past that conveyed a sense of the inevitability of her crime. A beautiful girl, yet dishonest of mind, she had been judicially sentenced to an ignominious death on account of a certain crime that she had committed.\textsuperscript{105} Escaping death by fire and sword, on the grounds that, she was a blood-relation of Charlemagne's, she was put to sea in a boat and condemned to the ambiguous fortunes of wind and tide. Alighting by chance upon the shores of Britain, she was presented to Offa whose protection she begged. She desired that her misfortune be transformed into auspicious fortune and that she be more blessed in exile than in her native country. The king, moved by her piety, her eloquence and her elegance, consigned her to his mother's care. Matthew brings to the fore, her aptitude for evil when he recounts her

\textsuperscript{104} Flores i. 251: '...sed tamen, licet a morte regis haberetur immunes, missa expeditione non modica, regnum orientalium Anglorum suo imperio copulavit.'

\textsuperscript{105} Wats, p.9.
relationship with Offa's parents. Once her thinness and pallor had disappeared she began to boast like her father and showed contempt for Offa's mother. Offa however, blinded by love, and failing to consult either his parents or his 'magnates', married her. Meanwhile, Tuinfred and Marcelline wasted away in pain and fatigue. With the critical selectivity of parents-in-law they knew her to be unworthy of the royal embrace and considered her to have been condemned to exile not without good cause. 106 At this point in the narrative Matthew notes that Offa had offspring of both sexes by 'Petronilla'. The reader is evidently meant to assume the synonymity of Petronilla with Quendrida, rather than to assume foul play on the part of the King of Mercia. Matthew, however, provides no explanation for his use of this alternative name. Although 'Petronilla' is the name of an early Roman martyr, it has Frankish associations for Pepin and Charlemagne considered her their patroness, and Matthew's use of the name may have aimed at a substantiation of Quendrida's Frankish background. 107 In this way he could cleanse the English historical record of at least one feminine impurity. Whatever the name of Offa's queen, to Matthew, her crime was as predictable as Offa's innocence. In the pages of the Vitae Offarum Offa was freed of blame for the crime that his wife had been bound to commit.

Matthew's desire to stress the complicity of Quendrida in the murder of Ethelbert led him to employ his favourite technique of sketching extremes of character, of personifying good and evil, blame and innocence. Ethelbert 'elegantissimus iuvenis' and 'special adviser to the king' was strong in arms, pious and sagacious of mind, beautiful of form. 108 The miracle working powers

106 Ibid., p.9.
108 Wats, p.15.
of his decapitated head were posthumous revelations of his sanctity in life.\textsuperscript{109}

Where his head had fallen, a stream had erupted; Ethelbert evidently shared with Alban a talent for tapping the water table.\textsuperscript{110} The parallel with the third-century martyr is significant and intentional. Yet he was also an eighth-century John the Baptist, having been ensnared by the traps of a woman so it is perhaps ironic that his death inspired his future wife Aelfleda to enter a nunnery.\textsuperscript{111}

Quendrida qualified for none of the flattering comparisons that are lavished on Ethelbert. Envious of Humbert, Unwona and Ethelbert because they were honest, just and useful to her husband, she displayed an impiety that Matthew considered characteristic of all women. She was greedy and crafty and she was sprung, so Matthew pointedly remarks, from the stock of Charlemagne.\textsuperscript{112} Fox-like, (quasi vulpecula), and riddled with disease, she was banned from her

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., p. 16. A wicked attendant of Quendrida had carelessly allowed Ethelbert's head to roll out of the sack that carried his murdered corpse to its place of burial. The long and golden hair of the decapitated head became entangled around the foot of a blind man walking the path. He realized it to be a human head on stroking its hair and he smeared some blood upon his eyes. On the return of his sight, he deduced it to be the head of a saint. And so, claimed Matthew, the obstacle obstructing the blind man's progress became a restorer of light. The \textit{Vitae} supplies no further details of miracles worked by the head of Ethelbert. It is interesting to note that Matthew included the tale of the discovery of Ethelbert's head at the expense of the symmetry of the text in \textit{Nero D i}: he had clearly intended that illustrations should occupy the top right-hand half of f. 20r since notes in his hand, describing the proposed pictures, appear at the foot of the page. Instead he included this tale. Folio 20r is the only folio in the text on which the text intrudes upon the space set aside at the top of the page for illumination. St Edmund the Martyr's head had suffered a similar fate. Having been thrown into thicket, it was discovered by Christians, or so claims the tenth-century \textit{Passio Sancti Edmundi}: see Fisher, 'The Church in England', p. 4.

\textsuperscript{110} Wats, p. 16.

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., p. 16. Offa is associated in Ethelbert's sanctity through his friendship with the king: the two are said to have feasted together. Offa hid his dispute with the queen from Ethelbert and deeply lamented his death: Wats, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., pp. 15: '...ex stirpe Caroli originem duxerat'.
husband's bed. Spending her last years locked away, she met a suitable fate at the bottom of a pit; a rubric to the *Vitae* termed it 'Iusta Vindicta'\textsuperscript{113}

Matthew placed great emphasis upon her active, physical involvement in the crime against the king of East Anglia. It was she who persecuted the king's favourites, who laid womanly snares and who planned to subvert the kingdom of the Mercians\textsuperscript{114} In addition, Matthew attributed her far greater responsibility for Ethelbert's plunge into the pit than did Roger. The *Flores* stated simply that Ethelbert was led into the chamber 'to give his limbs a rest'. The only possible indication of Quendrida's physical participation in this is that the verb of the sentence, *adducto*, is in the passive voice\textsuperscript{115} The *Vitae Offarum* on the other hand leaves nothing to the imagination. Quendrida approached Ethelbert in the palace and informed him that the woman that he planned to marry was awaiting him in the chamber. Locking out the soldiers who had accompanied him, she told him to sit on the chair that she had cleverly positioned over a pit, while she summoned the girl\textsuperscript{116} The Quendrida of the *Vitae* was no wallflower when it came to murder. No longer eager to delegate the job of suffocating the king, she is found alongside her attendants, pillow and curtain in hand. The degree of her involvement is all the more marked when considered alongside the innocence of her victims. When Quendrida first approached Ethelbert in the palace it is said

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., p. 16.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., pp. 15-16: 'Vidensque suae nequitiae argumenta minime prevalere, nec hanc saltem tertiam suam, ad voluntamen suam alicui transmarino amico suo in regni subversionem (quod certissime speraverat) dare nuptui cum non prevaluisse, in dictos episcopos huius rei auctores eminus malignari, in Albertum regem, virus suae malitiae truculenter evomuit, huc modo.'

\textsuperscript{115} *Flores* i. 250.

\textsuperscript{116} Wats, p. 16.
that he 'suspected nothing'. 117 He was 'the most innocent king'. 118 When he followed her into the bedchamber, Offa remained behind because he feared no evil, 'rege offano remanente qui nil mali formidabat'. 119 Offa's lamentation and fasting upon hearing of the death of the king 'proved' his inculpability and Matthew justified his subsequent annexation of East Anglia by claiming that it was not really been an annexation at all. Offa, he said, had strengthened the kingdom of East Anglia, by prudently joining it to his own kingdom. This he had done because Ethelbert had had no heir. 120 In addition, Matthew endeavoured to rid Offa of any carnal associations with the wicked Quendrida. He engineered the literary 'divorce' of Offa from his wife by stating, on at least three occasions, that the king led a celibate life. 121 The *Vitae Offarum* is the only text to make a case for Offa's complete innocence in the Ethelbert affair. He was 'penitus a morte regis ... immunis.' 122

Quendrida would have been horrified. Going by her true name of Cynethryth she makes a frequent appearance in documentation of the period, and there is never

117 Ibid., p. 16: 'nihil sinsistri suspicantem'.

118 Ibid., p. 16.

119 Ibid., p. 16. Gerald of Wales had noted Ethelbert's innocence but could not say the same of Offa. Of Ethelbert he wrote 'Noster autem iuvenis, quia nichil pravitatis unquam vel excogitaverat vel expleverat. nichil hic pravi penitus suspicando... 'James, 'Two Lives', p.228.

120 Wats, p.17: '...missa expeditione pervalida, regnum orientalium Anglorum suo regno prudenter copulando solidavit. Non enim prae nominatus Rex Albertus liberos habuit aut legitimum successorem.'

121 Ibid., p. 16: 'Rex autem ipsum postea ut sociam lateris, in lecto suo dormire quasi suspectam non permisit.' Ibid., p. 17: 'Rex autem Offa magnificus ac piissimus, post mortem uxoris suae reginae, videlicet Quendridae, vitam caelibem ducens... ' Ibid., p.19: letter of Hadrian to Offa - 'vere caelibem vitam agentibus, merito mittendus fuit Angelus, cum castitati cognata sit puritas Angelica.'

122 Ibid., p. 17.
the slightest hint of the scandalous reputation she was later to acquire. The name 'Cynethryth' is attached to twenty charters between 765 and 790, some of which are, however, spurious. She was the only pre-Conquest queen to have appeared on a coin, in imitation perhaps, of classical Roman custom, and Alcuin sent her his greetings in 796. She was probably synonymous with Cynethryth abbess of Cookham who witnessed a privilege by which Pope Leo III confirmed to Cynhelm the monastery of Glastonbury in 798 and in the same year she presented archbishop Aethelheard with lands in Kent in exchange for his claims to her monastery. It has been suggested that her desire to retain Cookham as a family proprietary monastery, may have led to the hostility towards her that engendered the Quendrida legend. Whether this is true or not, her prominence in life serves to explain her subsequent prominence in legend. By exploiting that legend to the full and by creating a female anti-hero of monstrous proportions, Matthew freed Offa of blame. The degree to which Offa could be vindicated of blame was directly proportional to the size of the she-monster.

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123 Rickert, 'Old English Offa Saga', p.329.
125 S1258.
126 Todd, 'The Vitae Duorum Offarum', pp.60-61.
127 It is worth considering for a moment the 'wicked queen' topos and the legendary and quasi-historical materials that coagulated to produce the evil Quendrida of Mercia. Quendrida represented a conflation of several wicked female figures in history, including Eadburga, daughter of Offa who had accidentally poisoned her husband Brithric of Wessex, in an attempt to kill one of his favourites (narrated in Asser's Vita Alfredi, Simeon's Historia Regum and
Matthew's handling of the murder of Ethelbert demonstrated the extent of his determination to whitewash Offa's character and to free him from the damning brevity of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. That he was fully aware of alternative portrayals of the role of Offa in the events of 794 is certain; a marginal note to the *Chronica*, written in Matthew's hand reads as follows,

Albertus rex Orientalium Anglorum postulans tertiam sibi dari in uxorem, dolo regis, ut dicitur, sed hoc non manifeste verum est, suffocatus est in thalamo ipsius reginale. 128

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William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum*, Quendrida of Wessex who had murdered her brother Kenelm (eleventh-century *Passio Kenelmi*, William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum* and *De Gestis Pontificum* and the anonymous chronicle in Julius D vii) and Thryth, wife of Offa I of Angel who had persecuted her husband's retainers (*Beowulf*). Thryth, like Quendrida of Mercia, had sprung from an iniquitous past, Quendrida of Wessex, had ended her days imprisoned like her namesake in Mercia. The tale of Eadburga appears to have exerted the greatest influence, however, upon the development of the legend of Quendrida of Mercia. Eadburga too, was a jealous women who plotted the demise of one of her husband's favourites. Both Eadburga and Quendrida are said to have begun to live like tyrants after the manner of their fathers. They both killed a king and they were both connected with Charlemagne. In addition, the innocence of Offa and Ethelbert paralleled the innocence of Brithric and the noble youth whom Eadburga sought to kill. By the time of the twelfth-century chroniclers, the legend of the wicked queen had come full circle. From a wife, she became a daughter, then a sister, then a wife once more. Edith Rickert considered the complex origins of the legend of Quendrida in greater detail, drawing upon her extensive knowledge of Anglo-Saxon, Frankish and Danish legends and sagas. Rickert, *The Old English Offa Saga*, pp.326-376.

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128 *CM* i. 354, n.3. Matthew would have been familiar with Diceto's version of events in the *Ymagines Historiarum*. Folio 23r of Royal MS. 13 E vi , the manuscript that Matthew himself consulted, boasted the rubric 'Offa killed Ethelbert'. The hideousness of Offa's crime must have been evident to contemporaries for it blatantly contravened the report of the papal legates in 786: 'Let no-one dare to kill a king, for he is the Lord's anointed, and if anyone take part in such a crime, if he be a bishop or anyone of the priestly order let him be expelled from it and cast out from the holy heritage, just as Judas was ejected from the apostolic order.' It is intriguing that efforts to disguise this contravention were still being made some five-hundred years after it had occurred although there is no evidence that either Roger or Matthew were familiar with the report itself.
Yet Matthew had evidently made up his mind, and whilst engrossed in his
efforts to cleanse the reputation of Offa he displayed a remarkable
consistency of thought. His ability to convey an impression of the goodwill and
intimacy that bound Offa and Ethelbert rested upon his deliberate alteration of
an error committed by Roger in the *Flores*. Simeon, in the *Historia Regum*’s
annal for 771, spoke of Offa’s subjugation of the ‘Hestingorum’. 129 Roger
claimed for Offa a rather greater victory; not content with attributing to his hero
a defeat of those occupying a mere corner of the island, he attributed him instead
with the defeat of the English nation.130 It is to Matthew’s credit that he
substitutes the more realistic ‘East Angles’ for Roger’s ‘Anglorum gentem’. 131 He
claimed that whilst Carlomann was detained in Saxon parts, Offa was eager to
attack the king of the East Angles. The latter, sensing the advent of hostility,
prepared to confront Offa. A most cruel battle at Feldhard, lasting from early
morning until midday, was the outcome. Offa was victorious.132 Matthew had
lent a little more historical realism to the victory that Roger had assigned to
Offa. Yet, to do so suited his purpose. It set the stage for his subsequent claim
that Offa had conceded the kingdom of the East Angles to Ethelbert.133 This

129 Arnold, Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia, ii. 44.
130 *Flores* i. 239.
131 *CM* i. 346 and Wats, p.10.
132 Ibid., p.10.
133 Ibid., p.15: ‘Erat quoque quidam iuvenis, cui rex Offa regnum orientalium Anglorum, quod
eum iure sanguinis contingebat, concesserat, nomine Albertus’. This is not substantiated by the
primary written sources and archaeological evidence suggests that it is extremely unlikely;
East Anglia was independent long enough for coins to be minted for Ethelbert; three portrait
coins of Ethelbert are known - see I. Stewart, ‘The London Mint’, pp.27-43, p.31 and Kirby,
*The Earliest English Kings*, p.166. Blunt concluded, on the basis of the coin evidence, that
Offa established a mint in East Anglia in around c.790. Ethelbert regained sufficient power to
issue coins in his own name but after his murder in 794, Offa resumed coinage in his own
name up until the time of his death, ‘The Coinage of Offa’, pp.49-50. That Offa’s position in
East Anglia may have been relatively secure by as early as 787 is suggested by the fact that the
East Anglian bishoprics of Dummoc and Elmham were included in the new diocese of

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claim said much for Offa's sway and by heightening a sense of the concord
between the two kings, lessened the probability of Offa's complicity in
Ethelbert's murder. Matthew's consistency of thought extended as far as not
including Ethelbert amongst the rebel kings who enlisted the aid of Charlemagne
in their rebellion against Offa. Yet, paradoxically, his correction of Roger's
error also lent some credibility to Quendrida's accusation that Ethelbert aimed to
invade the kingdom of Mercia and vindicate the violent and unjust injuries
inflicted upon his kingdom by Offa. Her accusation also hinted at the
justifiability of Ethelbert's murder, regardless of the attribution of blame. In
support of this point it is worth noting that Ethelbert is also accused of plotting
with Charlemagne. Jaenberht too, according to the Vitae had committed this
heinous crime; and he had received little or no sympathy from Matthew. Matthew's attempt to free Offa of all blame and his admiration for Ethelbert is
plain for all to see. Yet it is difficult not to feel that 'accusations' placed in the
mouths of the actors of the 'vitae' are revelations of Matthew's own uncertainties
concerning the historical characters he is portraying.

Lichfield; for this see Kirby, The Earliest English Kings, p.166. In the context of Mercian
influence in East Anglia, Gerald of Wales is of great interest in speaking of the blood ties of
Ethelbert, 'Qui et ipsi atavis editi regibus ex orientaliun Saxonum regalia prosapia, Anna
videlicet Anni filio et Etheldride virginis patre, Adelredo, Adelero, et Athelwoldo, Adulfo et
Alfwoldo quoque, <quos> in Anglorum historia Beda commemorat, et illustribus quoque
Merciorum regibus ac ducibus, lineam duxerant originalem.' James, 'Two Lives', p.222.

134 WatS, pp.9-10.
135 Ibid., pp.15-16 and p.10.
136 Ibid., p.16. Quendrida made this accusation: 'In cuius rei fidem, mihi a meis amicis
significatum est, quod regis Caroli multis muneribus et nuntiis occultis intermeantibus,
imporat ad hoc patrocinium, se spondens ei fore tributarium.'
137 Ibid., p.14. Matthew's tendency to associate with foreigners those historical figures in
whom he had doubts is illustrated in the Historia's accusation that the pluralist Stigand had
befriended the Norman invaders, HA i. 13. Their association with foreigners explained away
the historical misdemeanours that should never have been committed by Englishmen!
When Matthew came to discuss Offa's journey to Rome in 793 he abandoned a
defensive stance and adopted a simpler eulogistic approach. It did not matter
to him that evidence for that journey to Rome earlier than Roger's *Flores* was
non-existent. The papal registers contain no trace of it, the Vatican records do
not mention St Albans at all for the next two hundred years and neither William
of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon nor any other non-St Albans source
mentions any such journey. Roger's statement that Offa journeyed to Rome
was possibly the result of his misinterpretation or more probably the deliberate
distortion of a passage in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* that claimed that Offa
king of the *East Saxons* had journeyed to Rome with Coenred. The Parker
Chronicle echoed this claim. Roger himself elaborated upon it. In the *Flores*
under the year 705 he stated that Offa reigned as king of the East Saxons after
Sigehard and Senfred for a few years. A youth of cheerful countenance, in the
flower of his life, he was loved by his people. He had been taught to 'sigh for
heavenly love' by Kineswitha who had refused to marry him. Journeying to
Rome he had received the tonsure and had zealously sought the kingdom of
heaven. Under the annal for 710 Roger restated that Offa had visited Rome with
Coenred and suggested that he had left his wife, kindred and country out of
devotion to Christ. In the following annal he added the information that Egwin,

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138 The *Vita*, as usual vastly elaborated the version of Roger. Roger for instance, had claimed
that the king '...mare ingressus, ad portum in Flandria desideratum applicuit oppidum.'; *Flores*
i. 255. The *Vita* stated instead that 'ships having been supplied with naval provisions by royal
dict, the king embarked on the ship and with sails extended and through a prosperous
journey, landed in the certain desired seaport in Flanders'; Wats. p.18.


140 B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (eds.), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*
Coenred for to Rome 7 Offa mid him.'
third prelate of the Hwicci had accompanied the two to Rome. It was perhaps only logical that Roger should have claimed a similar feat to have been undertaken by the founder of his house and the namesake of Offa I. Matthew perpetuated this claim.

Matthew's account of Offa's journey to Rome was a vehicle for the glorification of three aspects of Offa's character. First, in accordance with thirteenth-century political ideals he depended upon counsel. Roger had noticed this already. In a council attended by Humbert and his suffragans and all his primates, Offa had discussed his forthcoming journey. The plan of the king, claimed Roger was pleasing to all and the king in return, praised their counsel. His men had suggested that he treaty with the Pope either through legates or in person and 'acquiescing in the advice of his men the king took the laborious journey'. If Matthew's alteration of Roger's account at this point is not extensive, it illustrates the subtlety of Matthew's thinking. Offa was no longer, simply advised or counselled ('consulitur') with regards his proposed journey but instead 'he

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141 *Flores* i. 203 and 205.

142 Ibid., i. 254-255. There were precedents, however, for confusion of the two kings. Two charters of 692 and 704-9 (S64 and S1784) anachronistically refer to Offa of Mercia rather than his earlier namesake. See Rickert, 'The Old English Offa Saga', p.329.

143 Wats, pp. 18-19. Matthew's appreciation of the notion that Offa I became a monk and had thus probably journeyed to Rome is indicated by the picture he drew alongside the Chronica's annal for 705 which was accompanied by the words 'Nota de Offa rego sancto facto monacho'; *Chronicon* i. p.320, n.3. That there was some uncertainty in the later fourteenth century as to Offa II's journey is suggested by the fact that the Liber Benefactorum produced under the eye of Walsingham, states on two occasions that Offa went to Rome corporaliter. (LB, ff.3v and 7v) The use of this adverb hints at an element of doubt. It also seems to be the case that fourteenth-century St Albans was muddled by the concept of the two Offas for B.L. Additional MS. 62777 bestowed upon the Vitae Offarum the title Duorum Offarum Merciorum Regum Vitae.

144 *Flores* i. 254.
took the advice of holy and discreet men and carefully obeyed it.' Moreover, the "holy and discreet men of the Flores became the 'magnates' of the Vitae." Offa's political sensibilities were matched by piety of practice. Matthew considered the plan of the king to be pious and the king 'piissimus'. Offa no longer merely 'began the laborious journey' as he had in Roger's Flores, but, 'led by the divine spirit he made the truly laborious and costly transalpine journey without harmful delay'. The lords from whom Offa had attempted to purchase certain meadows had considered the extent of his power and his ability to crush them although he was 'most pious'. To Pope Hadrian he was not 'the most dear and powerful king of the English' but 'the most Christian king'. Matthew's faith in the piety of this eighth-century king dictated the alterations that he made to Roger's Flores.

As the lords had appreciated, Offa was powerful. Matthew emphasized this point. He suggested for instance that Matthew immediately summon those lords from whom he wished to purchase meadows. Roger however had implied that this summoning occurred after Offa had questioned their subordinates. Moreover, the lords consented to the sale of their meadows, not because, as

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145 FH i. 397.
146 Wats, p. 18.
147 Ibid., p.18.
148 Flores i. 254. Wats, p.18: 'O igitur rex piissimus, suorum magnatum sano adquiescens consilio, divino ductus spiritu, transalpinum valde laboriosum, et sumptuosum iter arripit, sine morae dispensio'.
149 Wats, p.19.
150 Ibid., p.18.
151 Flores i. 255.
Roger had claimed, 'they gave in to their greed', but because they had considered the power of Offa and had borne in mind his ability to destroy them with a nod of the head. Needless to say the thousand marks that Offa was willing to pay them cannot have proved anything other than a major factor in their decision. Matthew illustrated Offa's standing once more in his description of the manner in which Hadrian replied to Offa's requests for the blessing and privileging of his monastery. Having outlined these requests, Roger introduced the papal response with the phrase 'to whom the papal pontiff replied thus'. Matthew considered this the ideal opportunity to advertise the international importance of his hero. 'And when the excellent king Offa elegantly spoke, the Roman pontiff humbly and favourably, having inclined his head, replied thus.' Upon Roger's account of Offa's journey to Rome, Matthew superimposed an impression of the democratic, pious and powerful nature of Offa's kingship.

Two consequences of Offa's journey to Rome, his alleged foundation of the school of the English at Rome and his institution of Peter's Pence are worthy of close consideration. Matthew's accounts of them display all the symptoms concurrent with the occasional illness from which Matthew suffered; patchy blindness to his source material. Neither is supported by historical evidence. Through successive stages he attributed Offa with the foundation of the school at Rome. Henry of Huntingdon and Simeon of Durham had failed to mention

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152 Ibid. i. 255 and Wats. p.18.
153 Ibid., p.18.
154 Flores i. 256.
155 Wats. p.19.
156 Ibid., pp.19-20.
the school in any capacity. William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum* had touched briefly upon the repair, by Aethelwulf, of the school that had first been founded by Offa and that had subsequently been burnt down.\(^\text{157}\) Roger Wendover ignored William's claim of the school for Offa, and traced its origins to 727 when Ine 'built a house in the city with the consent and desire of Gregory and had called it the 'School of the English'. \(^\text{158}\) Roger further intimated that a church had been built near to the school to celebrate the divine mysteries for the English who had journeyed to Rome and for the burial of those who died there. \(^\text{159}\) He is consistent in his claim that Ine founded the school. In 793, he said, Offa had visited the 'school of the English that then flourished at Rome'. \(^\text{160}\) In the *Chronica Maiora*, Matthew broke free of the restraints that Roger's claim of the school for Ine placed upon his eulogizing of Offa. In a bas-de-page note he suggested that Offa had repaired the school which had been deprived of its rents and destroyed through the avarice of the Romans. \(^\text{161}\) Matthew could not quite yet claim its foundation for Offa. The *Gesta*, however, knew no such limitations.

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\(^{157}\) GR i. 109; '...Scholam Anglorum, quae, ut fertur, ab Offa rege Merciorum primitus instituta proximo anno conflagraverat, reparavit egregNie. William derived the information that the school burnt down from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which stated that the *Schola Saxonum* had burnt down in 817 and again during the pontificate of Leo IV 847-855. It came to an end in 1204. For this see S. Keynes and M. Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, (Harmondsworth, 1983; repr. 1987), p.244, n.82.

\(^{158}\) Flores i. 215; 'Ine, rex felix et potens, Athelhardo cognato suo regnum suum relinquentis, Romam petiii, ut pro regno temporali commutaret aeternum. Quo cum pervenisset, fecit in civitate domum, consensu et voluntate Gregorii papae, quam 'scholam Anglorum' appellari fecit.'

\(^{159}\) Ibid. i. 215-216. The school was situated on Verulamium Hill and served by the church of St Mary-in-Saxia. On this site were the church and hospital of Sancto Spirito later established; Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, p.244, n.82. Does the name Verulamium Hill lend credence to tales of Offa's foundation of the school given his own documented association with St Albans?

\(^{160}\) Flores i. 256; '...et in die crastina scholam Anglorum, quae tunc Romae floruit, ingressus...'

\(^{161}\) CM i. 331. Matthew chose to omit this note from his *Flores*. He merely followed Roger in claiming that Offa made a gift to the school.
Offa, it asserted, piously established a school at Rome. Unlike Roger's *Flores*, the *Gesta* touched upon the purpose of the school; it aimed, supposedly, at teaching languages to pilgrims and foreigners who had converged on the Roman Church from diverse parts of the barbarian world either for prayer or for the carrying out of business. The great convergence of pilgrims seeking consolation there caused it to be turned into a hospice 'of the holy spirit'. The *Vitae Offarum* did not reiterate the *Gesta*’s claim that Offa founded the school. Neither did it correct the *Chronica*’s statement that Offa entered the school of the English that then flourished at Rome. The smooth maturation of the Offa legend experienced a brief hiccup at this point. Yet Matthew had evidently not abandoned his belief in Offa’s responsibility for the school; the *Chronica*’s annal for 1256 might seem to constitute Matthew’s final statement on the matter.

'...Romam in proprio corpore adiit, ubi scholam Anglorum constituit...’

Matthew’s attribution of the founding of the school to Offa displays well the type of imaginative leaps and ahistorical detours he was prepared to make in his glorification of Offa.

162 Wats, p.22 (*GA* i. 5).

163 Ibid., p.22 (*GA* i. 5). The *Schola Saxonum (Angelcynnes Scolu)* was not an educational establishment; the term had originally applied to the contingent of Saxons or Englishmen who served in the militia of Rome. It eventually became a form of hostelry for Englishmen with any business in Rome; Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, p.244, n.82.

164 Wats, p.22 (*GA* i. 5).

165 Ibid., p.19.

166 CAI’v. 563.
What did Matthew make of Peter's Pence? First he went some way towards clarifying the ambiguous claims of the *Flores* as to who first instituted the payment. William of Malmesbury had claimed that honour for Aethelwulf. 167 The latter, he said, had left in his will three-hundred gold mancuses to Rome. 168 Roger however claimed that 'statutum est generali decreto per totum regnum occidentalium Saxonum, in quo predictus Ine regnabat, ut singulis annis de singulis familiis denarius unus, qui Anglice 'Romscot' appellatur, beato Petro et ecclesiae Romanae mitteretur.' 169 Plummer claimed that Roger was the oldest authority for the tradition of Ine's instigation of Peter's Pence. This is inaccurate because two texts emanating from early twelfth-century Durham, the *De Primo Saxonum Adventu* and an unpublished chronicle in Durham, Dean and Chapter Library, MS. B iv. 22, ff.3r-5v, credit Ine with just such a deed. The notion that Ine had begun collection of a hearth-tax for the benefit of the papacy was thus current in Durham some century or so before Roger compiled the *Flores*. 170 Yet Roger was not wholly convinced for a little later in the *Flores* he let it be known that,

Offa rex magnificus, tempore quo beati petri vicario, Romanae urbis pontificis redditum statutum, id est Romscot, de regno suo concessit... 171

167 *GR* i. 118.
169 *Flores* i. 216.
170 The anonymous chronicler of Julius D vii also credits Ine with the establishment of Peter's Pence. He, like Roger, apparently made use of certain lost Northumbrian annals: R. Vaughan, 'The Chronicle Attributed to John of Wallingford', *Camden Miscellany*, xc (1958), ix-79, xi. These annals are probably the link between the Durham and St Albans traditions of Inc and Peter's Pence. I am grateful to J.E. Story for informing me of the Durham tradition.
171 *Flores* i. 259. Roger appears to have been genuinely muddled as to who indeed had first instituted Peter's Pence. The grants that he assigns to Ine then Offa are identical which suggests that, whilst he believed there to have been only one 'founding' grant, he remained
Matthew did not attempt to iron out this inconsistency in his *Chronica Maiora*. In writing book one of the *Flores*, however, he strengthened Offa's case by declaring him to have been the first who granted this payment.\(^{172}\) This is assumed in the *Vitae* where it is possible to detect a manufacturing of evidence to support Offa's claim to be the instigator of Peter's Pence. According to the *Vita*, Offa's discovery of the body of St Alban on St Peter's day led to the bestowal of the term 'Peter's Pence' on the annual payment to Rome.\(^{173}\) In his consideration of the scope of the tax, Matthew displayed a preference for consistency. His statement in the *Gesta*, that Offa conceded Peter's Pence from 'the greatest part of his kingdom', took into account Roger's claim that the monastery of St Albans was exempt from the tax.\(^{174}\) The *Vitae Offarum* was more precise still, for it suggested that Peter's Pence was levied on all Offa's subjected territories except that conferred on St Albans.\(^{175}\) The phrase 'subjected territories' hints of course at a broader catchment area for the tax, than does the word 'kingdom' alone. Matthew had therefore taken to its logical conclusion Roger's claim concerning St Alban's immunity. Roger had stated simply that

uncertain as to the precise identity of the founder. Ine granted one denarius from each family in the kingdom of Wessex, to St Peter and the Church so that the English staying there might have the necessary sustenance. Offa granted one silver coin from each family in the kingdom of Mercia for the sustenance of people going to the school.

\(^{172}\) *FH ii*. 46.

\(^{173}\) *Wats*, p. 19.

\(^{174}\) Ibid., pp. 22-23 (*GA i*. 5). This claim is retained in the late fourteenth-century *Liber Benefactorum*, f.4r: 'Contulit ergo ad honorem dei et beati petri denarium qui dicitur sancti petri his diebus de maxima parte regni sui'.

\(^{175}\) *Wats*, p.19: 'Hoc autem per totam suam ditionem teneri in perpetuum constituit. Excepta tota terra sancti Albani, suo monasterio conferenda, prout postea collata privilegia protestantur'. A marginal note on folio 23r of B.L. Cotton MS. Royal 13 E vi, an early thirteenth-century St Albans manuscript, claimed that the rent was to be collected throughout all of Britain and sent to the church of Rome for the stability and common salvation of his kingdom. This contradicted a statement made earlier in the same note, that the rent was to be collected from each of the houses of his kingdom in eternity.
Ine/Offa had conceded the tax from their kingdoms. Matthew also found it necessary to tone down Roger's contention that St Albans was to retain for its own use all Romscot or Peter's Pence emanating from Hertfordshire. In the Gesta Matthew modified Roger's exaggeration, by suggesting that St Albans retained only that tax that emanated from its own lands. This is reiterated in the Vitae. Matthew had thus worked upon the theme of Offa and Peter's Pence in several ways. He had cemented the king's name to the tradition of Peter's Pence, he had made consistent Roger's claims concerning the geographical scope of the tax and he had toned down Roger's estimation of St Albans immunity.

Was Matthew so far wrong in linking the name of the eighth-century Mercian king with the annual payment to Rome? Could it be that Offa was the founder of Peter's Pence? He certainly made one grant to the papal see. Pope Leo III in a letter to Cenwulf of 798 declared that Offa, 'for the victories of the kingdom which he held by the support of St Peter, possessing and honouring him as his standard bearer and comrade in that same kingdom, made a vow before the synod of all bishops and ealdormen and chief men and all the people dwelling in the island of Britain, and also of our most faithful legates the most holy bishops George and Theophylact, to that same Apostle of God, the blessed Peter, keeper of the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, that he would send each year as many

176 Flores i. 216 and 259.

177 Ibid. i. 259.

178 Wats, pp.22-23 (GA i. 5). LB repeated the Gesta's claim; 'Censum vero totum provenientem ex terris quas sancto Albano contulerat eidem martiris assignavit', f.4r.

179 Although the Vitae also retains, uncorrected, Roger's claim that St Albans collected and kept all tax from Hertfordshire: Wats, p.20.
mancusses as the year had days, that is, three hundred and sixty five, to that
same Apostle of the church of God for the support of the poor and the provision
of lights. In addition, numismatic evidence for at least one payment is
forthcoming. A coin discovered in the mid nineteenth century by the Italian
numismatist Cesis, and now lost was adorned on the obverse with a man's head
and the inscription 'Offa rex-meror'. Its reverse displayed a large cross
surrounded by the inscription 'S. Petrus'. C.E. Blunt convincingly countered
the argument of D.H. Haigh that the coin had been minted by the archbishop of
Lichfield and on the basis of comparative numismatic evidence from the reign of
Pippin, suggested that the coin had been part of Offa's payment to Rome as
mentioned in the letter of Leo III.
Evidence for this payment aside, Offa's
capacity for exploiting taxable resources is demonstrated perhaps by the
administrative document known as the Tribal Hidage, although this document is
highly problematic. Moreover, Offa may have had every reason to exercise
those talents for taxing by initiating an annual benefaction to the pope; it has
been proposed that Offa's monetary gift to the papacy, apparently granted at the

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180 EHD i. 793-794 (no. 205). Interpretations of this passage in Leo's letter have varied.
Stenton did not believe that Offa's payment represented the origins of the tax called Peter's
Levison regarded it as 'a part in the preliminary history of Peter's Pence', England and the
Continent, p. 31.

181 Cesis published his find in a pamphlet of 1863 entitled Di una rara moneta di Offa re de
Merciani (Bologna 1863), although I have not managed to obtain this.

182 See letter of D.H. Haigh to the editor in The Numismatic Journal, iii (London, 1863), 223-
224. Haigh signed his letter 'Believe me, as ever. Yours very sincerely, Daniel Hy. Haigh').
Blunt, 'The Coinage of Offa', pp 44-46. Two moneyers Penred and Ciolhard, produced gold
coins that may be identified with the mancusses which figure in texts relating to payments by
Offa and Coenwulf to the see of Rome; Stewart, 'The London Mint', p. 39.

183 Todd, 'The Vitae Duorum Offarum', p. 28. A list of thirty-five peoples covering nearly the
whole of England south of the Humber, the Tribal Hidage assigned a round number of hides to
each. The document is edited by W. de G. Birch, Cartularium Saxonicum, 3 vols. (London,
1885-1893), i, no. 297.
The foundation of the monastery of St Albans stirred in Matthew a creative impulse that produced the *Vitae Offarum*. The foundation constituted the spine of this work. The tale of Offa II is welded onto that of Offa I with the solder of an obligation to found a monastery. The *Vitae Offarum* closes with the account of this event as if to say that this had been the sole purpose, the main achievement, the culmination of Offa's reign. It is highly probable that Offa founded or refounded the abbey of St Albans. He had had practise after all for he founded ('posuerat'), a monastery at Bath and allegedly a nunnery at Winchcombe. Neither is Matthew's emphasis upon the special nature of Offa's foundation of St Albans necessarily misplaced for a privilege granted by Pope Hadrian to Offa and contained in the *Liber Diurnus*, suggests that all monasteries that had been founded or acquired by Offa up until the date of the document had been dedicated to *St Peter*. Levison suggested that St Albans'...
The foundation, in any case, had thus proved inspirational to Matthew and his thoughts concerning it will be considered under four headings; the invention of Alban, the physical construction of the monastery, the gathering of the community and its endowment.

William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Pontificum* harbours the earliest extant account of the invention of St Alban by King Offa. He mentions literary witnesses to the martyrdom, Bede and Fortunatus and his reluctance to add to these sources stemmed, he said, from a natural unwillingness to pour waters upon the sea. He proceeds nevertheless to tell the tale of Alban's invention. Offa had been staying in Bath when an angel forewarned him of the discovery ahead. Next day, he began his journey. A torch ray of light, descending from the sky, pinpointed the site of the burial. Roger as usual built upon the version of William. The Offa of the *Flores* had also been residing at Bath. After the labour of the day, he sought rest in the royal bed. An angel appeared to him, advised him to raise Alban from the ground and to place his relics in a more worthy shrine. Offa,

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188 Levison, *England and the Continent*, p.35.

189 *GP*, pp.316-317 and n.5. Another early mention of Offa in connection with St Albans occurs in the Latin text of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* in a twelfth-century manuscript B.L. Cotton MS. Domitian A viii. See C.Plummer (ed.), *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, (Oxford, 1892), p.56 n.1. There is no evidence that the details of the invention supplied in the *Vitae* existed prior to the twelfth-century.

190 William was exaggerating at this point for although Bede included in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* a lengthy description of the martyrdom of Alban, drawn from a later version of the *Passio Albanii* found in Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale 11748, Venantius Fortunatus, bishop of Poitiers (d.600), wrote a single line on the saint, 'Albanum egregium foecunda Britannia profert'. See Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, pp.28-35 and *MGH Auct.Ant.* iv i (Carmina viii, iii), p.185. This single line is quoted by Bede and Roger: Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, p.28 and *Flores*, i. xiv.

eager to obey the divine command, summoned archbishop Hubert and communicated to him the divine will. Hubert, accompanied by his suffragans Ceolwulf of Lindsey and Unwona of Leicester and men and women of diverse ages, met the king at Verulamium. 192 The king, whilst on his way to that city had spied a ray of light, emitted from the sky in the shape of a huge torch as if to illuminate the place of burial. The aid of the martyr was sought in fasting, alms and prayer. Prelates were adorned with priestly mitres. Such a degree of endeavour was wholly necessary because the place and memory of the martyr, claimed Roger, had been utterly forgotten for three hundred and forty-four years since Germanus of Auxerre and Lupus of Troyes had sought the extirpation of the Pelagian heresy from Britain. 193 This he attributed to the ravages of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes who had driven out the Britons, depopulated the towns, burnt the cities and levelled the holy churches to the ground, slain the priests and devastated the island from sea to sea. Needless to say, the church dedicated to St Alban had been utterly destroyed. 194

On striking the ground Offa and his team had immediately located the tomb of the martyr. It had not been necessary to search for long because the site had been singled out by a celestial light. Alban still lay in the wooden coffin in which he had formerly been placed by Christ's faithful on account of the rage of the barbarians. Also found with him were the holy relics of all the apostles and diverse martyrs that Germanus had deposited there. Clergy and people were

192 Unwona witnessed numerous charters. See for instance EHD i. pp 465, 467-468 and 470-471 (nos. 76, 78 and 80). He does not appear however in those present at the synod of Clofesho in 803.
193 A tract entitled De Invencione seu Translacione Sancti Albani contained in Dublin, Trinity College, MS. 177, claims that they knew of the approximate area but not the precise site.
194 For the above see Flores i. 251-253.
moved to tears. Meanwhile the relics were transferred to a certain church accompanied by a solemn procession with hymns and thanksgiving. Roger noted the miracles wrought on this site; to the deaf was restored hearing, to the lame, movement, to the blind sight. All these events occurred, he said, in the five hundred and seventh year following the passion of St Alban, the three hundred and forty-fourth after the arrival of the Angles in Britain.\textsuperscript{195}

Matthew effected a number of alterations and changes of emphasis to the account of the invention that Roger had bequeathed to the monastery of St Albans. To begin with he strengthened St Albans's claims to the invention of its patron saint by 'manufacturing' evidence, as he had done in the case of Offa's connection with Peter's Pence. In the margin of the Chronica Maiora he noted that Offa had caused a gold circlet to be placed on Albans's head, 'ut in posterum omnibus patesceret quod a rege injunctum est corpus et regi revelata est inventio'.\textsuperscript{196} An extended account of this alleged crowning was included by Matthew in the Gesta, although whether its notice here preceded or post-dated that in the margin of the Chronica is unclear.\textsuperscript{197} Its description forms part of the account of abbot Geoffrey's translation of the relics in 1129. Ralph, archdeacon of the abbey had lifted up the head to discover a seal hanging from the back of it by a silk thread. On this seal were written in gold letters the words 'St Alban'. The venerable King Offa, claimed the Gesta, had placed a circlet around his head engraved with the proclamation 'Hoc est caput Sancti Albani, Anglorum

\textsuperscript{195} Ibid. i. 253-254.

\textsuperscript{196} CM i. 357. The reference to Offa and the gold circlet was omitted altogether Matthew's abridgement of the Chronica in the Flores.

\textsuperscript{197} Wats, pp. 38 (GA i. 85-86).  

234
Protomartyris' Afterwards this circlet had been carelessly destroyed to provision the shrine although another was made in its place.

The *Vitae Offarum* although later in date does not build upon these details. It states merely that the relics were deposited in a shrine, having been wrapped in palls and the head having been adorned with a gold circlet by Offa. It supplies too the inscription on the seal. The *Gesta* might thus be regarded as the culmination of the story of Offa and the crowning of Alban, the purpose of which was to 'prove' Offa's close association with the invention and hence with the founding of the monastery. His presence at and active participation in both are more persistent features of the works of Matthew than of those of Roger. Offa it was who had adorned the shrine with silver, gold leaf and precious gems. Offa it was who had decorated the church that had temporarily housed the relics with pictures, hangings and ornaments.

Furthermore, Matthew strove somewhat harder than Roger to emphasis the divine favour implicit in the 'inventio' of 793 and the divine aura that surrounded its instigator. Offa wholly deserved an angelic visitation, on the basis of his friendship with God.

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199 Wats, p.39 (*GA* i. 86).

200 Wats, p.18. In his autograph manuscript of the *Vitae* however, Matthew does denote the invention as an important event by his inclusion of a large flourished initial to head the passage dealing with the divine revelation to Offa of the site of Albans burial: f.21r.

201 Wats, p.18: '...et ecclesiam ipsius, in qua ut iam dictum est, corpus collocabatur, picturis, aulacis, et albis ornamentis, donec amplior multis ditanda possessionibus et honoribus aedificaretur, iussit decorari.'

202 Wats, p.23 (*GA* i. 8).
preference to the *Chronica*’s ‘strenuissimus’. 203 It supplies the additional adjective ‘Christianissimus’ on a second occasion. 204 The treasure of the relics, it claimed, was divinely found. Moreover, the ray of light that had led the king and his companions to the site of Alban’s burial was likened to the star of Bethlehem that led the Magi to the birthplace of Christ. 205 The rubrics to the *Vie de Seint Auban*, probably earlier in date than the *Vitae*, employ this same analogy. 206 In addition they liken the site of Alban’s martyrdom to the city of Jerusalem, whilst being careful to note that Jerusalem could never overshadow Verulamium. 207 Just as the Magi led by the star of Bethlehem had been destined to discover the Christ child, so Offa king of the Mercians had been destined to discover Alban. Divine favour had guided those destinies.

The lengths to which Matthew went in linking the name of Offa to the invention of St Albans indicate perhaps that a degree of uncertainty prevailed at St Albans in the middle years of the thirteenth-century. Had Offa ‘found’ St Alban? A tract incorporated in Dublin, Trinity College MS. 177 could clearly not decide whether Offa had effected an ‘inventio’ or merely a ‘translatio’ for it was entitled *De Invencione seu Translacione Sancti Albani*. 208 A chronological tract in the

203 Wats, p. 18.

204 Ibid., p. 18.

205 Ibid., p. 18: ‘Plus tamen caeteris, omnium corda erexit, radius igneus ab aethere missus super locum, et in dies descendens, et solare sicut et lunare lumen adaugens, regem cum suis sodalibus, quasi stella magorum dux, donec staret supra domum ubi crat puer Christus, ad locum perduxit, memoratis reliquis insignitum’.

206 *Vie*, p. 63.

207 Wats, p. 18 and Vie, p. 64. The rubrics to the *Vie* termed the site Holmhurst and stated that this was because it was overgrown with holly.

208 ff. 52v-70r.
same manuscript referred simply to the translation of 793. Yet it had earlier included lessons on the 'invention' of St Alban by Offa. B. L. Additional MS. 62777, dateable to the early years of the fourteenth-century similarly contains Tractates de Invencione sive Translacione beati Albani Anglorum Protomartiris. Such doubts were wholly justified. The proposition of the St Albans chroniclers that the site of Alban's tomb had been forgotten sometime before the reign of Offa is undermined by the suggestion of Bede, writing only sixty years before Offa's alleged invention of the saint, that sick people were healed at St Albans' shrine 'usque ad hanc diem'. M. Biddle noted in addition, that those intervening sixty years had witnessed the extension of Mercian power throughout the region around St Albans and beyond London and Kent under the Christian kings Aethelbald and Offa himself, thus making it improbable that the site of Alban's burial had been forgotten. It seems rather more probable that Offa had, in fact, effected a 'translatio' of the relics to a new shrine rather than divine 'inventio'. Matthew, however, remained personally convinced of the reality of Offa's 'inventio' of 793. Those rubrics of the Vie that describe Offa's 'inventio' exude tangibility and solidity. The site was dug with spades and picks. Bushes and woods were cleared, logs and roots were carried away, turves and

209 ff. 70v-72r.

210 ff. 50v-52v.

211 This tract was to be read on the feast of the invention by King Offa, and its composition post-dated the Vitae to which it refers on f.58v. A tract of the same title is found in Trinity College MS.177 is contained in B. L. Nero D i, ff.27v-29v, after the Vitae, in Matthew's own hand; he was clearly not immune from confusing interpretations of the events of 793.

212 Colgrave and Mynors, Bede's Ecclesiastical History, p.34.

thorns removed. Those digging searched this way and that until Offa summoned them when the relics, wrapped in straw, were finally discovered. 214

If Matthew had failed to convince all his contemporaries of the nature of the role that Offa had played in 793, his account of Offa's foundation of the abbey appears to have been accepted without a murmur. Twelfth-century accounts of the physical construction of the abbey are scanty. William of Malmesbury's Gesta Regum and De Gestis Pontificum state simply that a basilica of most beautiful workmanship was built. 215 Henry of Huntingdon mentioned Offa's transferral of the bones to a monastery that he had constructed and enriched in many ways. 216 As usual, Roger constructed an elaborate edifice upon these brief and rather deflating accounts of the foundation. He postulated the existence of at least two churches dedicated to the martyr in or near Verulamium, prior to Offa's founding of the monastery. The first, wonderfully built of stone after the passion of St Alban, had been destroyed by the Saxons. It was this church that Offa rebuilt 217

Hac denique tempestate, ecclesia beati martyris Albani quae post passionem suam miro tabulatu lapideo, atque ejus martyrio condigna legitur fabricata, dejecta penitus cum aliis creditur et deleta, donec per ministerium Offae regis, angelo sibi revelante, corpus gloriosi

214 Vie, p. 63.

215 GR i. 85 and GP, p.316.

216 Historia, p.124.

217 Biddle conceded that Offa may have rebuilt or renovated the church over the shrine but he did not believe that Offa could be attributed with the foundation of the abbey, 'Alban and the Anglo-Saxon Church', p.31.
confessoris ac martyris inventum est, et monasterium ejus denuo fabricatum. 218

Bede had made reference to this church in his Historia Ecclesiastica. Basing his narrative of Alban's martyrdom on the third and latest version of the Passio Albani found in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS. 11748, he made reference to the site of this event, 'Verlamacaestir' or 'Uaelingacaestir' 'ubi postea, redeunte temporum Christianorum serenitate, ecclesia est mirandi operis atque eius martyrio condigna extructa.' 219 Roger then postulated the existence in the late eighth century of a second church dedicated to the martyr and located outside Verulamium, ('quandam ecclesiam, olim extra urbem Verolamium in honorem beati martyris consecratam.') 220 This had housed the body of St Alban immediately after the latter's invention. Roger did not attempt to suggest that Offa's church had been the first dedicated to St Alban and the Flores hints instead at the several tiered and untidy development of worship of Alban in and around Verulamium. Neither, it appears, was he willing to attribute Offa with the completion of the church that he began in 793. Offa, he claimed, died, having 'nearly constructed his most noble monastery.' 221 It is perhaps unsurprising that Offa should have failed to complete his monastery in the three years that

218 Flores i. 91. Roger made reference to this church on a second occasion under the annal for 793, ibid. i. 253: 'Hac itaque tempestate, ecclesia beati Anglorum protomartyris Albani, quam Beda in historia Anglorum, post passionem eundem martyris, muro tabulatu lapideo scripta fuisse constructam, inter caeteras regionis ecclesias funditus est subversa...'

219 Colgrave and Mynors, Bede's Ecclesiastical History, p.34.

220 Flores i. 253. A lesson included on f.51r of Dublin, Trinity College MS. 177 stated that St Alban had been buried near the city of Verulamium that is now called Verlameceastre or Watlingceastre. There is also an obscure reference in a rubric to the Vie, to a church founded outside Verulamium called the Holy Sion.

221 Flores i. 261-262; 'Eodem anno Offa, rex Merciorum magnificus, constructo fere nobilissimo post inventionem beati Albani monasterio, in villa, quae Offeleia nuncupatur, juxta multorum opinionem diem clausit extremum.'
Matthew believed had elapsed since Offa made Willegod abbot of the church 'not yet built'. 222

Matthew, like Roger, made reference to two churches dedicated to Alban and founded before the time of Offa. With Bede and Roger he shares the claim that the early stone church built in the wake of the martyrdom, had been destroyed by the Saxons. However, he contradicted himself a little later in the *Vitae* when he claimed that, although the relics had been cast out, the church on the site of St Alban's martyrdom still existed. 223 It is just possible that it did for the *Gesta*'s account of the abbacy of Wulnoth makes reference to the 'greater church' which supposes the existence of more than one, although a firm equation of the smaller church with that mentioned by Bede would be difficult. 224 Matthew's claim that the early stone church still existed stemmed possibly from his reluctance to acknowledge discontinuity in the growth of the cult of St Alban in and around St Albans. His description of the second church, the church to which St Albans body was transferred, as an 'ecclesiola', was perhaps an attempt to boost the significance of Offa's monastic foundation. 225 What is more, even the 'ecclesiola' had benefited from Offa's glittering generosity, for he had adorned it with pictures, curtains and ornaments.226 Matthew was concerned most of all to

222 Wats, p. 19. Levison provides a note of caution here regarding Florence of Worcester's reference to the dedication of a church of St Alban in 805. He culled this from Marianus Scotus who was referring to a church of St Alban at Mainz (Thorpe, *Chronicon*, i. 64); Levison, *England and the Continent*, p.35.

223 Wats, p.17.


225 *FH* i. 397.

226 Wats, p.18.
disprove Roger's assertion that Offa had failed to complete the abbey before his death. His *Flores* and his *Gesta* side-stepped the issue by stating simply that he built 'construxit' a monastery, with no reference to its state of completion in 796. The *Vitae* however addressed the problem head on and sought to dispel the criticism that Roger had allowed to enter his *Flores*. Following the invention of Alban, claimed the *Vitae*, Offa began work upon the monastery at once. As if to confirm its completion during king's lifetime the *Vitae* describes his laying of the foundation stone and his dedication of the church to the Father, Son, Holy Spirit and the martyr Alban. Yet the *Vitae* did not rid itself of all traces of the claim that Roger had made concerning the monastery's state of incompletion. It echoed the *Flores* when it claimed that on his death Offa had constructed almost all the buildings in his monastery that he had begun some four or five years previously.

According to the *Vitae*'s reckoning of four or five years building work, Offa would have begun the monastery in around 791 or 792, well before his alleged journey to Rome. This interesting implication suited Matthew, for elsewhere in the *Vitae*, Matthew had openly stated that Offa had founded the abbey 'before he took the transalpine route, ignorant of what God had ordained for his life.  

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227 *Flores* i. 281 and *GA* i. 4.

228 Wats, p. 19: '...post inventionem memoratam, statim rex ecclesiam coepit aedificare, ponens primum lapidem in fundamento, dicens: 'In honore Dei omnipotentis, patris, et filii, et spiritus sancti et martyris sui Albani, totius terrae meae protomartyris.'

229 Ibid., p. 20: Yet the *Vitae*, unlike the *Flores* had earlier made it clear that Offa had effectively completed the foundation, for the only building that he had not built was the mill and that the building he had discovered already existing among the old buildings of the place.

230 Ibid., p. 19: 'Et hoc fecit rex providus, antequam iter arriperet transalpinum, ignorans quid Deus de vita sua ordinaverat.' Roger's *Flores* and Matthew's *Chronica* claimed that Offa decided to go to Rome so that the monastery newly built in honour of the martyr should be privileged and blessed by the authority of the Pope; *Flores* i. 254 and *CM* i. 358.
Not only did Matthew imply here, that Offa had finished it before he went to Rome, but he made the foundation independent of papal authority. Despite the Vitae's attempt here to suggest that the foundation had preceded the journey to Rome yet it did not take the opportunity to reverse the order of events as described in Roger's Flores and his own Chronica (under the annal for 793). These texts tell of the journey to Rome and then the foundation of the abbey. Matthew's Gesta and the Chronica's annal for 1256, however, hint more firmly at Matthew's conviction that Offa's foundation of the monastery preceded his visit to Rome. It is possible to see Matthew in the process of unravelling the ambiguous bequest of Roger. Did Offa complete the monastery? How many churches dedicated to Alban preceded it? Did he conceive of it before or after his visit to Rome? It is perhaps no wonder that he betrayed confusion as to the precise nature of Offa's achievement in 793; this confusion surfaces in the Vitae at a point where Offa's parents promise that their son will construct a monastery or restore an old one, in return for the his good health. It is likely however that Matthew had never entertained serious doubts as to Offa's role in the founding of the monastery for the rubrics and pictures of the Vie de Seint Auban could not present a more lucid picture of the extent of royal participation in the founding of the monastery.

231 Flores i. 254-259, CM i. 358-361 and Wats, pp.18-20.

232 Both the Gesta and the Vitae convey the impression that Offa's decision to found a monastery and his completion of it pre-dated his visit to Rome because the express purpose of the visit had been to adorn the monastery with liberties; Wats, p.23 (GA i. 5) and Wats, p.18. Both echoed CM i. 358.

233 Wats, p.7: Offa's parents promised that "si ipsum Deus restauraret, quod parentes eius negligenter omiserunt, ipse puere cum se facultas offerret, fideliter adimpleret", videlicet de coenobio cuius mention praebibata est honorifice constuendo, vel de diruto restaurando.' The Life of Offa I the hermit had suggested that he build a monastery or restore an old one as thanks for the lives of his wife and sons: Wats, p.6.

234 Vie, pp.63-64. Matthew seized every opportunity to refer to Offa as the founder of the monastery. The autograph manuscript of the Abbreviatio Chronicorum, f.5v termed him
Matthew brought many new elements to the account of the foundation of 793. The *Gesta* probed the motives underlying Offa's desire to found a monastery. He had, it said, been touched by the spirit and guided by repentance for the great slaughter that he had effected and the human blood he had spilt. He befriended God 'who does not wish the death of sinners but would rather that they live converted'. Thus he deserved to be taken into the divine confidence and told of the burial site of Alban, who had lain ignobly in the ground for so long, and to build a magnificent house of God.  

The whimsicality of the *Gesta* is oddly undermined by the *Vitae*'s revelation of Offa's rather more earthy and gruesome motive. The foundation, it believed, constituted a thanks offering for the timely assassination of Quendrida. If Matthew's interpretation of Offa's motives swung ambiguously between two extremes, his description of the building work itself left little to the imagination.

Li reis funder fait une eglise  
K'en meimes ceu liu est asise  
U li seint martir Auban  
Pur Deu sufri mort e hahan.  
[M]acuns mande e enginnurs  
Ki fund les fundementz des murs,  
Vousures e pavementz,  
Pilers, basses e tablementz.  

Mut met li reis peine e cure,

'magnificent founder of the monastery of St Alban protomartyr'. On f.7r of the same manuscript Offa is shown holding his new foundation.

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235 Wats, p.23 (*GA* i. 8)

236 Wats, p.17. W. Page believed that Offa's foundation of the abbey, aimed at getting the 'foreign' wastes of West Hertfordshire settled. Alternatively, he suggested, those unsettled wastes were available for the endowment of the abbey, and that Offa had taken full advantage of an opportunity; 'The Origins and Forms of Hertfordshire Towns and Villages', *Archaeologia*, lxxix (1920), 47-60, 59.
Chescuns k'en sa ovre labure,
Charpenter, macun, verrer,
Chescun sulum sun mester.
Li uns asset, li autre taille;
Cist coupe, cist bat, cist maille,
Cist de hache, cist de martel,
Cist de maillet e de cisel.\textsuperscript{237}

When the rubrics are read alongside the beautifully tinted illustrations, the ringing of hammer and axe on stone, the clinking of the chisel and the cries of carpenters, masons and glaziers can almost be heard. Matthew added a graphic element to the account of the foundation. That his resultant portrayal should be so evocative says a great deal about his ability to envisage the past and his proficiency in communicating that vision.

The \textit{Vitae} injects its fair share of new material into the story of the foundation of St Albans. Responsibility for the idea to found a monastery is removed from the hands of Offa and placed firmly in the lap of divine obligation. Offa I had first promised to found a monastery following the advice of a hermit who had sheltered his exiled wife and sons whilst he had been engaged in war against the Scots.\textsuperscript{238} His failure to found this monastery had resulted in the descent of the obligation through subsequent generations 'until the line of Pineredi, son of

\textsuperscript{237} \textit{Ite} pp.63-64.

\textsuperscript{238} The king of Northumbria had requested his aid. Offa's detention in the north and the adulteration of a letter sent by him to the primates and important men of his realm, had resulted in the exile of his wife and the butchering of his sons. A hermit who stumbled upon the mother and mutilated sons restored them to full health just as Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. He nurtured them, prayed for them and supplied them with food from the forest. Offa returned after two months to learn of disappearance of his wife and children. Angry and grieving, he was consoled by the nobles of the realm who accompanied him on a therapeutic hunting trip. Wandering off alone into the forest Offa stumbled upon the hermit who restored to him his family and requested that he build a monastery or restore an old one by way of thanks; Wats. pp.5-7.
Tninfreth'. 239 Offa II inherited and ultimately fulfilled this obligation. 240 And God had once again shown his favour when he had directed a heavenly light, sweetly fragranced into the little room on the manor of Wineslow in which Hunbert and Unwona had prayed for fulfilment of Offa's plan. 241 Yet the Vitae had also to explain why this fulfillment had occurred at a relatively late date in Offa's reign. The wicked Quendrida surfaces once more to shoulder the blame, it was she who had allegedly delayed Offa's plans to found a monastery. 242

Matthew added a little narrative padding to Roger's pithy account of Offa's gathering of the monastic community of St Albans. Roger stated simply that Offa gathered to the martyr's tomb a community of monks. This had been selected from the most religious houses and over it had been placed the abbot Willegod. 243 Matthew's Gesta provided a rather fuller picture. Like Roger's Flores it claimed that Offa had gathered monks from regions pre-eminent in sanctity. Unlike Roger's Flores it intimated Offa's desire that they live in a reverent and orthodox manner according to the 'institution' and tenor of the rule of St Benedict. 244 The Gesta conveys a stronger sense of Offa's involvement in the practical affairs of the early monastery than any other of Matthew's works.

239 Ibid., p. 7.

240 Using the theme of a royal obligation to found the monastery stemming from the time of Offa I Matthew instantly aged the origins of his house by over half a century. Yet, ironically, by emphasizing the role of Offa II in the foundation of the abbey, Matthew denied it a claim to the greater antiquity to which Bede alludes.

241 Wats, p. 17.

242 Ibid., p. 17: '. . cuius executionem Quendrida iam defuncta, nequiter retardando impediverat...'.

243 Flores i. 257.

244 Wats, p. 22 (GA i. 4).
Offa instituted the celebration of the invention of St Alban. He decreed that new abbots be elected swiftly from amongst the congregation lest the abbey appear destitute of religion and religious men. He aided the abbey's second monk Eadric against certain rebels. According to the Gesta Offa responded to the liturgical, constitutional and defensive needs of the early monastery. The Vitae Offarum supplemented these details with new information. It announced that the early community had been gathered mostly from the house of Bec in Neustria and that it had constituted around a hundred monks. The former proposition is impossible given that the monastery of Bec was founded in the early eleventh century. The latter proposition is not impossible but unlikely given that the average size of a monastic community even in fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was only around fifty. Matthew's accuracy is not really what matters. The clarity of his vision of the past is encapsulated in the details and illustrations that he added to his accounts of the invention, the physical construction of the monastery and the creation of its community. Although little substantive evidence exists for the information which Matthew supplied, that information betrays the richness and depth of his interest in the late eighth century.

Brief mention is needed of Matthew's handling of the endowment and privileging of the early monastery of St Albans. He added little if anything to the version of Roger. The latter stated that Offa gave to the abbey his own vill of Wineslow, 

245 Wats, pp.22-23 (GA i. 5-6, 8-9).

246 Wats, p.19: 'Monachorum quoque conventum, ex domibus ordinatae religionis (maxime tamen ex domo Becci in Neustria) ad tumbam congregavit...'.

247 Todd, 'The Vitae Duorum Offarum', p.26, n.79. Todd believed it possible that the earliest monks did come from a continental abbey. This would make sense of the continental thread that runs through the early vitae of the Gesta.

248 VCH iv. 413 and Williams, History of the Abbey of St Albans, p.244.
some twenty miles from Verulamium and the lands surrounding it. Roger stated elsewhere that Offa had granted 'innumerable lands and possessions'. The Gesta neatly side-stepped the need for particulars when it declared that 'many possessions were bestowed by Offa'. Sensing his approaching death, Offa placed charters of donation upon the altar. This sentence was perhaps inspired by an illustration for Dublin, Trinity College MS. 177 that showed Offa kneeling before the altar, presenting charters to abbot Willegod. The Vitae was no more specific in its reference to the early endowment of St Albans than were Roger's Flores or Matthew's Gesta. Its contribution amounted to a brief sketching of the motives underlying Offa's generosity to the abbey. He hoped, said the Vitae, that he could marry alms and hospitality in that place. For St Albans was accessible to all coming by road from the north and returning to the south, along the road generally called 'Watlingstrate'. It seemed to him desirable that all wandering between should find in that same place a holy resting place on account of his alms. The literary works of Roger and Matthew display a remarkable reluctance to dwell in any detail upon Offa's bequests to the monastery. They fail to mention his grants of Cashio, Stanstead and Hamstead's

249 Flores i. 258.
250 Ibid. i. 257.
251 Wats, p. 22 (GA i. 4).
252 Wats, p. 23 (GA i. 6).
253 f 63r.
254 It is possible that the Vitae makes a vague reference to an alleged grant of Verulamium by Offa; 'having added the mentioned place to the monastery', Wats, p. 19.
255 Ibid., p. 19: Offa gave the abbey many lands and possessions '...considerans, quod ibidem eleemosynarum vigeret hospitalitas'.
256 Ibid., p. 19: 'Et pium ei videbatur, ut omnes intermeantes ibidem pium ex suis eleemosynis, domicilium invenirent'.

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House that are documented in the Liber Additamentorum. They do not even hint at the numerous praedia that Offa conferred on the monastery and that were listed by Matthew on folio 63r of Nero Di. It is possible that the Liber Additamentorum coupled with the cartulary that underlay it, obviated the need for the detailing of such grants in literary works. It is also possible that Roger and Matthew's silence on the matter was simply a revelation of the secure position in which they felt their abbey to be with regards its early endowment.

Just as Matthew had little altered the information that he had received from Roger concerning the endowment of St Albans, so too he made few changes to Roger's account of the privileging of the monastery. Roger evidently believed that Offa had bestowed on St Albans two distinct categories of privilege. First, he had bestowed regalian rights upon Willegod in 793. Offa and later kings said Roger, had presented St Albans with all the temporalities that kingly power was capable of conferring. Second, he had obtained from Pope Hadrian the emancipation of the monastery from subjection to episcopal power.

257 The grant of Winslow that they do mention is printed at CMvi. 4-8. The grants of Cashio, Stanstead and Hamstead's House are printed at CM vi. 1-4.

258 The list extant in Nero D i is headed 'Quoddam sumptum de veteri libro, qui sic incipiit, - "Septem sunt Signacula" and reads as follows: 'Offa rex Anglorum, dedit deo et sancto albano has terras; scilicet, Edelmetunam, Wittelseia, Cagesho, Stanmere, Henhamstude, Wyneshlauia, Bissopescote, Cadenduna, Mildentune.' A second list extant on f 166v brings Offa's donations to a total of twenty two. The estates that Walsingham believed Offa to have conferred included all those named in Nero D i, as well as Rykemaresworth, Bacheworthe, Crokeleye, Michelfeld, Haldenhill, Syret, Enefelde and Byrstane. It omits Edelinetonam and Wittelesiae. It is intriguing that Ethelgifu's will grants to St Albans a place called Offeleam. - LB, f 90r.

259 P. Taylor, 'The Early St Albans Endowment and its Chroniclers' (forthcoming). Despite his adulation of Offa, Matthew could acknowledge that Henry III outstripped Offa in certain aspects of his generosity to the abbey, namely in his donation of palls; CM v. 489-490.

260 Flores i. 257 and 259.

261 Ibid., 258-259.
in a letter incorporated by Roger into the Flores, promised to 'adopt that monastery as a special son of the Roman church and subject it to our apostolic see, without the intervention of bishop or archbishop ('nulla episcopo sive archiepiscopo mediante'). 262 Hand in hand with this emancipation walked the abbot's right to exercise pontifical rights over priests and laity on his church's possessions. The abbot was subject to no bishop, archbishop or legate, except the supreme pontiff. Elsewhere Roger made general references to the privileges and liberties, bestowed by Offa. 263 Matthew's works fail to discuss these liberties and privileges in any greater depth. The Gesta refers only in the vaguest terms to temporalities and royal dignities coupled with spiritualities and ecclesiastical privileges. 264 In the Vitae Offarum, he made little more than stylistic alterations to Roger's account of Offa's quest for privileges. Roger's statement that the king journeyed to Rome so that just as the blessed martyr Alban shone over the English, so his monastery should lead all others in the kingdom in possessions and liberties, Matthew added 'necnon et privilegiis'. 265 Furthermore, Hadrian's claim in the Flores that 'privilegio nostro roborabimus consequenter' became 'privilegio nostro inviolabili gratanter roborabimus et confirmabimus consequenter'. 266 However, in his transcription of this letter into the Vitae Matthew chose to omit the crucial phrase 'nulla episcopo sive archiepiscopo mediante'. He substituted it with the innocuous words 'ab omni

262 Ibid., 256.
263 Ibid., 254, 257 and 258.
264 Wats, p.22 (GA i. 4).
265 Flores i. 254, CM i. 358 and Wats, p.19. This is echoed in Walsingham's Liber Benefactorum, f.3v; '...ac non multo post Romam petiit corporaliter ut sicut temporalibus et regalibus dignitibus hoc monasterium ditavit in anglia. ita illud nobilitaret privilegiis impetratis a sede apostolica.'
266 CM i. 359 and Wats, p.19.
nocivo cuiuslibet mortalium impetu specialiter [episcopo - erased] sive archiepiscopo protegemus. This was perhaps a careless alteration given that the phrase was the very hallmark of grants of immunity from episcopal jurisdiction in the twelfth century. Matthew certainly appears to have appreciated the significance of the phrase for a rubric in the *Vitae*, alongside a section describing the special relationship of the monastery with the Pope, reads 'mediante episcopo'. Elsewhere, the *Vitae* only makes brief mention of the privileges allegedly assigned to the abbey by Offa: 'Locum igitur memoratum coenobio addictum, libertatum multipliciti insignivit privilegio' and a little later 'In presbyteros autem et laicos totius possessionis suae, abbas vel archidiaconus monachus, sub ipso constitutus, ius pontificale exercet, ita ut nulli archiepiscopo vel legato, nisi summum tantum pontifici, subiectionem impendant.' Only the charters penned by Matthew into the *Liber Additamentorum* contain any specific details of the regalian privileges granted by Offa and the papal privileges obtained by him, yet Matthew was not responsible for their content for he had culled them from the twelfth-century St Albans cartulary copied into B. The first charter of Offa, dateable to 793 desired that the king's gift to the monastery '...sit libera omnino ab omni tributo et necessitate, seu regis, seu episcopi, ducis, judicum, comitum, exactorum etiam, et operum quae indici solent, necnon et expeditionis et omni edicto publico...'. The second charter, dated to 795,

267 Ibid., p.19.
269 f.23r.
270 Wats, pp.19 and 20.
271 CM vi. 1-8, B, ff.153r-156r, 167r-168r, 168v-169v.
272 Ibid. vi. 2.
reiterated this wish and in two of its threes copies in the Brussels manuscript and
Liber, it included a lengthy interpolation outlining the abbey's ecclesiastical
privileges, including freedom of the abbey from the intervention of bishop or
minister and from the summoning of its priests to synod or chapter. Neither
could its priests be deprived of holy office. 273 To these charters the Vitae had
made reference:

Unde et ipsa ecclesia, sicut a rege omnia
iura regalia, ita habet abbas loci illius, qui
pro tempore fuerit, pontificalia
ornamenta, et in quantum licet alicui
abbati habere pontificalem dignitatem,
prout tam nova quam vetera instrumenta,
inde obtenta, manifeste protestantur, quae
in hoc libro, videlicet in sequentibus
annotantur. 274

As far as abbots are concerned Matthew seemed eager to stress the full extent
of their privileges. As noted previously, he omitted 'abbas' from Roger's list of
those not immune from payment of Peter's Pence. 275 He also claimed for them
the right to exercise the pontifical dignity. 276 This retrospective campaigning for
the abbot is perhaps ironic given the constitutional struggles between abbot and
congregation that racked the monastery in Matthew's day. 277 The interest in
privileges and liberties is perhaps easier to understand given the insecurity with

273 Ibid. vi. 6.
274 Wats, p.20.
275 Ibid., p.20.
276 CM i. 361 and Wats, p.20.
277 See the Gesta's account of abbot William of Trumpington for example; Wats, pp.74-92
(GA i. 253-310).
which monasteries must have been wracked following the synod of Lyons in 1245. 278 In addition, Henry III's endeavours, between 1255 and 1257, to extort money from monasteries by persuading them to pledge their credit for large sums, gained papal support which effectively overrode previously granted monastic privileges. Abbot John de Cella's resistance was in vain and the abbey was placed under interdict for failing to find the requisite five hundred marks. 279 Roger and Matthew had every reason to be concerned with the abbey's privileges, yet they deliberately backdated the abbey's acquisition of them by some three-hundred years for the abbey had been granted it's first privileges by Pope Calixtus II in 1122. 280 Of the weakness of the abbey's claim to early privileges, Matthew was probably well aware for in the *Gesta Abbatum* Henry II, having examined the privileges allegedly conferred by the charters of former kings, decided that they were of no moment for they lacked a seal. 281 Once again, Matthew's perspective on the past has a peculiarly graphic element.

How did Matthew, a notorious xenophobe cope with the relations of Offa and Charlemagne. 282 It comes as something of a surprise to find him emphasizing

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278 See CM iv. 430-472 for a full account of this council.

279 GA i. 385 and Williams, *History of the Abbey of St Albans*, pp.110-111.


281 Wats, pp.51-52 (GA i. 151).

282 Matthew certainly displayed an interest in Charlemagne elsewhere in his writings; he made an addition to Roger's annal for 773 that dealt with Charlemagne's capture of Pavia, his seizure of Rome and his securing of the right to elect a Pope and invest bishops. Yet his degree of historical accuracy did not always match his degree of interest for he called Charlemagne the younger brother; ibid., p.10 - 'Defuncto, igitur, ut dictum est Carolo, qui cum
the political parity of two kings. A letter of Charlemagne to Offa warning him against troubling or attacking certain English rebel kings, elicited from the Mercian nobles a protective defence of Offa. If Charlemagne were greater than Carloman they said, then Offa II was greater than Offa I. Whole sections of the Vitae are structured around a comparison between Mercian and Carolingian power and they make explicit parallels between Offa I's dealings with Carloman and those of Offa II with Charlemagne. In a second letter allegedly sent by Charlemagne and incorporated in the Vitae Offarum, Charlemagne termed himself 'most powerful king of the Christian kingdom of the East' and his Mercian counterpart, the 'most powerful of the Christian kingdom of the West'. Their equality in every sphere was a concept to which Matthew firmly adhered. It is even possible that in stating that Offa, on return from Wales, was met by nobles and citizens through the distance of many roads, that Matthew intended a parallel with Pope Leo's greeting of Charlemagne at Mentana, twelve miles outside Rome on the occasion of the latter's visit in 800.

fratre suo Carolo, patris sui monarchiam participando dimidiabat, substitutus est ille dictus Carolus natu minor, monarchiae memoratae.'

Ibid., p.10: 'Utquid nos existimat Karolus ignavos et degeneres? vires suas minime formidamus. Qui et si Karolo iam defuncto maior est; et tu rex noster Offa, maior es offano magno tuo praecedessore. Et si ille maximus inter suos, maximus inter tuos coruscabis'. The Vitae contains the letter that the rebel kings of Kent, Wessex, Essex, Sussex and Northumbria had written to Carloman confessing that they had fled to the bosom of his protection, proffering him aid against his enemies and one thousand aureos to underwrite their future friendship.

The Vitae Offarum used the name 'Carolus' when describing both Charlemagne and Carloman. It inherited this confusing trait from Roger's Flores; see, for example, Flores i. 239-240.

Wats, p.14; 'Ego Carolus Regum Christianorum Orientalium potentissimus vos Offane regum occidentalia Christianorum potentissime'. This letter is riddled with the language of political equality; Charlemagne considered it 'decent and expedient that powerful and famous kings be joined by a treaty of friendship....'

B.W. Scholz (transl.), Carolingian Chronicles (Michigan, 1970), p.80 (the Royal Frankish Annals): When he approached Rome, Pope Leo came to meet him with the Romans at Mentana, twelve miles from the city, and welcomed him with the greatest humility and
For Matthew, friendship was a further gauge of equality. He claimed that friendship and trust grew between the two men and that they presented each other with precious gifts. They mutually deferred, their kingdoms grew in strength and their prosperity 'underwent a happy increase'. 287 To Matthew, their friendship was a social embodiment of their equality. This serves in part to explain his desire, apparent in the Vitae, to 'prove' their friendship. He concocted two letters of Charlemagne for insertion into the Vitae and acknowledged that their purpose was the delivery of such proof. 288 Yet he also included in the Vitae a genuine letter written by Charlemagne in 796 and equally suggestive of concord. 289 To prove the friendship between Offa and Charlemagne, Matthew had therefore soldered pure concoction onto a trustworthy documentary base.

Matthew's placing of emphasis upon the equality of Offa and Charlemagne was perceptive for as Simon Keynes has suggested, only a lack of a Life emanating from the circle of Offa prevents us from seeing him on par with Charlemagne or Alfred; 'Changing Faces', p.14.

287 Wats, p.14: '... crevit diatim inter ipsos reges magnificos amicitia: foederat firmabuntur, munera pretiosa mutuo deferebantur, regna utrobique non modicum roborantur, et prosperitas utriusque suspicit incrementum.'

288 Ibid., p.14: the second letter is introduced by the rubric 'Item aliud manifestum argumentum dilectionis et amicitiae, inter Carolum et regem Offam'. There are no earlier sources for these letters and as Todd noticed, there is no material in them that is not alluded to elsewhere in the Vitae; 'The Vitae Durotrum Offarum', pp.47-48. Matthew introduces the second letter with the rubric, 'Item aliud manifestum argumentum dilectionis et amicitiae inter Carolum et regem Offam.' Matthew's eagerness to 'prove' Offa's friendship with Charlemagne was perhaps inspired by William of Malmesbury's claim that he had included Charlemagne's letter of 796 so that the friendship of the two men might be illuminated forever; GR. i. 93. The letter itself is indicative of just such a friendship; 'Between royal dignities and exalted personages of the world the keeping of the laws of friendship joined in the unity of peace and of the concord of holy love with the deepest affection of heart, is wont to be of profit to many. The letter also refers to 'links of love' and the 'ancient pact between us', 'brotherly love'; EHD i. pp.781-782 (no. 197). As was noted above, Matthew made use of Malmesbury's abridged version of the letter. Alcuin wrote to Offa in 796 that '...Charlemagne has often spoken to me of you in a most loving and loyal way and in him you certainly have a most faithful friend.' Ibid. i. 782-785 (no.198).

289 Ibid. i. 781-782 (no.197).
Matthew's itching to eulogize occasionally got the better of him and he appeared consciously bent on proving Offa's superiority over Charlemagne rather than settling for his equality alone. The verses that he added to the margins of the Chronica Maiora celebrated the veneration and fear that Offa inspired in Charlemagne; 'Ense superborum vices reprimens dominatur/Hunc Rex Francorum Karolus timet et veneratur'. Moreover, Offa's kingdom was clearly preferable to that of the Frankish king for Quendrida hoped that she be more blessed in England than in her native country. Many of the veiled criticisms of Offa that Matthew placed in the mouths of the rebel kings in the Vitae served a dual purpose. They allowed Matthew's protagonist to voice replies that were riddled with sentiments of superiority. Carloman, like his successor had sheltered English rebels and offered protection to the kings of Kent, Wessex, Essex, Sussex and Northumbria. Carloman's threatening letter to Offa, advising that he desist from unsettling Britain and subjugating native kings to himself, met with a fearsome reply. Offa declared that he would hostilely attack Carloman if Carloman were to injure him in any way. Not only that, but he would force the king of France to serve him and his kingdom. Offa became a protector of liberties. Offa was equally vehement in his replies to Charlemagne's request that he not attack or harm the rebel kings. He likened

290 See CM i. 348. The same verse occurs on f.65r of Royal MS. 13D v. It is possible that these Latin verses were based on earlier vernacular prototypes; Todd, 'The Vitae Duorum Offarum', p.11.

291 Wats, p.9.

292 Ibid., p.9.

293 Ibid., pp.9-10: 'Et ipsum si mihi iniuriaretur, hostiliter impeterem, et conarer mihi et regno meo, ipsum cogere famulari'.

294 Ibid., p.10. It is interesting that Charlemagne had promised to aid the rebels 'in plenitudine tamen potestatis', language reminiscent of Innocent III. Charlemagne's restoration of Eardwulf
the French king to 'a shoot that has not struck roots very deep'. 295 Matthew could simply not refrain from tilting the literary balance in favour of the political supremacy of Offa in stark contrast to the author of the chronicle in Julius D vii who claimed that Charlemagne had reduced England under his dominion. 296 The veiled criticisms mouthed by Matthew's rebel kings serve a second, unintentional purpose; they communicated Matthew's appreciation of alternative interpretations of Offa's actions, his silent questioning the validity of the impression he had sought so hard to convey; had Offa really 'burst forth in violence' and made 'wolf-like attacks' on other kings of England? Had he hostilely invaded and attacked their majesty presuming to crumble it? Was his strength truly greater than his pride? 297

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295 Wats, p.10; 'Dum enim Karolus ad instar plantule quae nondum radices in altum transmisit robur non accipit, inimicos nostros celeriter conteramus.'

296 Vaughan, 'The Chronicle Attributed to John of Wallingford', p.11. Primary evidence for any kind of supremacy of the Mercian kings over the Carolingians is lacking; in the late eighth and ninth centuries the dominant ideas and ideologies were emanating from the continent and were used and accepted to a certain extent in England. The Carolingian community had become 'the dominant partner in the North West Europe culture interaction zone'; Hodges and Moreland, 'Power and Exchange in Middle Saxon England' pp.83-92. The article highlights four areas in which the English followed a Carolingian lead; in the consecration and anointing of Ecgfrith in 787 that mirrored that of Pepin, son of Charlemagne in 751, in the institution of grand councils of the Mercian kings and ecclesiastical elite (Brentwood 781, Chelsea, 786), that were based on Carolingian reforming synods, in legislation that reflected Carolingian ideologies and in pre-Alfredian architectural expansion of monastic communities that suggested Carolingian influence. See also Wallace-Hadrill 'Charlemagne and England' and by the same author 'Charlemagne and Offa'. Yet Charlemagne could occasionally follow a Mercian lead for two coins struck at Lucca closely resemble coins first minted by Offa; Blunt, 'The Coinage of Offa', p.42. With regards the supposed Carolingian influences at work in Offa's decision to consecrate his son it is perhaps worth noting that Dumville has suggested that Offa of Essex was perhaps associated in the kingship of Essex before the death of his predecessor; D.Dumville, 'Essex, Middle Anglia, and the expansion of Mercia in the South East Midlands', S. Bassett (ed.), The Origins of Anglo-Saxons (London, 1989), pp.123-140, pp.24-25.

297 Wats, pp.9 and 10.
The Carolingian kings were useful to Matthew. He could repeatedly purge Offa of his associations with evil characters in his story by accusing them of conspiracy with Carloman and Charlemagne. The *Vitae*, as has been shown, is the unique source of information that Jaenberht had offered Charlemagne free entry onto English soil. In the same text Quendrida accused Ethelbert of plotting with Charlemagne and she herself, a blood relation of Carloman's was said to have been labouring for the subversion of the kingdom of the Mercians. The *Vitae* attributed Carloman with similar evil motives. Matthew was fond, as we have seen, of offloading onto the Franks deviant historical figures that might have jeopardized the good name of his house and of English history in general. Conspiracy with the Carolingians was a literary metaphor for treacherous wickedness of character.

The odd feature of Matthew's account however, is his apparent desire to whitewash both Offa and Charlemagne in turn. The disagreement between the two that had led to a prohibition of the passage of foreign merchants by both kings had been touched on briefly by William of Malmesbury. He stated simply that they had argued before and that there had been great emotion on both sides. He quoted verbatim the letter of Alcuin that spoke of a certain dissension informed by the devil. Roger reiterated the claims of William, they were

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298 For Matthew's muddling and duplication of deeds attributed to the two Frankish kings see Todd, 'The *Vitae Duorum Offarum*', pp.39-41.


300 Ibid., p.15: 'Ipsas enim puellas filias suas, ultramarinis, alienigenis, in regis supplantationem et regni Merciorum pernicem, credidit tradidisse maritandas'.

301 Ibid., pp.5-6.

302 *GR* i. 91-92 and see *EHD* i. 774-777 (no.192), 775; Alcuin in a letter to Colcu of early 790, made reference to '... a certain dissension, fomented by the devil. [that] has lately arisen 257
mutual enemies, he said, in as much as each had prohibited the passage of the other's merchants through his kingdom. The Vitae's whitewashing of Offa in this context is deliberate and calculated. Following his victory over Marmodius king of Wales, Offa knew that he had to reconcile himself to Charlemagne whom he had vehemently offended. This is the extent of Matthew's discussion of Offa's wrongdoing in the matter. He passes swiftly to Charlemagne's perturbation of the peace and obstruction of the transit of merchants and pilgrims. Following a brief survey of Offa's peacemaking initiative (his solemn messengers, his desirable gifts and his eager pleadings) Matthew included in the Vitae a letter of Offa to Charlemagne. In this Offa accused Charlemagne of being credulous of the words of the English rebel kings. He denounced as unjust Charlemagne's aid of them in their fraud. Although Matthew might not have stated specifically that the agreement had arisen through Charlemagne's support of the rebels, that would seem to be the implication of the Vitae.

between King Charles and King Offa, so that on both sides the passage of ships has been forbidden to merchants and is ceasing.

303 Flores i. 240-241.
304 Wats, p.13.
305 Ibid., p.13.
306 Ibid., pp.13-14. Matthew's description of Offa's peacemaking initiative depended for its inspiration upon Roger's claim that Offa had desired to reconcile himself to neighbouring kings so that he should not have enemies abroad. Roger had in turn used William of Malmesbury (GR i. 91) who asserted that Offa had prepared for friendship with Charlemagne by frequent legation. Yet Offa's peacemaking initiative in the Vitae, introduces a veiled criticism of Charlemagne for Offa asks that the indignation of the Frankish king be restrained by the bridle of reason and kingly modesty.

307 This appears at first glance to be divergent from the primary evidence which suggests that marital arrangements rather than Charlemagne's treacherous activities were the cause of the breach. According to the ninth-century 'Acts of the Abbots of Fontenelle' Offa had refused to marry one of his daughters to Charlemagne's son Charles unless Berta, the daughter of the Frankish king, be given to his own son in marriage; EHD i. 313 (no.20). Matthew made no mention of this, yet his accusations against Charlemagne may not have been misguided. There is plentiful evidence that Charlemagne did indeed harbour English rebels. In a letter to Aethelheard, archbishop of Canterbury and Ceolwulf of Lindsey of 793-796, Charlemagne
Yet Matthew could happily save Charlemagne from an accusation of heresy. The *Vitae* tells how Charlemagne, a most gentle and powerful king, sent to Offa as a sign of affection certain letters containing synodal decrees. There was no hint in the *Vitae* that those decrees were anything other than doctrinally sound. 308

Roger, however, dependent upon Simeon at this point, had suggested that in those decrees had been found many things contrary to the true faith and especially the advice that images should be adored. 309 None of this is present in the *Vitae* where Charlemagne receives a generally favourable treatment. 310

Matthew's enthusiasm with the white paintbrush did not extend as far as Carloman, the relation of Quendrida, who displayed bloodthirsty tendencies offensive to God and choked to death by poison or apoplexy. 311

announced that he was sending them certain English exiles for whom they were to intercede with Offa. Their lord Hringstan, who had fled to Charlemagne had died; 'we kept him with us for some time' claimed Charlemagne, 'for the sake of reconciliation, not out of enmity'. The latter phrase might be indicative of the displeasure Offa felt at Charlemagne's policies in these matters. Charlemagne's letter of 796 suggests that he had given protection to the priest Odberht is most probably to be identified with Eadberht Praen who seized the Kentish throne on the death of Offa. (Brooks made this identification, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, p.114). Moreover, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle suggest that Ecgberht, driven from Wessex by Offa and Beorhtric had sought refuge in Gaul. Eadburga, daughter of Offa fled to the continent after the death of Beorhtric, her husband; Levison, *England and the Continent*, p.113.

308 Wats, p.14: 'Inter caetera vero dilectionis insignia, memoratus Rex Carolus (qui sicut erat regum potentissimus) offano regum occidentalium maximo et piissimo, quasdam transmisit epistolas, cum quibus statutis synodalibus, quasi quaedam catholicae fidei rudimenta, et ad informandum corda aliquorum suorum praelatorum quos rudes creditit et incompositios, et ad amicitiam inter ipsos inchoatam foeliciter perpetuandam. Quae et idem Offa quasi hostiam sibi coelitus transmissam, gratanter et gaudenter suscepit.'

309 *Flores* i. 249.

310 He made no mention of the rumour of a collaboration between Offa and Charlemagne to overthrow Pope Hadrian and replace him with a Frankish bishop, although he may not have been aware of this; Haddan and Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents*, iii. 440-442.

311 Wats, p.10. Matthew was fond of assigning lowly deaths to historical figures for whom he could find no affection. Mohammed had been poisoned whilst drunk and then gnawed to death by a pig. See chapter 4.
Matthew's perception of Offa's political sway will be the final consideration. How large a segment of British soil did Matthew believe that Offa ruled? How many peoples had he conquered? Matthew, like Roger, included in his works lists of provinces subject to Mercian rule. Roger's lists had displayed a slight inconsistency. Under the annal for 586 he implied that Offa ruled over eighteen shires, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Shropshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Oxfordshire, Herefordshire, Staffordshire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. However, a second list included in the annal for 793, numbered those shires at twenty three; it now incorporated Essex, Middlesex, Norfolk, Suffolk and Herefordshire. In other words, Roger had added to the list the kingdom of East Anglia. It is possible that his description of the murder of Ethelbert and Offa's annexation of the kingdom in the previous annal had encouraged him to do so. These lists Matthew copied into his Chronica Maiora. Yet they were not to escape for long the fidgeting pen of Matthew. When he came to add the second list to the first book of his Flores Historiarum, compiled in around 1240-1245, he inexplicably omitted the shire of Bedford in the heartland of the kingdom of Mercia and thus arrived at a sum total of twenty two shires subject to the rule of Offa. This error was perpetuated in the Chronica's annal for 1256, where

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312 Flores i. 92, 257-258 and CM i. 252 and CM v. 563. Also, Wats, p. 20. Despite Roger's grand claims regarding Offa's victories, he still restricted his list to twenty-three shires all North of the Thames and South of the Humber; Keynes, 'Changing Faces, p. 15.

313 Flores i. 92.

314 Ibid., i. 257-258.

315 FH i. 399-400.
Matthew persisted in the statement that Offa ruled twenty-two shires despite having listed at this point twenty-three. 316 A similar list was supplied by Matthew on folio 154v of the Liber Additamentorum. Here Suffolk replaces Southampton, Rutland is omitted and Bedford is listed twice.317 If Matthew's lists exhibit little consistency they suggest that for Matthew, it was the number of shires under Offa's sway rather than their identities that mattered most. Matthew was not concerned about whether Offa had ruled Bedford or not. He had merely to reach a respectable quota of shires.318

Matthew's exploration of the extent of Offa's power took a second form. He indulged in detailed narrative of Offa's military victories. William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon and Roger Wendover had given him something to go on.319 William had commented upon his battle with Cynewulf, king of Wessex. Although he had failed to name the site of the battle, he claimed that the victory had been achieved 'leviter'.320 He had noted also Offa's hatred for the men of Kent. Henry of Huntingdon claimed for Offa the conquest of the

316 CM v. 563.

317 On folio 1r of Vitellius A xx is a circular diagram of the Anglo-Saxon heptarchy, not in Matthew's hand that assigns to the king of Mercia rule over Worcestershire, Cheshire, Lincolnshire, Oxfordshire, Staffordshire, Herefordshire and Huntingdonshire.

318 That Matthew's interest in Mercian political sway was tied up with his fascination with physical geography is made clear in the passage that he wrote onto ff.5r-v of Claudius D vi, the manuscript that contains the autograph Abbreviatio. He supplies the length and breadth of Britain and talks of its division into many kingdoms ruled by diverse 'reguli'. The greatest and most important of these 'reguli' he claimed was the 'regulus' of Mercia and he makes brief reference to Offa. Offa appears next to a diagram of the Anglo-Saxon heptarchy. S. Lewis, The Art of Matthew Paris in the Chronica Maiora (Aldershot, 1987), pp.165-166.

319 Most of the information on battles fought by Offa springs ultimately from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

320 GR i. 84.
people of Northumbria, Wessex and Kent. His *Historia Anglorum* is the first extant text to claim that Offa was victorious at Otford in 776. This is entirely unsubstantiated by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* which is non-committal. The *Chronicle*'s statement that '...the Mercians and the Kentishmen fought at Otford' became the following - 'King Offa fought with the Mercians against the men of Kent at Otford. Great damage having been wrought on both sides the distinguished Offa shone with the successes of war. If Henry had taken a handful of liberties with the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Roger had taken a shovelful with the twelfth-century accounts that he had inherited. Roger claimed victories for Offa over the peoples of Northumbria, Kent, Wessex, Essex and Sussex. His statement that Offa had conquered the 'English nation' rested on a deliberate distortion of Simeon's reference to Offa's victory over the Hastingas. The *Gesta* appears to be drawing on the *Chronica* when it attributes to Offa conquests over the peoples of Northumbria, Wessex, Kent, Essex and East Anglia. Offa, it claimed, put certain bastard kings to flight and powerfully obtained the monarchy of all Albion and the adjacent parts.

The early passages of the life of Offa II in the *Vitae Offarum* constitute a lively exercise in battle reconstruction. Offa is said to have been victorious over the kings of Northumbria, Wessex, Sussex, Kent and Wales. Those kings crushed

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321 *Historia*, p.126. Kirby argues that Offa had no desire to intervene militarily in Wessex or Northumbria. The claim of Henry is however reiterated in the margin of f.23r of Royal MS. 13 E vi.

322 *Historia*, p.126.

323 *Flores*, i. 239-240 and 243.

324 *Wats*, p.23 (*GA* i. 8).

325 *Wats*, p.23 (*GA* i. 8).

correspond with those said to have plotted with Charlemagne. 327 In 776, having summoned and arranged into legions, those who were obliged to fight for him, he attacked the king of Kent.328 The ensuing description of the battle makes use of the multi-purpose battle template that Matthew had employed on other occasions.329 The Vitae's account of Bensington is less detailed; the vicious war resulted in the death of Cenwulf, the threatened downfall of his army and the capture and killing of many of Offa's enemies. 330 The flight of the rebel kings of Northumbria and Sussex to Marmodius king of Wales heralded Matthew's account of Offa's victory over the Welsh king that is unique to the Vitae. 331

327 Although the kingdom of Essex that joined the plot is not said to have been amongst those conquered.

328 Wats, p.10. That Offa drew on men obliged to fight for him is highly likely; Ethelbert of Mercia imposed bridge and fortress work on ecclesiastical estates shortly before 747 and King Offa added army service about a generation later. The earliest genuine reservations of the 'common burdens' occur in Mercian charters. N. Brooks, 'The Development of Military Obligations in Eighth- and Ninth- Century England', P. Clemoes and K. Hughes (eds.), England Before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources Presented to Dorothy Whitelock (Cambridge, 1971), pp.69-84, pp.73 and 76. Brooks also argued that Offa made greater and more regular demands on his noble and free subjects to sustain Mercian military supremacy just as Charlemagne at the same time was emphasizing the universal obligations of all his free subjects and defining their duties more precisely to meet military needs; p.83. During the last few years of his reign Offa, in response to the Viking threat brought Kent in line with Mercia and insisted that all estates, even church lands, contribute men for the army. By 796 all three burdens were obligatory in the Mercian kingdom; pp.778, 79-80.

329 See above p.194

330 Wats, p.11.

331 Ibid., pp.11-13. Matthew's tale is not supported by the primary evidence although there is considerable evidence for English hostility with Wales during the reign of Offa; Offa harried the men of South Wales in 777 or 778 and also in 783 or 784. Welsh annals (Annales Cambriæ and Brut y Tywysogion) record a battle at Hereford between Britons and Saxons in 760; see Kirby, The Earliest English Kings, p.165. According to Kirby the evidence indicated fairly extensive involvement of Offa against the Welsh during the first twenty-five years of his reign. He also suggested that Welsh rulers with whom Offa might have been at war and who possibly ruled in British territory subject to him, could have been among the kings of the Scots who recognized the lordship of Charlemagne. Keynes acknowledged that the details of the campaign against Marmodius may even verge on the historical; 'Changing Faces', p.15. He proposed the possible identification of Marmodius with Maredudd of Dyffed.
Neither army wished to retreat far so Offa built a long, deep ditch and elevated a high rampart against the Welsh. His famous dyke, 'Offedic', was completed according to the *Vitae* in a mere twelve days. The ditch later housed the corpses of those killed in the battle and it was filled in with earth from the rampart. 

The *Vitae* is careful to suggest that the dyke was a defensive structure. Offa, out of caution' and with common consent built the ditch between the two armies and his building of a small church close by named 'offekirke' lends a religious element to his construction of the dyke. Matthew admitted to a defeat that Offa sustained at the hands of the Welsh army; his brave defence had been interrupted by snow and terrible storms and he had been forced to return home in grief and lacking glory. Yet he had come back. The 'warlike basileus of the Mercians' strengthened by the sign of the cross, confidently attacked his enemies. Offa's order that many men, women and children be killed caused the battle plain to be stained with blood. This victory he had achieved in 775 and the *Vitae* acknowledges it as a watershed. His labour and worry were at an end and he needed fear no more attacks upon his kingdom. That the *Vitae* places all Offa's military victories in the first twenty years of his reign is greatly to Matthew's credit; his sense of historical perspective and his partially thematic

332 Wats, p. 13. Asser's *Vita Alfredi*, written in the late ninth-century, attributes this dyke to Offa; it runs from Sedbury cliffs near Chepstow to Treuddyn to link up with Wat's dyke which ends at Basingwerk in North Wales.

333 Wats, p. 12.

334 Ibid., p. 13.

335 Ibid., p. 13.

336 Ibid., p. 13: 'Collata est ititur coelitus haec gloria Offae victoria, anno gratiae sexcentesimo septuagesimo quinto. Ex quibus, annos circiter decem expendit rex in expeditionibus praece dentibus; in quibus, omnes suos contrivit inimicos. Et cum haec victoria, suorum laborum clausula fussit et sollicitudinem, pacis perpetue confirmativa, nec insurgentium aliquorum in circuito regnio sui impetuum, vel mali cuiuslibet machinationes formidaret...'
handling of the reign of Offa caused him to adhere unconsciously to the implications of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. His claim, however, that Offa's conflicts ended in 775 with the defeat of Marmodius is clearly erroneous given that the year 776 witnessed the battle of Otford. The *Vitae* leaves us in no doubt as to the power that Offa wielded with sword and shield. He likened the unconquered army of the Mercians to a rapidly rolling rock destroying everything in its path. 337 This destruction Matthew deemed justifiable. For the purpose of avoiding the suggestion that Offa was prey to overpowering ambition, he conjured up the rebel kings. His victories at Otford, Bensington and Wales and his occupation of certain forts and castles became part of the rightful subjugation of rebels who threatened his supremacy by negotiation with Charlemagne. Offa's expansion of the territory under his control became an act of necessity and not the materialization of a wicked lust for power.338 Thus Matthew's exploration of the military victories of Offa gave some impression of the extent of Offa's political powerbase and the manner in which he had created it.

Matthew appreciated the fact that gruesome battle narratives were not the only method by which an impression of the strength of Offa's military and political grip could be conveyed. He probed the king's personal relationships and the influences that he wielded and pressures he exerted on kingdoms other than his

337 Ibid., p.11.

338 Hence the *Vitae* is careful to suggest that the dyke was a defensive structure; Offa 'out of caution' and with common consent built the ditch between the two armies, ibid., p.12: 'Veruntamen cum nollent vel exercitus regis Offae, vel Wallensium inde procul recedere, rex Offa ad cautelam inter ipsos duos exercitus, communi assensu unum fossatum longum nimum et profundum effodi, aggere terrestri versus Wallenses eminenter elevato, ne fallacium hostium irruptionibus repentinae praecoparetur'. His building of a small church close by named 'offekirke' lends a religious element to his construction of the dyke.
own. He struck terror and fear into the hearts of all English kings claimed the *Chronica Maiora*. So much so that the kings of the Northumbria, Sussex, Wessex and Kent turned to Charlemagne for support in their reluctance to submit to Mercian dominance. Their rebellion was a measure of the hold that Offa had attained. It is clear too that Matthew considered the marriage of Offa's daughters to neighbouring kings a demonstration of Mercian supremacy. A rubric to the *Vitae* reads as follows 'Quomodo pacificatis sibi regibus quos vicerat, tradidit Rex Offa filias suas nuptui duas'. His marrying off of his daughters was considered part of his desire to stabilize the kingdom. In reality Eadburga married Brithric king of Wessex in 787 and Aelflaed married Ethelred of Northumbria. Yet Matthew had no reason to believe that these marriage alliances represented a wielding of Mercian power. Roger is careful to mention the motives these kings had in seeking the daughters of Offa. Brithric wished 'to find more grace with neighbouring kings'. An alliance with Offa was, as Roger implied, beneficial, for it enabled him to expel Egbert, sole survivor of the

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339 CM i. 343.

340 He considered them important enough to be worthy of marginal notation in the *Chronica*, CM i. 354.

341 Wats, p.15.

342 According to the *Vitae* Brithric and Ethelred both married daughters of Offa in 791 although the *Chronica* states that Ethelred married a year later. Matthew seems to have sought a thematic arrangement under rubric headings at the expense of chronological accuracy. It is intriguing that the *Vitae*, named the daughter whom Aethelbert was to marry, as Aelflaed. Aelflaed is said in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (792[794]), to have married King Aethelred of Northumbria. Earlier in the same annal Offa's murder of Ethelbert is noted. Had Ethelred married the daughter originally destined for Ethelbert? The *Vitae* is not the only text to hint at this. There was a twelfth-century tradition that Ethelbert had planned to marry Aelflaed. Gerald of Wales, in his *Life* of Ethelbert, noted the lamentations of the bride-to-be 'Aelfrida' on the death of the king. The Hereford Passio named her 'Aelfthrytha'; James, 'Two Lives', pp.229 and 240.

343 *Flores* i. 247. A few coins of Beorhtric are extant although he may have been cautious enough to wait until the death of Offa before minting them; Stewart, *The London Mint*, p.29 and n.9.
royal line, whom he feared would be an enemy to the interests of his kingdom. 344

It would be a mistake as Wormald suggested to consider the marriages of Offa's daughters as indicative of the extent of his political sway. 345 For one thing, Ethelred of Northumbria had much to gain by his marriage to Aelflaed. Northumbria was plagued by constant civil war. The Bernicians allied with the Picts and Ethelred, a Deiran may have sought in Offa a southern ally. 346

Matthew's interpretation of the marriage of Offa's daughters as nothing other than a revelation of a political fait accompli is deliberate.

The terminology employed by Matthew is indicative of the political status that he believed Matthew to hold. Roger had never called Offa anything other than 'rex Merciorum'. 347 The Vitae terms him 'basileus' on at least two occasions. 348 In the second letter of Charlemagne to Offa the latter receives the title 'regum occidentalium christianorum potentissime'. 349 This is not wholly an imaginative ramble by Matthew, he appears to have believed that Offa truly deserved a title greater than that of simply 'king of the Mercians'. In the Gesta he stated that Offa had obtained the monarchy of all Albion and the adjacent part. In the Vitae he declared that Offa had extended the boundaries of

344 Flores i. 247-248.


346 I owe this idea to J. E. Story who suggested also that the daughter whom Offa had failed to marry off to one of Charlemagne's sons may well have been the daughter who married Ethelred of Northumbria and that Alcuin may have had a hand in arranging this.

347 Flores i. 237-40, 243, 247, 251, 261. In the letter of Hadrian to Offa that Roger included in the Flores, Offa is called 'rex Anglorum potentissime'; CM i. 359.

348 Wats, pp. 11 and 13.

the kingdom of the Mercians in only a short time. Later in the same work he announced that the king had acquired for himself all of Britain ('tocius Britannie'). The legates who arrived in England in 786 were received by the king rather than by the kings, plural, of Roger's Flores. Yet Matthew wished to make plain the modesty of his protagonist and in his attempt to do so, he made an observation of considerable historical insight. 'In all the days of his life', said the Vitae, 'he ordered and decreed himself to be called, just king of the Mercians, in titles of writings, in salutations and reports although he reigned over many kingdoms'. This claim he reiterated on two other occasions in the same work. This is generally borne out by the charters of Offa most of which term him 'rex Merciorum' Similarly, he never called himself anything other than this on his coins Whether Matthew had reached his conclusion by historical method or whether he had conjured it up to suit his 'modesty' theme is unclear although it is important that the two of Offa's charters that he must have seen, those that he transcribed into the Liber, only term him 'King of the Mercians'. Matthew's works betray a conflict between his desire to blindly eulogize and his inability to sever his ties to the source material.


351 Ibid., p. 13.

352 Ibid., p. 13: 'Omnibus diebus vitae suae, se solum regem Merciorum, in titulis scriptorum, in salutationibus, in relationibus (quamvis pluribus praefuerit regnis), se praecepit et constituit nominari', and p. 20: 'Nec censeo, praetereundem, quod tanta fuerit rex Offa humilitatis et modestiae, quod nunquam (quamvis in tantis et tot provinciis regnaret et dominaretur et dominantibus et regnantibus praefuisset), voluit appellari, vel in epistolis vel chartis suis intitulari, nisi hoc solo dignitatis nomine regis Merciorum'.

353 For detailed discussions of the titles bestowed on Offa in his charters see Wormald, 'Bede, Bretwaldas and the origins of the 'gens Anglorum'. He states contrary to Stenton that three charters of Offa for Christ Church that term him 'rex Anglorum' are forgeries.

Explicit historia de Offa rege Merciorum:
fundatore coenobii sancti Albani
Anglorum protomartyris, et eiusdem martyris inventore, et de terra levatore.355

Where the history of King Offa ground to a halt that of the monastery swung into action. Some five folios after the Vitae's 'explicit' in B.L. Nero D i, Matthew's Gesta Abbatum opens with an account of Willegod. That Matthew, in the Vitae, should have reworked to such an extent the Offa material that he had derived from Roger's Flores, is perhaps supportive of our conclusion in chapter one that Matthew effected a similar transformation upon the literary bequest of Adam the Cellarer. Matthew was a man of passionate diligence. His reshaping of the history of the reign of Offa in the Vitae reflects at several points nothing more than an understandable loyalty to a king from whose generosity and initiative he had benefited. It would be unfair to regard Matthew's sometimes inaccurate and prejudiced historical meanderings as evidence in each case of sinister motives at play. As a literary 'document' of the abbey's early endowment, the Vitae is hopeless. It was the sharp edge of Matthew's vivacious interest in the reign of Offa and an uncontrollable historical imagination that chiselled the outline of the lives of the Offas. To Matthew, the past was a malleable inheritance, mouldable public property and he moulded the story of King Offa and his contemporaries in many ways. He deepened and enriched the characterizations of the story's protagonists. Not a single historical figure, whether it be the jealous and tyrannical bastard Beornred, the handsome and sagacious 'elegantissimus iuvenis' Ethelbert or the forlorn and malnourished young Quendrida, fails to emerge from the Vitae, a more eminently

355 Wats, p.21.
comprehensible, tangible and imaginable character. It is true that Matthew's portrait paintbrush is only ever dipped in tins of black and white paint but then history was a drama and it called for personifications of right and wrong, good and evil, heroes and villains. Offa, Quendrida, Ethelbert, Jaenberht, and Charlemagne are actors in a historical tragedy. Yet Matthew's dramatization of the reign of Offa presented him with an awkward dilemma, for it demanded the ritual sacrifice of 'evil' historical figures associated with the founder of his abbey. Matthew circumvented their blackening effect by suggesting that their wickedness stemmed in chief from dealings with the Carolingians; Jaenberht and Quendrida are disposed of in this way. And to make doubly certain that Offa's name was not sullied by his marriage to a murderous and treacherous woman, Matthew 'created' his celibacy. A little unconvincing perhaps given the constant supply of daughters that met the needs, political and otherwise, of neighbouring kings.

Matthew's deepening of characterizations was accompanied by a persistent excavation of causes, motives and historical backgrounds. The lives of Offa and Quendrida are contextualized in an effort to explain in part the subsequent course of historical events. The energy of Offa's rule stemmed from the persecutions and frustrations of childhood. Quendrida's crimes were the inevitable outcome of a life that began in miserable exile on the English Channel. Matthew enriched the historical material with which he worked; details of Offa's military victories, his invention and translation of Alban and his foundation of the house are handled at length and decoratively elaborated. Matthew shrouded Offa with an aura of legitimacy and crowned him with a halo of sanctity. King by hereditary right and election, his victory over Beornred was a sign of God's
favour. Offa was the amicable ecclesiastical pastor, the instigator of Peter's Pence, the founder of the Schola Anglorum, one of the Magi kings.

Matthew was a man at conflict with himself. The historian and scholar, battled with the Benedictine monk of the abbey of St Albans. He could on occasion show a deep and historically accurate appreciation of certain aspects of Offa's reign; his desire to prove Offa's legitimacy paralleled a desire that the king himself had harboured. His assertion that Offa's creation of the archiepiscopal see of Lichfield stemmed from a wish to rearrange the ecclesiastical jigsaw of England need not be so far removed from the truth. Moreover, he reached the conclusion that Offa only ever called himself 'King of the Mercians' some seven-hundred years before this view gained general acceptance. Even his promotion of Offa as the political equal of Charlemagne may not be wholly propagandist. Like Keynes he may have appreciated the fact that it may only be the lack of a contemporary Life of Offa that prevents us from regarding him as the equal of the Frankish king. Yet historical perceptiveness and cogent realism walked hand in hand with blatant endeavours to whitewash. Offa's dealings with Lichfield, and Ethelbert experienced the fervent flickering of Matthew's brush. It was noted too, however, that Matthew possessed the wherewithal to maintain a convincing paralleled degree of consistency in his wanderings from the historical path; his suggestion that Offa had, in 771, conquered the 'East Angles', and not the 'English nation' of Roger's Flores, enabled him to claim subsequently that Offa had bestowed the kingdom of East Anglia on Ethelbert. This in turn set the scene for Quendrida's accusation that Ethelbert had embarked on marriage negotiations with a review to the recovery of the independence of his kingdom. Matthew was clever enough to omit East Anglia from the list of rebel kingdoms.
that requested the aid of Carloman and Charlemagne. His whitewashing in short was blatant yet considered.

Let us return to the scriptorium of St Albans where we began. Matthew can be seen huddled over his desk gathering the details of Offa's life from the pages of Malmesbury, Huntingdon and Wendover. He delights in the details of the journey to Rome, the invention of St Alban and the foundation of the monastery. He shivers at Offa's creation of the see at Lichfield and at his alleged murder of Ethelbert. History, he thought, had done a great disservice to the king who some five-hundred years previously had generously established the monastery in whose scriptorium he was sitting. With the first scratching of quill upon parchment Matthew set out to correct this and with the penning of the 'Explicit' he might reasonably have felt his work to have been done.
Chapter Four

MATTHEW, MOHAMMED AND THE DYNASTY OF WESSEX: THE HISTORICAL PANORAMA

Thirty-two kings of Britain and England, awash with scarlet, purple and ochre inks, stare unwaveringly from the preliminary pages of Matthew's *Abbreviatio Chronicorum*. All occupy a rectangular frame. All perch majestically upon a throne. All demand of posterity equal attention. If Matthew had lavished on Offa in particular an adulation borne of passionate loyalty to his abbey he had retained a broader perspective on British history, a sense of the linear progression of reign upon reign, era upon era, kingdom upon kingdom. Yet the majority of Anglo-Saxon kings, unlike Offa, could stake no claim to a cosy corner in Matthew's historical imagination.

How did those kings who had experienced the misfortune of founding the wrong monastery fare in the works of our monk of St Albans? How extensive, accurate and genuine was his interest in Anglo-Saxon history before and after the time of Offa? How dependent were Matthew's historical endeavours on personal incentives? This chapter assesses the broader state of Matthew's thinking about the Anglo-Saxon past and for purposes of comparison it traverses the English channel and the Mediterranean to dwell briefly upon his additions concerning Mohammed and Pope Leo. Original contributions to the histories and legends surrounding the early kings of England will be sought in vain. Matthew had gleaned most of his knowledge from

1 ff.6r-9v.

2 CM i. 269-272 and CM iii. 344-361. The Leo interpolation occurs on CM i. 366-367.

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the works of twelfth-century historians such as William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon and Florence of Worcester, Ailred of Rievaulx and from Roger Wendover, whose Flores Historiarum had rendered superfluous any desire Matthew may have possessed to embark upon an intricate compilation of annals of early English history. Yet Matthew presented afresh this inherited historical material and it is in his serving of it that traits of a dedicated teacher of history soften the sharper contours of the accomplished and opinionated chronicler of contemporary events. Colourful pictorial and diagrammatic representations of complex features of Anglo-Saxon history decorate the pages of Matthew's works. He communicated the past because he valued it.

That communication was achieved in a number of ways. While he could interpolate historical material into the traditional annalistic framework of Wendover's Flores Historiarum, the basis of the Chronica Maiora up to 1235, he could reproduce it in his own Flores, he could also mould it into Anglo-Norman verse in the opening passages of the Estoire de Saint Edward le Rei, incorporate it into the biographical structure of the Gesta Abbatum and abridge it in the opening annals of the Abbreviatio Chronicorum. In the margins of the Gesta and on a fly-leaf of the Chronica Maiora he penned king lists. 3 In addition, he drew the past in the form of vertical genealogies strung together by pictorial medallions; a royal genealogy from Alfred to Henry III occupies a fly-leaf of the second volume of the Chronica Maiora and two incomplete genealogies preface the

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3 See marginal notes on pp. 22-29 of Wats and footnotes to GA i. 4-41. The Chronica's king list, entitled Nota Regum et Modernum Nomina et Quanto Tempore Regnarunt occurs on fly leaf ir of CCCC 16.
Abbreviatio Chronicorum. The first, on folio 10v of Claudius D vi, begins with Alfred and ends with Edward the Martyr. The second, opens in the middle of a note on Edward the Elder and extends as far as Harold Godwineson. The second is tagged onto the first as if to give the impression that they form a single continuous genealogy from Alfred to Harold Godwineson, although the chronological dislocation at the top of folio 11r betrays the truth. Certain of his genealogies are solely pictorial - the opening folios of Royal MS 14 C vii harbour portraits of William the Conqueror to Henry III and as mentioned above, the Abbreviatio Chronicorum is prefaced by thirty-two royal portraits on eight folios from Brutus to Henry III. It has been suggested that the latter portraits constituted the working sketches for a prolegemenon to the Chronica Maiora that never proceeded beyond the drawing board. In any case, it is worth bearing in mind that Matthew's compilation of genealogies was not wholly innovative; precedents and parallels for pictorial, annotated genealogies are to be found in a manuscript of the Abingdon Chronicle, Cotton, Claudius B vi (1220-1230) and in a manuscript roll in Princeton Library (No. 57) dateable to the middle years of the thirteenth century. Genealogies aside, Matthew encapsulated notions about the early kingdoms of England in three heptarchic

4 CCCC 16, ff.iii-r-v and Claudius D vi, ff.10v and 11r-v.

5 Claudius D vi, f. 11r.

6 Royal MS. 13 C vii, ff. 8v-9r and Claudius D vi, ff.6r-9v.


8 See ibid., p.140. The Princeton manuscript is discussed in J. Hammer, 'A Commentary on the Prophetiae Merlini (Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae Book vii)', Speculum, 10 (1953), 102-103.
The corpus of works upon which an impression of Matthew's attitude to the distant past can be formulated is varied; his versatility is suggestive of the vitality of his interest.

How did Matthew structure the Anglo-Saxon past. With what kinds of historical patterns and framework did he endow it? He displayed considerable interest in the concept of the 'heptarchy', denoting the seven kingdoms of Kent, East Anglia, Mercia, Northumbria, Essex, Sussex and Wessex that were notionally unified under a single overlord. In the brief historical survey that accompanies his heptarchic diagram on fly-leaf iv v of CCCC 26 he echoed Roger's belief that the alleged seven kingdoms of the early Anglo-Saxon period had been created in a single generation. Brutus, the exiled grandson of the Trojan hero Aeneas had had seven sons from whom the seven kings of the heptarchy had traced their descent. Hiscad had ruled the South Angles, Baldai, the West Angles, Beldagio ruled Mercia, Fletegald, Northumbria, Wegday, Deira and Kasere, East Anglia. Although Matthew had partially altered here the details supplied by Roger - his Hiscad of the South Angles replaced Saxnad of Essex and his Mercian kings were descended from Beldagio instead of Frehegeath and his Northumbrian kings from Fletegald rather than Beldagio - he retained the orderly pattern of Roger's account. This kaleidoscoping of Anglo-Saxon political history, this reduction of Anglo-Saxon kingdom formation to a single stroke of

9 Claudius D vi, f.5v and 10v and CCCC 26, f. iv v.
11 Flores i. 346.
the historical paintbrush, resulted in a neat and symmetrical image that could be easily packaged. And package it Matthew did, in the form of three heptarchic diagrams. Two of these diagrams found on fly-leaf iv v of CCCC 26 and f. 10v of Claudius D vi, are annotated. Yet despite their dependence on Wendover's tidy notion of seven kingdoms for seven brothers, their assignation of a number to each kingdom betrays Matthew's belief that they had not, in fact flourished simultaneously. The diagram of CCCC 26, makes plain this belief by labelling Kent the 'primum regnum', Sussex 'secundum regnum', Wessex 'tertium regnum', Northumbria 'quartum regnum', Essex 'quintum regnum', East Anglia 'sextum regnum' and Mercia 'septem regnum'. Matthew lacks consistency, however, for Claudius D vi considered Mercia fourth in the rise to prominence and Essex seventh. That Matthew's system of numbering fails to correspond with the order assigned by Roger to the sons of Brutus shows that it.

12 A similar heptarchic diagram is to be found in B.L. Cotton Vitellius A xx, f. 1r, a manuscript which contains Matthew's hand. The order in which it presents the kingdoms of the heptarchy differs from those presented by the diagrams in the hand of Matthew. The Vitellius order is as follows; Kent, Sussex, Norfolk, Wessex, Northumbria, Essex and Mercia. Unlike Matthew's diagrams it includes brief details on the length and breadth of England. It is orientated towards the south (the others are orientated towards the East) and it comments upon the political sway of each king and the location of episcopal sees within each kingdom. For example 'Rex Cantie qui tenuit Cantibirie et Roucestre et omnes partes illas. Sedes episcopalis erat Kantebire.'

13 f. iv v.

14 There are other differences between these two diagrams. Claudius supplies geographical indicators; to the left of the diagram appear the words 'ad aquilonem, vel septemtrione'. At the bottom Matthew has written 'ab occidente' and to the right 'ab austro'. Both supply additional yet slightly differing information on the kingdoms of Mercia and Northumbria. Claudius refers to the kingdom of the Mercians 'quod est maximum cui prefui Rex Offa'. The Corpus diagram makes the similar statement that the kingdom of the Mercians was that over which the noble Offa had presided. To its mention of the kingdom of Northumbria Claudius appends the statement 'Quod est maritimum et magnum'. Corpus labelled it 'quod fuit amplissimum regnum'. In the Corpus diagram the lobe for Northumbria is larger than those representing the other kingdoms. Matthew sought in this way, visual expression of a feature of the historical past.
was founded on different criteria, that it referred to the different points in time at which Matthew believed the kingdoms to have flourished and that he had broken away from the mythical roles of the sons of Brutus. If Matthew had overridden in part the simplicity of Wendover's concept of the origins of the heptarchy, what had been his sources? He most probably used Henry of Huntingdon who employed the heptarchic scheme in the first half of the twelfth century. Despite his statement that 'quando autem Saxones hanc terram sibi subjugaverunt reges septem statuerunt', Henry clearly entertained the belief that the kingdoms had arisen and flourished at different stages in time for he like Matthew, numbered them.

Primum regnum vocatum est Centi, secundum Sudseax, in quo sita est Ciceastria, tertium westseax, cujus caput erat Wiltonia quae nunc data est sanctimonialibus, in quo sunt urbes Winceastria, Salesburia, et plures aliae, quartum regnum Est Seax, quod non diu duravit, sed caeteris regnis subjugatam est, quintum Est anglie, in quo sunt provinciae quae vocantur Nordfolc et Sudfolc: sextum Merce, in quo est Lincolnia, et aliae complures Nordhumbre, in quo est Eboracum. Postquam autem reges Westseax caeteris praevalerunt et monarchiam obtinuerunt, terras per triginta quinque provincias sibi diviserunt;....

15 Matthew certainly made use of Henry's Historia elsewhere, particularly in the Estoire. His survey of the early history of Britain that accompanies his heptarchic diagram on folio iv v of CCCC 26, echos stylistically and in terms of content, Henry's Historia.

16 Historia, pp.8-9.
He went one further than this numbering for he assigned certain kingdoms with a precise date of origin and often demise. Thus the kingdom of Sussex came into being in 488 and went into decline after 514. 

Wessex was created in 519 and Northumbria in 547. Where he does not supply a precise date, an approximate date can be established on the basis of the point at which he first mentioned that kingdom within the text. The kingdom of Essex arose at some point in the 520s, East Anglia at some point between 571 and 577 and Mercia between 584 and 590. Kent surprisingly receives no mention. Henry proposed the consolidation of the heptarchy within the period of a century and Matthew evidently preferred this version to that of Roger. Henry's outlining of the heptarchy introduced into Matthew's thinking an element of realism that was lacking from the vision of his predecessor. Matthew's numbering of the kingdoms is suggestive of his belief in their fluctuating political fortunes and he openly confessed a sense of the complexity of the heptarchic system as a whole.

In the text that accompanies the non-annotated, diagram of the heptarchy in Claudius D vi he stated that the kingdom of England had once been divided into many kingdoms that were ruled by diverse reguli. War, peace, conjugal treaty, general

17 Ibid., pp.44 and 47.
18 Ibid., pp.47 and 50.
19 Ibid., pp.49, 52-53, 53-54.
20 Although Matthew's gloss of a certain section of the Merlin prophecies included under the annal for 465 is suggestive of his persisting suspicion that all seven kingdoms flourished alongside each other, Merlin had claimed prophetically that '...misfortune will pursue the white one and the buildings of its little garden will be torn down. Seven who hold the sceptre will be killed and perish and one of them canonized.' Matthew considered this to be a reference to the reversion of the kingdom to the Britons who had raised Cadwanus as King at Chester to subdue Eadwine, king of Northumbria. CM i. 200.
vicissitudes and complex time scales he considered obstructive to any attempt at enumerating the successors to various kingdoms and the dates and lengths of their reigns. These sentiments are paralleled in CCCC 26 where Matthew declared that

'Horum successores et tempora
regnorum terminos et dimensiones
difficile est propter eorum confusiones
elucidare regulorum tum propter
eorum diversas aetates, metas,
victorias, vicissitudinarias
occupaciones alternatim adeptas
diversis temporibus et successiones
directas et indirectas.'

The air of baffled resignation with which Matthew confronted the confusing implications of the heptarchic scheme is wholly understandable. That Anglo-Saxon England had ever been tidily parcelled into seven kingdoms, each ruled by a single king is improbable. In addition the notion of a heptarchy obscures the existence of smaller kingdoms such as those of the Hwicci and the Wihtware, and it makes no allowance for the disruptive repercussions of the divisibility of kingdoms and land partition. If Matthew had not, as is likely, appreciated the intricacies of early Anglo-Saxon politics, he had taken the preliminary steps towards the realization that the 'heptarchy' if useful, was inadequate. Yet diagrammatic presentation of it fed Matthew's love of cartography and communicated to his monastic audience, a complicated feature of Anglo-Saxon history in the most economic way possible. If Matthew

21 f. iv v.
22 f. 5v.
23 See Kirby, Earliest English Kings. pp. 4-8
considered the historical synchronicity of the kingdoms to be in
debate, he nevertheless considered them bound to one another by
Christianity; in his non-annotated diagram of the heptarchy, the
hexagonal shapes representative of kingdoms are intersected by pink
church turrets surmounted by blues spires and red crosses. The lower
right hand turret is identified as St Albans. Matthew could justify a
heptarchic scheme on religious if not on historical grounds.

Despite his exasperated protestations that lists of successors to the
various kingdoms could not be easily reconstructed, he battled to
reconstruct them for the Chronica Maiora. At first glance, the king
lists, under the annal for 886 in Luard's edition of the Chronica,
could be taken for the work of Wendover for they are printed in small
type. Wendover had indeed included king lists in this same annal of
the Flores. Closer inspection, however, reveals that Matthew's lists
departed considerably from the versions presented in the Flores. And
this is surprising for by and large Matthew had had the early annals of
the Flores copied verbatim into the Chronica. To begin with, he
changed the order in which the king lists appeared within the text.
Roger had listed the kings of Kent, then Mercia, Wessex,
Northumbria, Deira, East Anglia, Essex and Sussex. Matthew's lists
proceeded as follows; Kent, East Anglia, Mercia, Essex, Wessex,
Sussex, Northumbria, Deira. There is no logic to Matthew's

24 Claudius D vi, f.5v.
25 CM i. 422-424.
26 Flores i. 345-346.

27 In his Flores, Matthew retained Roger's order of kingdoms although when
it came to the content of the lists, he clearly drew upon his own Chronica;
FH i. 464-466. The lists of Matthew's Flores and Chronica are identical with
a few exceptions; the Flores adds Cenulphus before Kenelm in the Mercia
list and adds Offa before Thitila in the East Anglia list.
rearrangement of these lists. They do not follow the numbering of the
kingdoms in his heptarchic diagrams. Nor is there a clear
geographical pattern. They do not follow the order of the king lists
included in the works of Henry of Huntingdon or Florence of
Worcester. Matthew also made substantial alterations to the
contents of these lists. He added kings - Horsus of Kent, Eanic of
East Anglia and Berthferthus of Mercia. As if by way of
compensation he omitted several kings mentioned in the *Flores*. From
the king list for Kent he omitted Octa, Siward and Eadberht Praen.
From the West Saxon list he omitted Quichelmus, from the Mercian
list, Cearlus and Cenulph, from the Essex list, Sexred and Seofrid and
from the Northumbrian list, Redwulf. Many of Roger's elaborations
did not survive into the *Chronica*, Matthew failed to term Sigebert
'Parvus', or Ethelwold 'Moll' and Eadwinus lacked the epithet 'rex
Deiorum primus Christianus'. Simple orthographical alterations
include 'Certicius' for Cerdic, king of Wessex, Aridhunus for
Aldhunus king of Sussex, Kinfridus for Eanfridus king of
Northumbria and Eadricus instead of Aethelfridus, king of Deira. It is
hard to see why Matthew chose to alter in any way the lists in the
*Flores* when it would have been much simpler for him to have copied
them. Even more baffling is the fact that his alterations do not appear
to be traceable to any source in particular. Luard suggested that the
king lists of the *Chronica* were derived from the appendix to
Florence of Worcester's *Chronicon ex Chronicis* Henry of
Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* and the *Libellus de Primo Saxonum
Adventu*. Certain of Matthew's modifications are paralleled in these

28 Historia, pp.64-66. B. Thorpe, Florentii Wigornensis Monachi Chronicon

29 CM i. 422, n. 1.
sources but evidence that he made direct use of any of them at this point is weak. On only two occasions is Matthew found to agree with Henry against Roger Wendover. He shared with the twelfth-century archdeacon the omission of 'et Quichelmus' after Kinegils in the king list for Wessex and the omission of Sexredus after Seber in the king list for Essex. Matthew did not adopt Henry's ordering of the king lists and he could not have depended on him for the later entries in his king lists for East Anglia, Sussex and Essex for Henry provided full king lists for the seven kingdoms only as far as the 680s. Only the lists for Kent, Wessex, Northumbria and Mercia are continued beyond this point in Henry's Historia. Similarly, only two of the variants in Matthew's king lists occur also in the De Primo Saxonum Adventu. Both texts omit Siward from the Kent king list and both insert an extra king between Theodoricus and Ethelfridus of Northumbria, if the De Primo's Eathelricus is synonymous with Matthew's Eadricus. Several more of the changes effected by Matthew, some six in total appear to have been derived from the appendix to Florence of Worcester's Chronicon. Matthew agrees with Florence in substituting an Ethelbert of Kent for an Eadbald and both omit Siward after Wihtred. Both insert a King Eorpwald after Redwald of Mercia and both omit Cearlus from this same list.

Matthew agrees with both the De Primo and Florence's Chronicon

30 Ibid. i. 423, Historia, p.65, Flores i. 346 and 348-349.
31 Historia, pp.64-67.
32 Ibid., pp.134-137 and 171-172.
34 Thorpe, Chronicon, i. 248 and 251-252.
in the addition of a King Ethelric after Theodoric of Northumbria and his transformation of Roger's Ethelredus of Northumbria into an Ethelbert may well be dependent upon Florence's 'Aethelred qui et Ethelbert'. So although the king lists of the Chronica occasionally mirror each of the sources mentioned by Luard the vast majority of Matthew's modifications remain unaccounted for. Furthermore, the notion that Matthew made direct use of these three sources conjures up the improbable scenario that he flitted between the three selecting a few entries from each for inclusion in his lists. It is rather more probable that he employed a wholly different set of king lists.

Little improvement upon the historical accuracy of the king lists of Roger's Flores was achieved by Matthew. The lists for Wessex and Sussex are the most accurate. Yet a large number of kings who are documented elsewhere fail to make an appearance in the other lists; Octa, Suaebhard, Oswin, Ealhmund and Eadbert Praen of Kent, Hunbeanna, Alberht, Eadwald, Athelstan, Ethelweard, Beorhtric and Ethelred of East Anglia, Ceolwulf II of Mercia, Saeward, Sigeberht I, Sigeric and Sigered of Essex, Redwulf of Northumbria and Osric and Oswald of Deira. The historical accuracy of these lists, the dependability of Matthew's historical heritage leaves much to be desired. Yet, even had Matthew known this, he would probably not have suffered agonies of scholarly frustration. Although he had himself confessed to finding difficulty in constructing the lists, what really mattered to him were not the niceties of early Anglo-Saxon dynastic politics but the sense of linear motion through history, the death of one king and the succession of another. He did not mind if

35 CM i. 423, Arnold, Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia, ii. 374 and Thorpe, Chronicon, i. 254.
that air of smooth historical progression could only be replicated on
the page by his moving rapidly from kingdom to kingdom in pursuit
of kings linked by nothing more than their dates of death and
accession. In an endeavour to anchor in time the early abbots of St
Albans, Matthew incorporated in the margins of the *Gesta Abbatum* a
king list. These kings were drawn from no single dynasty. A king
Aethelwulf is made to follow Ecgfrid of Mercia although his identity
is uncertain. If the Aethelwulf of the *Gesta* is to be equated with
Aethelwulf of Wessex then the logic of the first few entries in the
*Gesta*’s king list becomes apparent. Aethelwulf died in 855. The next
king to be noted, King Edmund of East Anglia, succeeded to the
throne in that year. Edmund died in 870. Alfred became king of
Wessex in 871 and he is the next to appear. All that kings
Aethelwulf, Edmund and Alfred possessed in common were dates
that might link them together in a chronological chain. 36 Time was a
river, kings were the stepping stones and it did not matter that those
stepping stones were hewn from different rock for you might cross all
the same. The early kings of the *Gesta* margins were historical
stepping-stones, traversing the sparsely documented first half of the
ninth century. Matthew’s approach to the Anglo-Saxon kings in the
*Gesta* conveyed more effectively than any number of complicated
dynastic genealogies a sense of motion in time and geographical
space.

36 Matthew showed the same tendency to link chronologically kings of
different dynasties at *CM* i. 362; 'Mortus autem Ecgfred rege Anglorum
regnavit Eadbertus, qui et Pren. tribus annis, et captus est et abductus a
Kenulpho'.
Although Matthew had constructed his framework of the past around a broad chronological survey and diagrammatic representation of the kings and kingdoms of the heptarchy he did not indulge in a great deal of fleshing out. He was not a William of Malmesbury. He depended heavily on Roger's *Flores* and the works of twelfth-century monastic historians to supply him with material that he might absorb and rework. He knew most about, or perhaps communicated most about the West Saxon kings. On a flyleaf of CCCC 16 he listed twenty-three kings of Wessex from Ine to Edward the Confessor and assessed the length of each reign.\(^{37}\) His overall accuracy is remarkable; the reigns of four kings are accurate to within days. Matthew stated that Aethelstan ruled for fourteen years and seven weeks. In fact, he ruled for fourteen years and fifty-three days from 4/9/925-27/10/939. Matthew was a mere four days out. He rightly proclaimed the length of the reign of Edmund Ironside to have been six years and six months and the lengths of the reigns of kings Aethelheard and Ethelbert he gauged with a similar degree of accuracy. Accurate to within a year were the figures he gave for the reigns of Ine, Cynewulf, Beorhtric, Edred, Harald and Hardecnut. The reigns of Cuthred, Edgar and Ethelred were several years out. Matthew made a serious misjudgement in only three cases. Sigeberht, king from 756-757, he claimed to have ruled for thirteen years. He attributed a reign of similar length to Edwius who was king, in fact, for only three years and ten months from November 955 to October 959. Cnut he believed to have reigned for some thirty-four years instead of nineteen.\(^{38}\) If the reigns assigned to the various kings are

\(^{37}\) f.1r.

\(^{38}\) Alfred and Edward the Elder are not assigned a figure.
generally accurate, the list itself is not free of historical muddles for
King Beorhtric appears twice, before as well as after Cynewulf. 39
Matthew's omission of Egbert is surprising given Egbert's role in the
consolidation of West Saxon kingship. His omission of Edward the
Martyr is equally surprising yet perhaps explicable on the grounds
that later tradition had indirectly implicated Ethelred, benefactor of
the abbey of St Albans in Edward's murder, by accusing his
stepmother of the wicked deed. 40 Why Matthew should here omit
Edward only to openly declare his murder by Ethelred's stepmother in
his genealogical histories is, however puzzling. 41 Accuracy aside,
Matthew's interest in the descent of the kingship of Wessex extended
beyond listings in the Chronica, for he made reference to it in his
Estoire de Saint Aedward le Rei.

From King Alfred, the holy, the wise
Was Saint Edward sixth in descent
If to the direct line of birth
From father to son you pay attention
If of reigning kings you take account
Edward is the tenth who now ascends
Which is the number of reigning kings
Kings rightful and conquerors
From sons and also from brothers
From King Alfred to Edward. 42

39 That they are one and the same Beorhtric is suggested by the fact that they
are both said to have reigned for seventeen years.

40 The accusation appears to have been earliest made by Eadmer in his Vita
Sancti Dunstani, in W. Stubbs (ed.), Memorials of Saint Dunstan (Rolls
Series, 1874), p.215. Ethelred's mother had certainly not been accused at the
time. No-one was punished for the crime although, Aelfhere of Mercia did

41 CCCC 16, f.3r and Claudius D vi, f.11r. The matter is not however,
mentioned on Claudius D vi, f.10v.

42 Estoire, ll.107-116.
This he culled from Ailred's *Vita* which explains perhaps why its positioning of Edward sixth and tenth in descent is not supported by Matthew's list in CCCC 16.43

Matthew's investigation of the deeds of the West Saxon kings and his gauging of their personal attributes were geared primarily towards constructing the neat little passages that accompanied his genealogical diagrams although occasionally, he allowed himself some leeway. Matthew's thoughts on Alfred were too many to allow of concise verbal expression. He would have been familiar with Wendover's account of the king, based on seven sources, some of which he had direct access to; William of Malmesbury's *De Gestis Regum* and *De Gestis Pontificum*, Florence of Worcester's *Chronicon ex Chronicis*, Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum*, the *Vita Sancti Neoti*, Simeon of Durham's *Historia Regum* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.44 Matthew would also have read the highly favourable account of Alfred in Ailred's *Genealogia Regum Anglorum* for he made considerable use of this source in his historical introduction in the *Estoire*.45 He may also have read the account of Alfred's reign in the chronicle of early English history included by

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43 J. P. Migne (ed.), *Beati Aelredi Abbatis Rievallensis Opera Omnia, PL cxcv* (1885), *Vita Sancti Edwardi Regis*, cols. 740-741. (Henceforth *Vita.*)

44 *Flores* i. 318-367. Roger does not appear to have made direct use of Asser's *Vita Alfredi*. He did, however, add plentiful new material of his own. He claimed, for instance, that the conspiracy of Aethelbald, Alstan bishop of Sherbourne and Eanwulf earl of Somerset had been partly due to the fact that Alfred had been crowned king at Rome. He also suggested that Alfred's writing of a book of Saxon poetry had been inspired by his belief that an illiterate king is no better than a crowned ass, *Flores* i. 290-291 and 320.

45 *PL, cxcv* (1885), cols. 711-738. See *Estoire*, p.xxiv (quoting the findings of G. E. Moore, *The Middle English Verse Life of Edward the Confessor* (Philadelphia, 1942), pp.xlviii-xlxi; ll.107-124, 131-139, 358-399 and 155-357 are taken from the *Genealogia*).
John of Wallingford in his historical miscellany extant as B.L. Cotton MS. Julius D vii. The chronicle contains a full account of Alfred's lusty youth, his conversion by Neot, his burning of the cakes and his military escapades and it is novel in its claim that Rollo journeyed to England to aid Alfred against the Danes.47

He liked Alfred. Alfred was illustrious, holy, and most eloquent. He was 'pacificus' and a lawgiver.48 'Alfredus sapiens' was a second Solomon. He wrote books of wisdom in his own language so Matthew tells us.49 One of Matthew's four portraits of the king, extant on f. iii r of CCCC 16 shows him holding out just such a book, whether of laws or vernacular learning is unclear. Despite his scholastic tendencies and love of peace, Alfred had achieved sole monarchy over the English.50 On folio 65v of CCCC 26 a circular bas-de-page picture of Alfred shows him holding a scroll that reads

46 ff. 10r-33r.


48 CCCC 26, f. iv v.

49 CCCC 16, f. i r.

50 Lewis considered Matthew to have undertaken a dual portrayal of Alfred in the illustrations to the Chronica. The picture on f. iii r, she claims, portrays him as an active ruler and celebrates a stable, civilized kingdom through Alfred's revival. The other pictures (Claudius D vi, f.10v and CCCC 26, f. iv and 64v) she suggests, show him as a static frontal effigy, symbolizing the newly consolidated power of the heptarchy; Lewis, The Art of Matthew Paris, p.171 - 'Thus, within the expanded range of three royal portraits Matthew has shifted his conception of Alfred as an abstract personification of Saxon monarchy in MS. 26 to a more human and accessible interpretation in MS. 16 as a great lawgiver.' Matthew would probably have derived his emphasis on Alfred's sole monarchy from Roger's Flores. Under the annal for 886, Roger describes how Alfred had obtained sole monarchy over England. Alfred besieged London 'ubi omnes Anglorum nationes ad ipsum confluentes subjectionem fecerunt.... Rex itaque Alfredus omni deinceps tempore vitae suae monarchiam totius regni Angliae aedeps est praeter illas regionis partes, quas sibi subjugaverat barbarica gens Danorum...'; Flores i. 345.
'Primus in anglia regnavi solus'. 51 Sole monarchy was the necessary prerequisite for the status of 'protomonarchus anglie' that Matthew unlike Roger had striven so hard to attach to Alfred. Alfred's bust dominated the heptarchic diagrams of both CCCC 26, f iv v and CCCC 16, f.i. He had, according to Matthew consolidated the heptarchy and in CCCC 26, f.iv v Matthew emphasized this by joining the central portrait of Alfred to each of the seven lobes by means of seven thin strips. Alfred was the beginning of the history of English kingship. He was to West Saxon royal genealogy what Woden had been to all earlier genealogies, namely the anchor, the starting point. Roger Wendover had traced Alfred's descent from that most obscure of ancestors, God. If Alfred was to Roger a culmination, to Matthew he was a beginning. 'Alfredus primus monarchia anglie a quo incipit genealogia orbiculata' reads the inscription accompanying the bas-de-page portrait on folio 65 v of CCCC 26. In Claudius D vi Matthew felt justified in placing Alfred at the beginning of his lineage of kings and likened him to a root. 52 In short, Alfred was great. A note penned by Matthew into the margin of the Gesta Abbatum does indeed term him 'Magnus', and constitutes the earliest known reference to him as such. 53

51 Lewis suggests that this refers to Alfred's later accession to the English throne in 886AD. She also proposes that this format and inscription of Matthew's circular picture suggests that he modelled it on Alfred's seal or a lost Anglo-Saxon prototype. For it is in Alfred's time, she argues, that the working of a royal treasury and seal are first heard of, although no examples of seals survive from before the time of Edward the Confessor: The Art of Matthew Paris, pp.166-168. Matthew's Flores also terms Alfred first monarch; FH i. 465.

52 f. 10v; 'Unde non sine causa ipsum inicum stirpis regie quasi radicem duximus ordinandum'.

53 GA i. 10 (V, f.30v, next to the beginning of the account of abbot Wulsig) 'Rex Alfredus magnus.... Hic, meritis exigentibus "magnus" dicetbatur'. This observation was first made by Dr Simon Keynes and it runs counter to the suggestion in S. Keynes and M. Lapidge, Alfred the Great (Harmondsworth, 1983), p.44. that the earliest reference to Alfred's epithet 'the Great' occurs in
That Matthew should have assigned Alfred so prominent and so pivotal a position in English history is interesting enough. He must consciously have ignored Ailred's assignation of the 'protomonarchy' to Egbert in the *Genealogia*. More intriguing still is that he should have deprived Offa of the status for he had suggested in the *Gesta Abbatum* that Offa like Alfred had achieved dominion over all the territory of the English. Yet Alfred had something that Offa did not. A note in Matthew's hand on folio I Ov of Claudius D vi explains why Offa was not a worthy recipient of the accolade 'protomonarchus anglie'.

And if King Offa freed Britain from all princes, so that he alone appeared to rule all Britain, nevertheless this Alfred was said to be protomonarch of England, for he was crowned and anointed by Pope Leo and held in peace all the kingdom of England.

the sixteenth century.

54 *Genealogia* cols. 717-718 - 'Ab Ingles vero linea cognationis tuae tenditur usque ad Ebrictum, qui tantae fuit probitatis, et universam Angliam ex Australi parte Humbrae, quae pluribus regibus catenus divisa subjacerat suo subjugaret imperio, et ita primus omnia monarca Angliae dicitur'. Simeon of Durham had assigned the protomonarchy to Aethelstan; 'In his praecriptis regibus dividebatur antiquitus Angliae totius regnum ab incarnatione Domini anno CCCXLVIII usque regem Eathelstanum qui primus monarchiam regni Angliam obtinuit'. See Arnold, *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, ii. 380 and also p.372. If as Luard believed, the De Primo was used in construction of Chronica's king lists (*CM* i. 422, n.1) then we have to believe that Matthew ignored Simeon too).

55 *GA* i. 7-8 where it is stated that 'Offa 'obtained the monarchy of all of Albion and the adjacent part'. However, Matthew could also be realistic about the extent of Offa's sway; in the Chronica's annal for 1256 he could confess that Offa had 'held alone almost all the monarchy of the English region'. *CM* v. 562. See chapter three, p.268.
Likewise, in CCCC 26 Matthew notes that Alfred was protomonarch and first to receive from Pope Leo (IV), the prominence of sacred unction for the kingly dignity. The *Estoire* also makes this claim. 56 The portrait of Alfred on folio 10v of Claudius D vi shows him raising a crown and vial to represent his coronation and anointing by Leo. For Matthew, holy anointing and coronation were the crucial qualifications for the protomonarchy and in his belief in their significance he echoed, if unconsciously, those most contemporary of sources for Alfredian Wessex, Asser's *Vita Alfredi* and the *Anglo Saxon Chronicle*. 57 Offa had attained a political sway comparable with that of Alfred and according to Matthew, Offa, like Alfred, had journeyed to Rome. Yet he had not received a papal coronation and so could not be named protomonarch. Matthew might so easily have bestowed upon the founder of his house the title of protomonarch of the English. 58 It says something for his historical integrity that he refused to do so.

What did Matthew make of later kings of Wessex? It is from the time of Alfred that his treatment of them becomes consistent. He had coped with the late seventh to ninth centuries by swinging between the historical beacons of Ine, Offa and Alfred and bypassed the intervening decades with the words

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57 See Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, p. 69 and p. 232 n. 19 and ASC 'A' (853). Matthew's sensitivity to the concerns of the period he is describing is demonstrated also in his handling of Offa; see chapter three, passim.

58 Moreover he clearly considered Mercia to have been the greatest kingdom for he said as much in his heptarchic diagrams of CCCC 26, f. iv v and Claudius D vii, f. 10v.
Matthew was clearly concerned to disguise his ignorance even though a hiatus in contemporary source material for the early ninth century makes his ignorance justifiable. With regards the kings of the tenth century he stood on more certain ground. His knowledge of them he channelled largely into his genealogical diagrams and into interpolations in the *Chronica*. From which source or sources had Matthew derived this knowledge? With which materials had he constructed his vision of English history in the tenth and eleventh centuries? Matthew presented that vision in so brief and impressionistic a form that the tracing of his use of a particular source at any point is extremely difficult. The details that Matthew possessed and ultimately suggest an acquaintance with a wide pool of sources, rather than exclusive familiarity with a single work. Matthew was widely read and his resultant general knowledge provisioned his genealogical diagrams and historical excursions. Much of the information that Matthew supplied for Edward the Elder and Edmund I, for example, he might have derived from several sources to which we know he had access. His assertion that Edward was inferior to his father in wisdom yet more glorious in power and

59 CCCC 26, f.iv v. Inc receives only passing mention in CCCC 16, f. i - 'Yne rex magnus inter antiquos regnavit in britannia annis xxxvii'.

60 The author of the chronicle included by John of Wallingford in B.L Cotton MS. Julius D vii was perceptive in commenting upon this hiatus; see introduction, p.17 and n.73.
dignity echoes both in substance and style the similar claims of Florence of Worcester, William of Malmesbury, Ailred of Rievaulx and Roger Wendover yet not one of these texts has any greater a claim than the rest to be Matthew’s source. 61 Matthew’s claims that Edward ruled for twenty-four years and that he repelled and utterly defeated the Danes might also have been drawn from any of these sources. 62 Similarly, he might have reached a logical conclusion that Edmund was miserably killed on the basis of the tales of martyrdom told by Florence, William, Henry and Roger. 63 The decapitation of Hardecanut’s corpse and its jettison into the Thames, noted in Claudius D vi, f. 11v, the Estoire and the Abbreviatio was likewise the stuff of popular history. 64 Matthew stated that Hardecanut’s father, Cnut, had not worn a crown. 65 Had he culled this from Roger’s lengthy tale of Cnut’s failed attempt to turn back the tide or had he returned to Roger’s source, the Historia of Henry of Huntingdon? 66 He condemned Edwiu for his powers of seduction. 67 This is scarcely surprising when Roger had relished in the gruesome details; Edwiu, it seems, had a penchant for mothers and daughters

61 Claudius D vi, f. 11r - 'Hic patre fuit inferior sed potencia et dignitate gloriosor'. Thorpe, Chronicon, i. 117 - 'Huic filius successit Eadwardus, cognomento senior, litterarum cultu patre inferior, sed dignitate, potentia, pariter et gloria superior...'. GR i. 135 - 'litterarum scientia multum patre inferior, sed regni potestate incomparabiliter gloriosor'. Flores i. 367; 'Eadwardus, Alfredi regis primogenitus litterarum cultu patre inferior sed potentia pariter et dignitate gloriosor regni Angliae est diademate insignitus'.

62 Claudius D vi, f. 11r.

63 Ibid., f. 10v, Thorpe, Chronicon i. 398-399, GR i. 159-160.

64 Estoire, II 496-499. AC, p. 165.

65 Claudius D vi, f. 11v.

66 Flores i. 472-473. Historia, p. 159.

67 Claudius D vi, ff. 10v and 11r.
and following his anointing had rushed from the dining table to indulge in lascivious frolickings between two women, having first cast his diadem negligently aside. In such a sordid state he had been discovered by Dunstan, who admonished the lewdness of the women and dragged Edwiu back to the royal table by the scruff of his neck. Yet this tale was narrated by William of Malmesbury in the Gesta Regum and Ailred spoke vaguely of Edwiu’s sexual misdemeanours in the Genealogia. Matthew might have employed any of these sources. On this occasion he most certainly did not make use of Henry’s Historia for this text is relatively favourable to the king. Matthew praised Edmund Ironside’s repulsion and defeat of the Danes, yet again, no single source is indisputably the origin of Matthew’s statement. The information that found its way into Matthew’s diagrams and interpolations was the product of a historical consciousness that had fed steadily upon a rich diet of twelfth- and early thirteenth-century texts.

Matthew, most certainly, made use of sources other than Roger's Flores in his surveys of the West Saxon kings. In two cases, details given by Matthew in his genealogical chronicles and not found in the Flores are traceable to Ailred’s Genealogia. His claim that Edward the Elder founded the monastery of St Peter at Winchester is missing from the Flores and is even contradicted by William of Malmesbury’s

68 Flores i. 404-405.

69 GR i. 163 and Vita, cols. 725-726.

70 Historia, p. 163; 'Rex autem praedictus Edwi non illaudabiliter regni infumam tenuit. Edwi anno regni sui quinto, cum in principio regni ejus decentissime floreret, prospera et laetabunda exordia mors immatura perrupit.'

71 Claudius D vi, f. 11v.
Gesta Pontificum and Florence’s Chronicon. Yet Ailred had previously voiced the opinion that Edward ‘novum monasterium Wintoniae fundavit’. Similarly, Matthew’s claim that Edmund thoroughly extirpated all foreigners is uncannily close in sentiment to Ailred’s statement that ‘Purgato autem ab alienigenis regno, et sibi in omni parte subjecto, monasteriorum et ecclesiarum maxime curam habuit....’ Matthew’s attack on Edwiu for ruining the church would not have been justified had he merely read Roger’s Flores which suggested only that Edwiu had consented to the plundering of the property of the monastery of Dunstan by his mistress Algiva.

William of Malmesbury’s account in both the Gesta Regum and the Gesta Pontificum of Edwiu’s persecution of monks throughout England and his anger with Dunstan most probably shaped Matthew’s mental image of the king as an enemy of the church. William’s works might also have spawned Matthew’s praise of Edgar as an executor of justice although so too might Ailred’s.

Furthermore, if Matthew, unlike Roger had displayed a favourable attitude to Ethelred, so too had Florence. Matthew’s assignation

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72 Ibid., ff. 10v and 11r. All that Roger claims is that Edward’s mother founded a monastery of nuns in Winchester; ‘Eodem anno religiosa Christi famula regina, mater Edwardi regis, quae monasterium Wintoniae construxerat sanctimonilaum, ex hac luce migravit’; Flores i. 371. William of Malmesbury’s Gesta Pontificum refers to the foundation of a monastery at New Minster by Alfred and its rebuilding as Hyde abbey in the reign of Henry I, p.174.

73 Vita, col. 723.

74 Claudius D vi, f.10v and Vita, col.725.

75 CCCC 16, f.iiir. Flores i. 405.

76 GR i. 163 and GP, pp.24 and 403.

77 Claudius D vi, f.11r. GR i. 176-177 and Vita, col. 727.

78 See below, p.301, n.96.
to Cnut of the diplomatic style ‘King of the English, of the Norwegians, of the Danes, of the Scots, of Sweden, lord’ if not the result of Matthew’s first hand acquaintance with a charter of Cnut’s, probably owes its formulation to claims made by Henry and Florence as to the extent of Cnut’s dominion. The latter described him as ‘rex totius Angliae et Denemarcae et Norreganorum, et partis Suanorum’. According to Henry ‘Erat enim dominus totius Daciae, totius Angliae, totius Norwagiae, simul et Scotiae.’ Roger makes no such claims. The contribution of texts other than Roger’s Flores to Matthew’s accumulated pool of historical knowledge is much apparent.

At the end of the day however, the Flores constituted a vast reservoir of information about the Anglo-Saxon past and Matthew tapped it frequently. In some cases, details supplied by Matthew could have been derived from no other source. His mention in the Claudius genealogy, of Edmund I’s conflict and ultimate settlement with Olaf of Norway cannot have been inspired by Ailred, William, Henry or Florence for they failed to note them at all. Roger however, described them in some detail. Matthew’s suggestion that Aelpege flourished in the time of Edred is again dependent on Roger. Moreover, Matthew in line with Roger assigns Edred a

79 Thorpe, Chronicon, i. 185-186.
80 Historia, p.188.
81 See also R.Fritz, Über Verfasser und Quellen der Altfranzösischen Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei (Heidelberg, 1910), p.40.
82 Claudius D vi, f.11r.
83 Flores i. 395-396.
84 Claudius D vi, f.11r and Flores i. 401.
reign of ten years despite the fact that William of Malmesbury assigned him a reign of nine and a half and Henry, a reign of seven.\textsuperscript{85}

It is clear that in several cases Matthew opted for the Roger's version over and above those of the twelfth-century historians. This notion, coupled with the fact that most of the information given by Matthew is to be found in some form in Roger's \textit{Flores} heavily suggests that the latter work had constituted the starting point of Matthew's acquisition of knowledge concerning the Anglo-Saxon kings. This knowledge he supplemented with material derived from other sources, piecing together the historical jigsaw of the past.

Matthew did not always tap the written sources and neither did he always listen to the rumblings of his historical memory. He was ever the tactician and clever omissions underline his capacity for moulding and whitewashing the distant past that he demonstrated too in his handling of Offa. From his gallery of thirty-two kings painted on the opening folios of Claudius D vii, he carefully left out portraits of the stepbrothers Harold and Hardecnut who ruled after the death of Cnut from 1035-1042. He passed directly instead to Alfred, son of Ethelred and Emma who had crossed the Channel in 1035 to claim the throne only to be blinded by Harold and exiled to Ely.\textsuperscript{86} In the \textit{Estoire} Matthew voiced his belief that Harold had had greater right to the kingdom than the sons of Cnut and in Claudius D vi he had endeavoured to depict pictorially his preferred course of historical

\textsuperscript{85} Claudius D vii, f.10v. \textit{Flores} i. 403-404. GR i. 162. Historia, p.163.

\textsuperscript{86} Matthew seems to have had a particular interest in Alfred whose death he recounts in great detail in the \textit{Estoire}; II.414-489. It is intriguing that Ailred has nothing to say of Harold or Hardecnut in his \textit{Genealogia} although this was probably not the reason for Matthew's omission of the two kings.
events. Matthew might also be accused of selective myopia in his failure to mention Aethelstan's alleged founding of Middleton and Muchelney. We might have expected him to have singled out these details for comment since he paid particular attention elsewhere to the association of kings with monastic foundations. Yet Matthew had good reason to pass over the foundation of these monasteries in silence for they were not physical manifestations of blameless piety but means of repentance for murder. Aethelstan had cunningly removed the legitimate heir to the throne of Wessex. Ethelred's decree that all Danes in England be massacred on St Brices's Day in 1012 was also carefully sidestepped when Matthew came to compile the historical introduction to the Estoire. Matthew's selective editing of his historical vision aimed at the eradication of details unfavourable to those most Christian kings of Anglo-Saxon England.

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87 Estoire, II. 416 and 419.

88 Flores i. 392-393.

89 Both in Claudius D vi and in Royal MS. 14 C vii certain kings, Offa, William the Conqueror, William Rufus Henry I, Stephen, Henry II etc are shown balancing their monastic foundations upon their laps. As has been shown, the whole raison d'etre of the Vitae Offa is to stress Offa's association with the foundation of St Albans.

90 It is worth noting that on folio 7v of Claudius D vi Aethelstan is not shown holding models of his monastic foundations. Matthew had achieved complete eradication of an undesirable piece of history.

91 It is intriguing that the early thirteenth-century St Albans chronicle in Julius D vii does not omit the details of the St Brice's day massacre but it ensures that responsibility for it does not fall in Ethelred's lap. It claims that the king had received numerous complaints from Englishmen concerning the insolence of the Danes so that 'he gave them all up to the English to be dealt with as they might think fit'; Vaughan, 'The Chronicle Attributed to John of Wallingford', p.60 and for the translation here quoted J. Stevenson (ed.), The Church Historians of England (London, 1854), ii, part ii, 525-564, 558-559. There is no other source for this chronicle's statement that the Danes were massacred whilst taking their baths on a customary Saturday, although the statement is highly significant in view of the fact that St Brice's day fell on a Saturday in 1002; Vaughan, 'The Chronicle Attributed to John of Wallingford', p.60.
Yet, as in the *Gesta Abbatum* he left the odd black sheep intact for the sake of comparison and perhaps a touch of realism. Edwiu was to Anglo-Saxon kingship what Wulnoth had been to the early abbacy of St Albans. Their immoral preferences for the ladies were duly punished and set an example to all.

On occasion Matthew climbed out of his pool of source material to invent history from its banks. Several of the *gesta* that he attributed to the West Saxon kings cannot be substantiated; Cnut's almsgiving and construction of a road from Ramsey to Kings Delf, for example. Matthew's statement that the slaying of two tax collectors in the reign of Hardecnut occurred in the 'vestibulo' of the 'certain monastery' mentioned by Roger, is similarly unsupported by independent evidence. In the *Estoire* he novelly assigned Godwin a role in the death of Edmund Ironside. Some of his new information is contradicted by the earlier sources which we know that he must have read. His proposition that Aethelstan ruled by the advice of Dunstan is contradicted by William, Ailred and Roger who suggest variously that Edmund I, Edgar and Edred benefited from this instead. Matthew might have even calculated from Florence that Dunstan would have been merely twenty one at the time of Aethelstan’s death. It is possible that his linking of the two was simply careless error.

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92CM i. 509 (AD 1033) and ibid. i. 514 (AD 1041). AC, pp. 161 and 163-164 (AD 1033); 'viam in mariosco, multiplicatis fossoribus, quae Kingesdelf dicitur eruderavit'.


94 Claudius D vi, 11r. This claim is not to be found in Matthew’s *Flores. GP*, p.26 (Edgar). *Vita* col. 725 (Edmund). *Flores* i. 399.

95 Thorpe, *Chronicon* i. 130.
Matthew indulged in plentiful elaboration when it came to King Ethelred. In opting for a favourable depiction of the king he departed almost wholly from Roger’s *Flores* and the twelfth-century histories. Roger had recalled Ethelred’s siege of the city of Rochester and his rapacious extortion from the bishop of one-hundred pounds. The king was petulant to his wife, scarcely admitting her to his bed and he was cruel, depriving at least three men of their sight on account of the treachery of their fathers. William of Malmesbury spoke of his reign in the following terms:

\begin{quote}
Ejus vitae cursus saevus in principio,
miser in medio, turpis in exitu
asseritur ita parricidio, cui
conniventiam adhibuerat, immanis, ita
fuga et mollitie infamis, ita morte
miserabilis fuit.
\end{quote}

To William, Ethelred was little more than the indecisive and badly organized, ‘unready’ king whose mother had been prone to beat him with candles.

96 *Florence's Chronicon* is perhaps an exception for it terms the king 'clito egregrius, moribus elegans, pulcher vultu, decorus aspectu...'; i. 145. Ailred showed muted appreciation of the king in his *Genealogia*, col. 730.

97 *Flores* i. 421-453.

98 *GR* i. 185.

99 Ibid., p 185. In the *Gesta Pontificum* he had, however, acknowledged a relatively good start to the reign: p.410.
The Ethelred of the *Flores* and the *Gesta Regum* was a far cry from the beautiful, noble and elegant king of the genealogy of Claudius D vi or the ‘piissimus et imbellis, prole felicissimus’ king of the *Abbreviatio*. 100 Matthew bestowed on him further praise in the *Estoire*.

Li rois Aedgard avoit un fiz  
K'ert de force e sens garniz,  
Aelred k'out nun, bon justisers,  
K'en paes peisible, en guerre ert fers  
Regne tint par vasselage  
Cum cist ki ert peisible e sage,  
Amez cremus... 101

He had married Emma of Normandy and they made a graceful pair ‘Cum de safir e or lusant/U de lis e rose espanie’. 102 After the death of Ethelred, Cnut had said to Edmund ‘Thy father is dead, certainly it is a loss/ For he was peaceable and wise.’ 103 Only in the *Gesta* did Matthew display a degree more reserve when he said that the king was ‘lazy and slow but pious’ and in his *Flores* he retained unaltered Roger’s version of the reign. 104 Matthew’s affection for Ethelred is easily explained. The abbey’s charters and martyrology revealed him to have been a generous benefactor of St Albans. 105 And a century

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100 f.IIv; ‘decorus et elegans’. *AC*, p.159.
101 *Estoire*, ll.131-137.
102 Ibid., ll. 140-141.
103 The *Estoire* is occasionally unfavourable to Ethelred; ll.194-200.
104 Wats, p.26 (GA i. 29, n.4); ‘Rex Atheldredus, segnis, sed pius’. *FH* i. 517-541.
105 Ethelred granted or restored to the abbey lands at Burston, Wincelfelda, Westwick Hall, Flamstead, St Albans, Grandborough, Redbourn, Langley. Thwangetune. See *CA* vi. 15-18, 21-24, 24-27. See also B, ff.157v-158v. 158v-160r and 160r-161v for the Anglo-Saxon precursors to these charters.
or so after Matthew's time, towards the end of the fourteenth-century the abbey's Liber Benefactorum was also to praise him in this capacity. 106

The Gesta Abbatum harbours many unique details concerning Ethelred's relationship with the abbey. It mentions his presentation of the precious cameo and it suggests that he had permitted, even persuaded Ailwin Niger and his wife Ailfleda to grant five hides at Grandborough to the abbey. 107 Furthermore he had allowed abbot Alfric to purchase and then level the royal lands at Kingsbury, all excepting one small fortress (propugnaculum). 108 Matthew had every reason to alter Roger's portrayal. Suzanne Lewis suggested that he had not been entirely successful in as far as he portrayed Ethelred as one of four villainous kings (alongside Locrinus, William Rufus and John) in the prefatory pictures of Claudius D vi. 109 Yet the evidence for such a portrayal is slight; the sword of Edward raised in foreboding above the picture of Ethelred is the only indication that Matthew considered something amiss in the reign of the latter king. Ethelred himself sits nobly upon his throne, hands raised in benediction. 110 There was a great deal of novelty in Matthew's approach to Ethelred, independent as it was from the versions of Roger and his predecessors.

106 Ethelredus rex cartas et dona predecessorum suorum nois datas renovavit et renovando confirmavit, domum istam pro viribus protegendo. Dedit etiam unum lapidem preciosum martiri precioso, quem onicem vulgariter appellamus qui dicitur multum conferre parturientibus, LB, ff. 4v-5r.

107 Wats, pp. 38 and 31 (G4 i. 84 and 54).

108 Wats, p. 27 (G4 i. 32-33).


110 Claudius D vi, f. 8r.
Some of Matthew’s ‘new’ information was little more than elaboration of details derived from the works of his predecessors. His claim that Edmund defeated Cnut six times in battle takes one stage further the insinuations of Ailred’s *Genealogia* and Roger’s *Flores* that conflicts between the two resulted in either a victory for Edmund or a draw. \(^{111}\) It is intriguing, however, that in his illustration of the battle between Cnut and Edmund Ironside in the *Chronica* (in which Cnut appears in the armour of Matthew’s own time), he departed from Roger’s *Flores* in suggesting that Cnut had struck Edmund’s helmet rather than vica versa. \(^{112}\) This line he adopted also in the *Estoire*. \(^{113}\) He also altered Roger’s account of the murder of Edward the Martyr. In the *Flores*, Edward’s wicked stepmother had dealt the poison whilst delegating the task of stabbing to wicked attendants. \(^{114}\) Matthew made sure that the stepmother wielded the knife herself. \(^{115}\) She would no doubt have befriended the equally vicious Quendrida had she lived some two centuries earlier. It is intriguing, moreover, that Matthew, in further implicating the stepmother would consciously have bypassed the versions of Ailred and Florence for they made no such accusations, preferring instead the vague attribution of the killing to impious Englishmen. \(^{116}\) If Matthew could

\(^{111}\) Claudius D vi, f.11v and *AC*, p.161 where Matthew states that ‘Hic anno regni sui primo, septies strenue contra Cnut pugnavit, triumphans gloriose.’ *Genealogia*, col.731.

\(^{112}\) CM i, 498, n.1 and *Flores* i, 458.


\(^{114}\) *Flores* i, 419.

\(^{115}\) Claudius D vi, f.10v.

elaborate upon his source material he could also misinterpret it and
some of his new information is little more than careless error, his
attribution to Edred of a reign of six and a half years was a
thoughtless repetition of a similar detail provided for Edmund. 117
Similarly, his statement that Edgar had allied himself by marriage to
duke Richard of Normandy is peculiar given that, although his son
Ethelred married the duke’s daughter Emma in 1002, the duke
himself had died some six years previously. 118 Elaboration, pure
invention and error were all responsible for Matthew’s novel angle on
the past.

Much of Matthew’s new material could not have been supplied or
invented by anyone else for it smacks of those interests and biases
that decorate his works as a whole. His accusation that Edwiu
depended upon the advise of foreigners is characteristically
xenophobic, reflecting Matthew’s obsession with Henry III’s reliance
upon the Savoyards and Poitevins. 119 Roger had also mentioned
Edwiu’s unwise administration yet he had not considered it an issue
of alien influence. 120 Roger’s Edwiu had cherished evil over good.
Matthew’s had cherished foreign over native. Matthew considered
the ‘bastard’ Harold I to have committed similar crimes;

117 Claudius D vi, f.10v.

118 *Estoire*, II 125-127; ‘Par cuncil de sun barnage s’alie par mariage/ Au
that the *Estoire* terms Edgar, Richard’s stepson although I cannot trace this
statement.

119 Claudius D vi, f.11r.

120 *Flores* i. 406.
Matthew did not like Harold which makes all the more surprising his handling of Harold’s brother Hardecanut whom he declared rather pointedly to be 'dreiturel' or 'rightful'. Matthew makes the novel assertion that Hardecanut recalled exiles banished by Harold and that his reign had been blighted by civil war. His emnity with the Danes made him an honorary Englishman. As ever the issue of nationality was at the forefront of Matthew’s historical imagination. The variety of ways in which Matthew manipulated the corpus of West Saxon material that he had inherited from his predecessors is impressive. He abridged, extracting from a number of sources the kernel of each reign. He elaborated, supplemented and omitted information contained in these sources. His writing about the Anglo-Saxon past depended upon a continual process of expansion and abridgement. He condensed information for the genealogical tables and expanded it for the Estoire. Matthew did not leave behind him the volume of material that would have enabled the extent and depth of his knowledge of the West Saxon kings to be accurately gauged. This is scarcely important when what he did leave us clearly betrays a desire to neatly package the past and communicate it in simplistic form. His brief and impressionistic sketches of the history of the West Saxon

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121 Estoire, II.451-453. See also ibid., II.478-479; 'Ke trait aliens Daneis/ Esuens destruit, cum dis enceis' and II.455-456, 'Poisanz, tant fu a Engleis pire -/ Ki l'escho [s]irent a rei -'

122 Ibid., 1.535.

123 Ibid., II.494-495 and 535-581.

124 Ibid., II.535-539.
dynasty constitute a patchwork of earlier texts stitched together by the colourful thread of his historical imagination. His vertical genealogies and strings of lively portraits convey more effectively and more immediately than any number of detailed annals a sense of the inevitable forward march of time.

For Matthew, Anglo-Saxon history began with Alfred and culminated with 'Li sage, debonaire e pruz' Edward the Confessor. The latter had captured Matthew's interest as no other king, with the exception of Offa of Mercia, had done before. That interest surfaced largely in the Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei, written by him in the 1240s and to all intents and purposes a reworking of Ailred of Rievaulx's Vita Sancti Edwardi Confessoris. Between accounts of his birth, his exile in Normandy and the opening of his tomb in 1102 are sandwiched details of his various gesta; his abolition of the Danegeld, marriage to Emma, restoration of Westminster. Matthew's vision of the reign of Edward in the Gesta is complex. He was the pinnacle, the ideal of Anglo-Saxon kingship. He was 'Li plus pruedum de sun lignage'. His reign represented the final victory of the West Saxon dynasty after a dark period of Danish rule, the defeat of foreigness. His refusal to depend upon the advice of aliens in any aspect of his government is stressed.

125 Ibid., 1.446.

126 Ibid., 1.172.

127 Matthew conveyed an awareness of the political dislocation caused by Danish rule. He suggested that Edward the Confessor was sixth in descent if attention was paid to the direct line of birth from father to son, yet he was tenth if reigning kings, rightful and conquering alike, were considered; Estoire, II.107-115.

128 Ibid., II.2497-2503. 'Baut ses chastens e ses dunguns/ De ki leautez est tut certeins/Nun pas estranges aliens/ Cist ke sunt ses natureus/Gentilz de nesance e feus, Se peinent la terre garder,'
‘delivered up to lions and wolves’, where women were ravished, religion dishonoured and children slain became a land of ‘bon estat’ at his accession to the throne. ‘All are rich, all are at ease’. Edward had won back England for the English. On the death of Hardecnut

Li Daneis s'en vunt confus,
N'i osent demurer plus.
Lors sunt Engleis en grant baudur
E mercient lur Creatur,
Ki. cum d'Egipte fist jadis,
Ses serfs a de servage mis.\textsuperscript{130}

Edward’s accesion had fulfilled the promises of the Book of Revelations. He was holy, Christlike and his coming had been prophesied by Bishop Brithewold of Winchester.\textsuperscript{131} His elevation to the throne of England, was like the resurrection, part of God’s plan. Chaste befriender of hermits, priests and canons, he possessed the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, followed the example of John the Baptist and was friend of St Peter.\textsuperscript{132} Moreover he was to rise from his deathbed on the third day.\textsuperscript{133} Matthew rarely missed an opportunity to allude to his Christly qualities.

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., II.621, 532-81, 872 and 875. Matthew oddly avoided the whimsicalities of Ailred at this point who claimed that on Edward’s accession the waters of the sea became calm, the air fresher, the sun more serene and the earth more fertile. Ancient happiness returned and the priests shone with wisdom and sanctity; cols. 744-745.

\textsuperscript{130} EStoire II.840-845.

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., II.633-701.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., II.966-971, 3094-3120, 667-670, 79.

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., II.3695-3700.
N'ai oi ki unc fist maire
Simplicite debonaire
Fors sul Jesu qui au larrun
Penduna destre fist pardun
De ses maus en sa Passiun,
Cum [en] la ewangile lisum. 134

A little later Matthew asked;

Ki vesti les poveres nuz
Fors Aedward li seinz, li duz?
Ki pesseit les fameillus
Fors Aedward li glorius? 135

Vast sections of the *Estoire* are given over to a narration of the miracles that he effected in life and posthumously, such as his cure of the cripple Guel Michel, and his restoration of sight to countless blindmen and his healing of a scrofulous woman. 136 Yet, if Edward was the culmination, the saviour, he was equally the beginning, the link between past and future. In the *Estoire* he prophesied antagonism between Tostig and Harold, the drowning of the Danish king war, pestilence and famine for the latter years of the eleventh century and the early years of the twelfth, and the pattern of politics for this same period. 137 The Norman Conquest becomes instantly less cataclysmic. Edward had seen it coming, he had controlled it. The West-Saxon dynasty had never been vanquished.

134 Ibid., II.1052-1057.
135 Ibid., II. 1895-1898. It is intriguing that Matthew chose to omit lengthy reference to the prenatal election of Edward that Ailred made so much of in the *Vita*, col. 741. Matthew notes it briefly at *Estoire*, II.852-855.
136 Ibid., II.1919-2022, 2606-2683, 2690-3128, 4029-4066, 4365-4412.
137 Ibid., II.3133-3198, 1279-1372, 3341-3452, 3695-3858.
Matthew's fascination with the reign of Edward is manifested to a lesser extent in other works attributed to him. The *Abbreviatio*’s annal for 1055 summarizes the legends surrounding him, the devil on the treasure chest, the appearance to him of the Christchild and his vision of the drowning of the Danish king. 138 It mentions too his marriage to Edith, his gathering of a fleet to thwart the Danes and his abolition of the Danegeld. 139 To his base account of the reign of Edward in the *Flores*, derived from the *Chronica*, Matthew added a note on Edward’s relation to Edward the Martyr and a little later he supplied details of the king’s endeavour to free himself of a vow to journey to Rome: the Pope absolved him on the grounds that he gave his proposed expenses to the poor and that he found or restore a monastery in honour of St Peter. St Peter himself revealed to a monk named Wulsin his desire that a monastery be built at Westminster. 140 Edward obliged, generously endowing the place with possession, rents and liberties. An additional interpolation in the *Flores* centres on Edward’s acquisition of privileges for his newly founded monastery. 141 The *Gesta Abbatum*, alongside the *Estoire* and the *Flores*, notes his vision of the death of the Danish king, the resultant confusion and the flight of his army. 142 The *Gesta* is novel in its claim that the frustration of Danish plans stemmed from the merits of Edward. 143 The text also narrates Edward’s vision of the Seven

138 *AC*, p.167.

139 Ibid., pp.165-166.

140 *FH* i. 564 and 566-567.

141 Ibid. i. 579-580.

142 Wats, p.27 (*GA* i. 35).

143 Wats, p.27 (*GA* i. 35); 'per merita Sancti Edwardi'.
Sleepers of Ephesus turning over onto their left sides, although in the *Gesta* this prophecy is fulfilled by misery, vice, gambling and oath swearing throughout England and not by catastrophe on a global scale as described in the *Estoire*. 144 It is hardly surprising to discover the *Gesta* presenting yet again the local angle. It developed this local angle on Edward further by chronicling the king’s anger at the fraudulent behaviour of the monks of Ely with regards the relics of St Albans and documenting his role in the expansion of the abbey’s early landed endowment. 145 He had consented, for instance, to the bequest of the five estates of Stodham, Redburn, Langley, Grandborough and Thuantonam to the abbey in the time of abbot Leofstan who was his familiar, adviser and confessor. 146 Moreover, Leofstan had bestowed ornaments and liberties upon the church supported by the friendship and help of this same king Edward. 147 In the margin of the autograph manuscript of the *Gesta* Edward termed him saint and virgin. 148 Finally Matthew had jotted down sketches of the king’s reign for his genealogical chronicles. For instance, on folio 11v of Claudius D vi, Edward, innocent and unstained and depicted in a circular medallion succeeded Hardecnut. Although he had been deprived of his brother by the treacherous earl Godwin, he never the less married the earl’s daughter because it suited him. The genealogy makes reference to his cleanliness, his sanctity and his foundation of Westminster. Down the right hand margin and across the bottom of

144 Wats, p.29 (*GA* i. 41-42), *Estoire*, ll.3435-3448.

145 Wats, p. 28 (*GA* i. 38).

146 Wats, p.28 (*GA* i. 38-39).

147 Wats, p.28 (*GA* i. 41).

148 Wats. p.28 (*GA* i. 38, n.2). *V*, f. 33r.

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the page is a rubric concerning the legend of the severed tree. In short, Matthew's works document his considerable interest in Edward at a local as well as national level and that interest manifested itself in a variety of literary forms.

How had Matthew gathered his information on Edward? In the *Abbreviatio* he had made use of his own *Estoire* for his summary of legends. He had probably not referred to Ailred's *Vita* for the latter omits the tale of the devil on the treasure chest. For his notices on Edward under the annals for 1042, 1044 and 1052 he depended most probably on the *Chronica* although he might equally have employed his own *Flores* or that of Roger Wendover. It is intriguing, however, that his assignation of the abolition of the Danegeld to the year 1052 disagrees with all the proposed sources which mention it under 1051. The *Flores*'s account of Edward's liberation from his vow and his founding and privileging of Westminster is said by Luard to be derived from Edward's 'First Charter' to the abbey dateable to 1066. It parallels information supplied in the *Estoire*. The *Flores*' account of the Pope’s freeing of Edward from his vow differs little from that in the *Estoire* except in as far as it omits the name of the hermit who predicted the papal response and unlike the *Estoire*, it presents the hermit’s vision after mention of the return of the legates. Yet the *Estoire* made use of the *Flores*, not vice versa.

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149 f. 11v.

150 *CM* i. 517, *Flores* i. 482, 483 and 487, *FH* i. 565.

151 *CM* i. 519, *Flores* i. 487, *FH* i. 569.

152 See ibid., pp. 566 and xxxv. S1043.

153 *Estoire*, II.1397-1876.
versa, unless we are to assume contemporaneity of composition. So it seems that Luard may be right in assuming that the Flores derived its information at this point from charter evidence. The Gesta made use of Ailred or the Estoire in its account of Edward's visions of the Seven Sleepers and drowning of the Danish king. It depended on the documentary evidence gathered in the Liber Additamentorum for its account of Edward's role in the growth of the abbey's early landed endowment and it most probably concocted his anger at the monks of Ely. The details supplied by Matthew in his genealogical diagrams are too brief to be traced with any accuracy. The basis of Matthew's knowledge of Edward was thus Ailred's Vita. This knowledge he supplemented by sifting the Liber Additamentorum (or its vernacular predecessor) and by indulging in his own imaginative wanderings.

An examination of the mechanics of Matthew's construction of the Estoire need only be brief for in 1910 Rudolph Fritz undertook a line by line analysis of the Estoire's source material for a dissertation published in Heidelberg and entitled Uber Verfasser und Quellen der Altfranzosischen Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei. Matthew frequently acknowledged his dependence on a written source in the Estoire. At lines 35-37 he declared himself to be translating 'without falsehood and without deceit/ The history from Latin to French.'

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154 Vaughan, Matthew Paris, pp. 174-175.

155 Wats, pp. 27 and 29 (GA i. 35 and 41-2).

156 CM vi. 28-33.

157 'Dunt vus escrit e vus translat
Sanz fausete e sanz barat
En francen de latin l'estoire'
Matthew’s ‘grant estoire’ in Latin (I.595) was Ailred’s *Vita Sancti Edwardi*. Large portions of the *Estoire* follow it closely in order and substance and sometimes reproduce it almost verbatim. Matthew was, by and large, truthful in his statement that ‘Kar il m’apent le franceis traire/Si k’au latin ne seit cuntraire’. Ailred’s *Vita* had claimed that ‘...sicut spina rosam genuit Godwinus Editham’. The *Estoire* reproduced it thus

Cum vent la rose del espine  
Venue est Edith de Godwine.  
...sicut spina rosam  
Genuit Godwinus Editham.’

There is a similar close approximation of style and substance between their accounts of the pact of chastity made by Edward and Edith.

*Vita*  
Convenientibus igitur in unum  
rex et regina de castitate  
servanda paciscuntur, nec  
huic fidei alium quam Deum  
testum aestimant adhibendum.

*Estoire*  
...Fait li rois a reine  
Par cunsente andui e cuvine,  
Par ferme fei ecuvenant,  
Dunt Deu funt testimon e garant,  
Ke ja a nul jur de lur age  
N’entamerunt lur pucelage

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158 Wallace argued that the *Estoire* was not a translation in the strict sense but had been produced more in the form of a chronicle; *Estoire*, pp xxiii-xxiv.

159 Ibid., II.3027-3028.

160 *Vita*, col. 747.

161 *Estoire*, II.1171-1172, 1175-1176.

162 Ibid., II.1225-1230, Ailred, *Vita*, col.748. At this point Matthew followed the version of Ailred even though it contradicted the line that he had adopted in his *Flores*. In the *Flores* he had attributed Edward’s childlessness to the king’s reluctance to propagate heirs from the daughter of the traitor Godwin (II.588-589). The *Estoire* adhered to the *Vita’s* tale of a vow of chastity sworn by Edward and Edith (II.1223-1260). The *Estoire* also follows the *Vita* in its claim that Brithewold was bishop of Winchester rather than bishop of Wilton, as correctly stated by the *Flores; Estoire*, 1.597 and *FH* i. 574.

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Neither can Matthew have derived his account of Edward's vision of
the Christchild from any other source.

\textit{Vita}

Agitur in altari coeleste mysterium
manibus sacerdotis divina sacramenta
tractantur. Et ecce speciosus
ille forma prae filiis hominum Christus
Jesus in ara consistens, oculis
utriusqueae visibilius corporalibus
apparuit, sacraque dextera super
regem extensa, signum sanctae crucis
eum benedicendo depinxit. At rex
demisso capite... (tantae
benedictionem reverentia
exhibebat.) Comes...coepit velle
ad illum usque procedere. Verum
rex...'Sta, inquit Lefice, sta, quod tu
vides video et ego. 163

\textit{Estoire}

Quant le va li chapuleins
Le cors Deu entre ses mains,
Esvus k'un tres beus danceus
Purs, clers, e spiriteus
Aparut au rei Aedward.
Li quens regard cele part...
K'atant ad leve sa main destre
Li juvenceus, li reis l'encline...
Au rei dune sa beneicun,
E meimes l'avisien
Veit li quens e vers le rei
S'en va cist dist 'Suefre tei,
Tu veiz, m'est vis, co ke jo vei..

As might be expected, Matthew did not depend solely on Ailred's
\textit{Vita} in his construction of the \textit{Estoire}. A number of earlier texts had
shaped its production. Fritz believed, for instance, that many passages
in the \textit{Estoire} were derived from the fictitious 'St Albans
compilation' that allegedly underlay both Roger's \textit{Flores} and
Matthew's \textit{Chronica}. He devoted considerable space to proving that
the author had indeed employed the 'compilation' rather than
returning to the original sources and he argued that the 'compilation'
could not be equated with Roger's \textit{Flores}. 164 Richard Vaughan

See Fritz, \textit{Über Verfasser}, pp.41-70 for a comprehensive list of parallel
passages in these two texts, including the account of the thief in the treasury
(II.982-987, 990-1009 and \textit{Vita}, col.745) and the description of Edward's
vision of the Danish king's drowning (II.1279-1370 and \textit{Vita} cols.748-749.

164 Fritz, \textit{Über Verfasser}. pp.25-34.
argued convincingly that the 'compilation' employed in the *Estoire* was none other than Matthew's own *Flores*. The following lines can be traced to that source; ll. 175-593, (the invasion of the Danes under Swein, the flight of Ethelred and the reigns of Cnut and his sons Harold and Hardecnut), ll. 4311-4344, 4521-4553 and 4627-4638, all concerning the Norman Conquest. Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* and Orderic Vitalis's *Historia Ecclesiastica* account for certain other passages towards the end of the *Estoire*, that centre on Harold and the Conquest and, as has been noted above, Ailred's *Genealogia* accounts for much of the historical introduction. The *Estoire*’s information on Edward himself, if not taken from Ailred’s *Vita* appears to have been drawn from his own imagination. His detailed description of Edward's foundation at Westminster, not derived from any Latin source, was probably eyewitness.

A fundement le e parfund.
Le front vers orient fait rund.
Li quarrel sunt mut fort e dur.
En mi liu dresce une tur
E deus en frunt de l’occident,
E bons seinz e grantz e pent.
Li piler e li tablementz
Sunt reches defors e dedenz.
A basses e a chapitraus
Surt l’ovre grantz e reaus.

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166 ll. 532-581, concerning the unpopularity of Hardecnut among the Danes are not traceable to that source.

167 ll. 4554-4625 are dependent on Henry's *Historia*. ll. 3615-3534, 3895-3922, 4066-4402, 4265-4310. 4445-4510 are influenced by Orderic's *Historia Ecclestica*.

168 Matthew's appreciation of the Edward's church is underlined by notes and comments he made in the *Chronica* at the time when the church was being demolished; *Estoire*, p. xxvi. n. 30.
Matthew was solely responsible for other passages in the *Estoire*. Some are mere notes to the reader:

\begin{verbatim}
Des miracles i a grant numbre
Ke dire eschiu, ke n'encumbre
De l'estoire la matiure
Dunt jo vus empris a dire
\end{verbatim}

Others contribute subject matter. Lines 4413-4444 catalogue the range of hideous diseases and deformities curable at the tomb of Edward. In lines 3955-3974, Matthew prays to Edward and presents his work. The most intriguing of all Matthew’s additions occurs on ll.3846-3850. On his deathbed Edward had had a vision whereby a green tree was severed from it roots and relocated some three acres away without the aid of machine or human hand. Returning to its original trunk it bore flowers and then fruit. The tree represented the kingship of England that had flourished and borne fruit since the time of Alfred. The severage of the trunk occurred after the death of Edward and the three acres symbolized the reigns of the three bastard kings Harold, William I and William Rufus. The tree returned to its trunk in the time of Henry I. The *Estoire* and the *Vita* agree in all this. Where Matthew differs from Ailred is in his belief that the tree’s final fruiting represented the reign of Henry III rather than that of

\footnote{169 *Estoire*, ll.2292-2307-2309.}

\footnote{170 Ibid., ll.3129-3132. See also ll.4345-4364.}

317
Henry II. Matthew had good reason for making this alteration for the *Estoire* itself was dedicated to Eleanor, wife of Henry III. 171

If Matthew had derived most of his information on Edward from the twelfth-century life by Ailred he had not displayed unthinking dependence upon it and he had even omitted some matter that it had had to offer such as Edward's prenatal election and five of his posthumous miracles. 172 Moreover he drawn upon other sources, his own *Chronica* and *Flores* and charter material drawn from the *Liber Additamentorum* and elsewhere. Matthew had not executed a simple exercise in regurgitation. He had thought for himself.

On occasion Matthew turned the historical spotlight on kings other than those of the West Saxons. He was rather fond of Cenulphus, successor of Ecgfrith of Mercia and father of Kenelm. Matthew cites amongst his *gesta* the foundation of the abbey of Winchcombe, large enough to sustain two hundred monks, his peaceful, just and pious government of his kingdom and the abduction and death of Eadberht Praen king of Kent. 173 Matthew's interest in Cenulphus had been fuelled by the works of Florence of Worcester and Robert de Monte from which he had extracted his information. Other kings received passing mention. Oswald and Oswin were the wise, peaceable, intelligent and powerful kings of the *Estoire* who depended upon good counsel. 174 Even the mythical King Arthur slipped into

171 Ibid., II.49-62.

172 Edward's prenatal election is hinted at in II.852-855. Ailred discusses this event in greater detail; cols. 741-742.

173 See *CM* i. 362 (794), 372 (820 AD), 373, n.1.

Matthew's historical survey in CCCC 26 for he was warlike and most strong, had subdued many kingdoms and crushed many monsters. 175 He was after all Merlin's boar of Cornwall. It is a point of some interest that Matthew did not confine his comments to kings alone. Prominent yet non-royal figures from the Anglo-Saxon past feature in his work. Three of these figures are treacherous villains. Eadberht Praen whose reign, abduction and death he noted in the Chronica was most probably the Odberht whom Charlemagne in a letter to Offa had confessed to sheltering. 176 Eadric Streona, notable for his infidelity to Ethelred and the Danes alike graces the pages of the Chronica. Matthew appended 'cognomento Stren'to Roger's mention of him. 177 Matthew had a little more to say about the pluralist Stigand. In the Historia he accused him of plotting with the Normans and in the Gesta he noted with some glee his ignominious death. 178 He had been flung into prison, by papal persuasion, because he had obtained the status of archbishop during the lifetime of archbishop Robert of Jumieges. Burdened by heavy fetters and rattling chains he languished in prison.179 These villains were charming because their activities were so far removed from the mundane conservatism of the cloister of St Albans. Matthew might have felt a greater affinity with Aelphege. Into the Chronica Maiora's annal for 1012 Matthew inserted a brief potted history of the saint.180

175 Ibid., II.9-12 and CCCC 26, f.iv v.

176 CM i. 362 and 368, n.1.

177 CM i. 481-482. It is worth noting that Simeon of Durham makes the similar addition of 'quendam cognomento Stren' in his Historia Regum. Arnold, Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia, ii. 140.

178 HA i. 13 (W[illeml] fautor subdolus') and GA i. 45 and 46.

179 GA i. 45 and 46.

180 CM i. 488.
A monk of wondrous holiness, he was made abbot of Deerhurst by the design of Ethelwold bishop of Winchester and the wish of Edgar. St Wulfstan procured his elevation to the episcopacy of Winchester. He succeeded Dunstan as archbishop of Canterbury to rule happily for six years before he was beheaded with a Danish axe on the darkening Sabbath of Easter week. Matthew's history was a dramatic tale of heros and villains, crooks and saints.

If England was Matthew's historical stage then some of the drama was enacted in the dressing room for along the corridors of time constructed in the *Chronica* prowled certain foreign understudies. Matthew was ever the universal chronicler. He dwelt briefly upon Rollo of Normandy who 'according to a certain historiographer, first conquered Normandy that was called Neustria' That certain historiographer was William of Jumieges. It is scarcely surprising that Matthew, a man so engulfed in Anglo-Norman culture should have possessed an interest in Rollo. Matthew's other historical *notae* were frequently influenced by personal experience. Hence his journey to Norway in 1248 no doubt occasioned his mention of Olaf of Norway in the annal for 1030 'Eodem anno Sanctus Olavus, rex, doctor, praedicator et apostolus Norichorum in Norwegia, Haroldi regis Norichorum filius, in Norwegia injuste perimitur, a Norichis

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181 It is ironic that Matthew chose to interpolate foreign material at all since he had noted its irrelevancy in the early annals of Roger's *Flores*; he rendered the stories of the two witches at Rome and the discovery of the body of Pallas, son of Evander as 'vertum sed impertinens'; *CM i*. 518 and 511.

182 Ibid. i. 450; "Rollo secundum quendam historiographum, primus conquisivit Normanniam, quae Neustria dicebatur. Ad quam cum rex Francorum nuncios destinaverat ut nomen ejus inquirerent, respondit "Nornneman Bigou", id est, "Noricus sum per Deum". Erat enim a Norvegia oriundus, unde Normannia primo dicta est et vir Bigod.'
percussus nimis truculenter quadam securi, quia gens illa non gladiis sed securibus utitur' 183 This is from Florence of Worcester although Matthew's statement that the Norwegians used axes and not swords is original to him and something he may have observed first hand in 1248. Pope Leo and the prophet Mohammed drained Matthew's quill of considerably more ink. Leo's hair raising brush with sexual temptation is the substance of an interpolation into the annal for 799.184 Whilst praying as a youth and repenting of lasciviousness the Virgin had appeared to him. She promised that if he corrected his excesses she would elevate him to the highest of positions. Abandoning rhetoric he took up the study of theology. A chaste, modest, diligent and skilled theologian and rhetorician he was soon made pope. At his first mass a female worshipper squeezed and kissed his hand exciting in him a burning lust. Matthew makes the startling claim that she was a woman to whom Leo had access. Leo indulged in a little self-reprimand before following the advice of the apostles and amputating the hand involved. This caused him no small inconvenience for when called to the ministry he had often to excuse himself lest the signs of this crippling be noticed by the more ignorant brothers. Removing himself to a more secret place and prostrating himself in devout prayer before that altar of the blessed Virgin he sought consolation that he might not accuse her of raising him up only to cast him down. The Virgin replied by restoring a hand to his truncated arm. Leo retained his former hand and explained the miracle to a gathering of the brothers lest the glory of the Virgin be

183 Ibid. i. 508. Matthew's interest in Olaf is paralleled in the chronicle in Julius D vii - Vaughan, 'The Chronicle Attributed to John of Wallingford', p.67.

184 CM i. 366-367.
hidden. Displaying the hand in church he made no effort to conceal the reason for its dislocation from his body. The miracle had liturgical repercussions because for it was decreed that never again would the hand of the pope be kissed in mass. The severed hand was stored in the Lateran treasury.

This account of the legend of Leo's hand is intriguing. It is not to be found in contemporary Anglo-Saxon and Frankish sources and neither is it to be found in the contemporary account of Leo III in the Liber Pontificalis. 185 That there was some near contemporary tradition of miracle stories recounting the restoration of bits of Leo's body is clear from the evidence of the Liber. The Liber narrates in some detail the vicious attack on Leo in front of the monastery of Sts Stephen and Silvester in April 799. His body beaten with clubs and his eyes and tongue gouged out he had been left half dead and drenched in blood before the altar. Yet God restored his sight and voice. 186 There is no trace in this same source of the miracle surrounding Leo's hand. The closest the Liber comes to suggestions of possible sexual impropriety is its claim that certain 'iniquitous sons of the devil' laid such charges against the Pope. 187 That Matthew may have preserved here an early miracle story extant in no other source is a real possibility. Yet whether this is the case or not the tale is notable for its symmetry and its patterned framework. Virgin


186 Ibid., p.186. There is no evidence that Leo himself claimed such a miracle; ibid., p.186, n.35.

187 Ibid., p.188. In a letter, Alcuin notes that he had destroyed a report sent him by Arn who had accompanied Leo back to Rome, in which Leo was implicated in the crimes of perjury, simony and adultery; see ibid. p.186, n.35.
balanced seductress, temptation balanced holy prayer and religious elevation balanced cruel casting down. The tale fulfilled Matthew's desire for order in history and an order bent on communicating a moral tale.

Matthew's writings about Mohammed do not preserve early and unique legends. Instead they crystallize later traditions. Roger Wendover had begun the process of alteration and amalgamation of the source material in the *Flores's annal* for 622. His account of Mohammed's early years as a merchant, his marriage to Khadija, his claims to be prophet, his battles with Heraclius and his death were derived chiefly from the works of Ildefonsus and Hildebert. He had not copied Ildefonsus verbatim. He made stylistic changes. Ildefonsus made reference to the young Mohammed 'qui cum in adolescentia coepisset esset mercator providus.' Roger Wendover's Mohammed wandered frequently with his camels through Egypt and Palestine 'cum in primaeva aetate sua esset mercator'. Ildefonsus's Mohammed had stayed (morabatur) with Jews and Christians. Roger's had conversed (conversabatur) with

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188 The depth of Matthew's interest in Mohammed is betrayed by his personal transcription of most of the *Chronica's* material on the Prophet. Within the annal for 625 he transcribes the sections from 'vel adige' to 'at' of 'attulerat' and 'sepe mittatur' to 'fine conclusit' (CCCC 26, f.44r).

189 *Continuatio Chronicorum Beati Isidori Sancti Hildefonsi Supposta in Sanctorum Hildefonsi, Leodgarii, Juliiani... Opera Omnia*, PL, xcvi (1862), 317-324. *Historia Hildeberti Cenomanensis Episcopi de Mahumete in Venerabilis Hildeberti...Opera Omnia, Patrologiae Latinae*, clxxi (1844), 1343-1366. Roger also made use of the chronicles of Sigebert and Hugh de Saint Victor.

190 *Continuatio*, col. 321.

191 CM i, 269. *Flores* i, 121.

192 *Continuatio*, col. 321.
Roger had also made additions and omissions. Whilst acknowledging that Mohammed had learnt the Old and New Testaments from Jews and Christians he failed to mention Mohammed's close association with the Antiochene monk John and he added the comment that Mohammed became a most wicked magician. Roger altered many of his predecessor's observations. In the continuation by Ildephonsus Mohammed had assumed the name of king having crowned himself with the diadem of the kingdom. Roger's Mohammed had obtained the sovereignty of the whole province. Similarly, Roger explained Khadija's upset at her husband's epileptic fits in terms of her disappointment at having married an unclean and epileptic man. Ildephonsus declared her upset on the grounds that her faith in her husband's battle against the devil had been disturbed. Roger's additions to Ildephonsus included details of Mohammed's wars against the eastern Roman empire and comments upon his liberal attitude to carnal pleasures. In one short sharp stroke Roger condemned his own generation by suggesting that were he living today, Mohammed would find many adherents.

Matthew left Roger's account largely intact except for his additions on two occasions of the alternative name Adige for Mohammed's

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193 Flores i. 121.
194 Ibid., p.121 ('magus nequissimus'), - Continuatio, col. 321.
195 Ibid., col.321 and Flores i. 122.
196 Ibid. i. 122 and Continuatio, col. 321.
197 Flores i. 122.
198 Ibid. i. 122.
wife. 199 He termed those goods that Mohammed had carried as a young merchant 'furto vel praedo raptas' and he built upon Roger's statement that Mohammed preached a doctrine of pleasure and physical indulgence. 200 The words underlined indicate Matthew's addition.

Praedicabat etiam voluptates
deliciasque carnales futuris pollicitis
incertis non fore praeponendas,
lauteque vivere summum esses
bonum; in eo Epicurus.

Yet it was Mohammed's death that had well and truly caught Matthew's imagination for it provided him with an ideal opportunity to wreak literary revenge on this 'inveigler of souls'. Roger's account of Mohammed's death was derived in part from Hildebert and in part from his own imaginings. Original to Roger was the statement that, on the evening of his death, Mohammed intoxicated with wine had hastened from his palace having perceived the onset of his usual sickness. He excused himself on the grounds that he had been summoned to converse with an angel and that no-one should follow lest he perish at the angelic sight. For his account of Mohammed's collapse into a dung heap, his violent thrashings, his foaming at the mouth and his consumption by a number of hungry pigs, he was dependent upon Hildebert. 201 The tale loses nothing of its vigour in the retelling.

199 CM i. 269-270.

200 Ibid. i. 269-270.

201 Flores i. 122-123.
To this account Matthew added the detail that the wine that
Mohammed had drunk had been most pure, yet poisoned by a certain
friend. 202 He had clearly returned to Ildephonsus who suggested
that Mohammed had been poisoned by one Albimor whose motive
had been to test the hypothesis that Mohammed would rise again
three days after death. 203 Between Roger's account of Mohammed's
agonized writhings and his description of Islamic paradise (derived
from Sigebert), Matthew inserted a long passage dealing with the
manner of the prophet's death, his awaited resurrection and his
successors. 204 Wholly his own composition stylistically, it draws
some inspiration from inherited material. Its tale of Mohammed's
proposed resurrection is probably derived ultimately from a tale in
Ildephonsus although Matthew oddly omitted the gorier details of
which he might have made a great deal. According to Ildephonsus the
disciples of Mohammed abandoned his body when they could no
longer bear the stench. After eleven days Albimor who had poisoned
him found his body torn to bits by dogs. 205 Matthew stated simply
that when three days had passed and Mohammed had not arisen, his
companions hid his body unwashed and half eaten in a certain
precious tomb. Many wise men left his law although simple, common
people and those prone to indulge in carnal pleasure were still
inclined to heed his mandates. 206 Matthew's mention of Mohammed's

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202 CM i. 270. Matthew also suggested that Mohammed recognized his
illness 'per solita indicia'; p.270.

203 Continuatio, col. 322. The poison motif is not to be found in the works of
either Gerald of Wales or Ildephonsus.

204 CM i. 271-272.

205 Continuatio, col.322.

206 CM i. 271.
successors and the use that they made of the Old and New Testaments is similarly derived from Ildephonsus. His equation of the pig with filth and his assertion that the manner of Mohammed's death accounted for Moslem abstinence from pork occurs at an earlier date in Gerald of Wales De Principis Instructione Liber. Similarly, the three methods by which Matthew believed Mohammed to have died had all been cited at some point in previous sources. Ildephonsus and Roger Wendover had made reference to Mohammed's alleged epilepsy. His drunken stupor had been noted by Gerald of Wales and Roger. Ildephonsus had claimed poison to have been an important component in his demise. The novelty of Matthew's account of Mohammed's death was its drawing together of these three gruesome fates into a single divinely plotted punishment for his blasphemous ridicule of the Trinity. Mohammed's doctrinal misdemeanor had shaped his gruesome end for as Matthew declared,

Forte triplici peste mortifera ideo percussit eum Dominus quia maxime peccavit blasphemando in Trinitate, dicendo frivolum esse credere Deum, Trinum et Unum..., Merito igitur perit traditus sui Machometus intoxicatus et epilepticus et crapulatus, trina scilicet poena punitus.

207 Ibid. i. 271 and Continuatio, col. 321.

208 G.F. Warner, Giraldi Cambrensis Opera, 8 vols. (Rolls Series, 1861-1891), viii, 68.

209 Flores i. 122.

210 Warner, Giraldi Cambrensis Opera, viii, 68 and Flores i. 122-123.

211 Continuatio, col., 322. Warner, Giraldi Cambrensis Opera, viii. 68.

212 CM i. 271.
The three assailants, epilepsy, drunkenness and poison took care of his doctrinal errors. A pig took care of his filthy soul.

Matthew introduced into the account of Mohammed's death a degree of symmetry and balance. Mohammed's death became a symbolic event, visual and mathematical. And he could not control his urge to represent it diagrammatically. At the foot of f. 44r he added the following:

Matthew neatly schematized Mohammed's death. He also portrayed it pictorially. On f. 44r in the unusual position between the two columns of text Matthew drew the prophet himself. Above him a scroll read 'I proclaim polygamy for it is written 'You shall increase and multiply' and 'Do not reject present pleasures for the sake of the future'. Beneath Mohammed's feet lay the hairy and tusked 'Sus' who had developed a taste for heretical prophets. Matthew disapproved of Mohammed. His anti-hagiographical grisly

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213 Ibid. i. 271.

214 Lewis argued that the drawing of Mohammed was contemporary with the Alban cycle and thus belonged probably to the 1240s; The Art of Matthew Paris, p. 93.
contouring of the death account stemmed from a desire to demonstrate moral retribution and to impose patterns upon history. 215

Manifestation of Matthew's interest in Mohammed extended beyond the annal for 622. The Chronica's annal for 1236 harboured many new details concerning the prophet - details of his early expeditions and the names of his eleven wives. 216 He also devoted considerable space to their doctrines - their belief in one God yet their denial of the Trinity and of the crucifixion, suffering and death of Jesus Christ, their longing for a paradise flowing with wine, milk and honey. Mohammed's tale of Jesus's raising of Japhet from the dead he recounted in some detail. When he came to narrate the death of Mohammed for a second time he claimed that Mohammed's followers had retained the body for twelve days instead of the eleven of the 622 annal. Mohammed had again been poisoned yet not by the curious Albimor of Ildephonsus's tale nor by the 'certain friend' of the 622 annal but by some nobles angry at his pride. 217 Matthew added the new information that the burial occurred in the month termed in Arabic 'rabea granvil' and in the sixtieth year of the prophet himself. Matthew's curiosity with regards Mohammed's approval of carnal pleasures develops further in this annal. He claimed that people were attracted to Islam because of the luxuries and carnal delights it permitted and he noted with obvious displeasure Mohammed's injunction that his followers take as many wives and concubines as they could support. Matthew accused him of thinking little of angelic

215 Ibid., pp. 133 and 144.
216 CA iii. 346-349.
217 Ibid. iii. 351-361.
virginity, condemning it as unfruitful without considering that the Lord gave only one Eve to Adam as a helpmate and to bring him offspring. Matthew's disapproval of Mohammed's carnal indulgences led him to enlarge upon the role played by Mohammed in his relationship with Khadija. The versions of Ildephonsus, Roger Wendover and the Chronica's annal for 622 suggest that Khadija, attracted by Mohammed's beauty and eloquence had considered him fair game and had seized the opportunity to talk to him by admiring some of the goods that he was trading. Matthew could not be content with this. Mohammed must have played a larger part. By the time that Matthew came to write the annal for 1236 Mohammed had seduced and polluted her by a clandestine connection. 'Truly was this Mahomet a poisonous dragon, a beast blooded with the slaughter of many...' Matthew could be literarily inspired even by those historical figures of which he disapproved.

What were Matthew's sources for the material on Mohammed that he incorporated into the Chronica's annal for 1236. Luard suggested that Matthew had shared common sources with both James of Vitri's history of Jerusalem and Vincent of Beauvais's Speculum Historiale for his Mohammed material. He suggests on at least two occasions that he may have had access to the Koran. In a section dealing with the beliefs of the Saracens he stated that 'according to the writings of Mahomet they abominate idolatry'. On another occasion '...Mahomet

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218 Continuatio, col.321. Flores i. 121.

219 CM iii. 353; 'Idola autem ex documento machometo detestantur...'. Also ibid. iii. 345; 'Cum eadem tandem femina occulto coitu ipse adhaesit camque in uxorem duxit.

220 Ibid. iii. xiii.
confesses with his own mouth that he never had and never should perform any miracle...'. 221 Matthew made direct reference to the Koran and it is possible that he was familiar with its tenets. A Cluniac translation of the Koran entitled the 'Liber legis Saracenorum quem Alcoran vocant', commissioned from Robert Ketton by Peter the Venerable made accessible to Western scholars from the late twelfth century onwards the writings of Mohammed. 222 Yet it seems that Matthew also deployed oral sources; 'As we have commenced to give an account of this impostor, Mahomet, which we heard from a celebrated preacher of great renown, who preached in rebuke of the law of the said Mahomet, having been sent to the countries of the east for that especial purpose, we have thought proper to insert it in these pages. 223

Matthew's knowledge of figures from a distant Anglo-Saxon and foreign past and his endeavours to place them within a historical framework have been explored. The illustrations to his chronicles, and his genealogical and heptarchic diagrams ooze the theatricality of his vision of the past. That vision fed on issues of religion and nationality. Christianity coloured most of what Matthew thought or wrote about the past. It condemned Mohammed, it drew strings of English monarchs clutching models of their monastic foundations and it patterned the heptarchic diagram of Claudius D vi with colourful church spires. Xenophobia underlay his hostile attacks on the Danes.

221 Ibid. iii. 350; 'Ecce Machomet ore proprio confitetur se aliquod miraculum nec fecisse, nec esse factum'.


223 CA iii. 355; 'Quia igitur de impostore illo, scilicet Machometi inchoatur narratio, quam per quendam magni nominis celebrem praedicatorem, qui ejusdem Machometi legem praedicando reprobavit, ad hoc specialiter in partes Orientales destinatus, accepimus, huic paginæ duximus inserendam
in the *Estoire*, his enmity against Harold I and his slamming of the foreign counsel upon which kings such as Edwiu and Hardecnut had allegedly depended. Matthew's opinions and prejudices served to structure the past, to impose upon it an order and symmetry. It was important to Matthew that his past be symmetrical. It mattered that the three blasphemies of Mohammed be punished by three repulsive methods of death and it mattered that Edward's possession of the Seven gifts of the Holy Spirit should have led him to cure seven blind men. With the Tartars hammering down the doors of Europe nothing lay beyond the reach of the beckoning hand of chaos except history itself. Symmetrical and predetermined, the theatre of the past offered a never-ending performance for those world-weary enough to purchase a ticket.
Chapter Five

MATTHEW PARIS AND THE NORMAN CONQUEST

Matthew believed that the West Saxon dynasty, Anglo-Saxon England, all things English had surged towards a sparkling zenith during the reign of the chaste and holy Edward the Confessor. Offa, Alfred and the abbots of St Albans were the historical prelude. With the accession of Edward, the ragged rope of history had been neatly knotted at the end. On St Calixtus's day 1066 the knot was sliced through and the rope rewoven with a Norman thread. What did our famous xenophobe make of this act of sabotage? Drawing upon the evidence of seven of his works, the Chronica Maiora, Historia Anglorum, Flores Historiarum, Abbreviatio Chronicorum, Gesta Abbatum, Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei and the abridged version of the Chronica contained in B.L. Cotton Vitellius A xx, Matthew's portrayal of the Norman Conquest and the reign of William the Conqueror will be explored. How were these tumultuous years regarded by a monk who first put quill to quire in the second quarter of the thirteenth century? 1

Before beginning to trace the blossoming of Matthew's vision of the Norman Conquest, it is worth presenting afresh the chronology of those texts in which that vision is enshrined. The Chronica Maiora was begun in around

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1 Matthew evidently regarded the Norman Conquest as a historical landmark; the Historia opens with the annal for 1066 and ornamental rubric and page headers adorning the Chronica begin only with the account of this year; De Tempore Regis Haroldi' heads f. 87r of CCCC 26. Matthew's illustrations of heraldic shields in the margins of the Chronica also begin in this year; see S. Lewis, The Art of Matthew Paris in the Chronica Maiora (Aldershot, 1987), pp 175-177, for a discussion of the shields denoting the accessions and deaths of Harold and William I. A list of the abbots of St Albans written by Matthew into the left-hand margin of CCCC 16, f.41v is interrupted by the words 'Post conquestum anglie' after which follows the first Norman abbot Paul and Matthew's short genealogical chronicle on ff. iiiirv of the same manuscript is similarly divided at the Conquest.
1240 and completed as far as the annal for 1250, by February 1251. The
Historia Anglorum was begun in 1250 and by 1255, the text was complete as
far as the annal for 1253 with which the work ends. The Abbreviatio
 Chronicorum is roughly dateable to some time after 1255. Book one of the
Flores Historiarum ending with the annal for 1066 can be dated to
approximately 1240-45. Book two, as far as 1249, was probably written
during the period 1250-1252. Its account of the reign of William made use
of the Chronica, Historia Abbreviatio and Gesta Abbatum. The short
chronicle contained in Vitellius A xx is an abridged version of the Chronica.
Its text extending from 1066-1246 draws upon the Abbreviatio, Wendover's
Flores and the 'new material' that Matthew also added to the margins of
CCC 26 and 16 (the autograph Chronica) and incorporated into the text of
ChE. Vaughan implies that this abridgement of the Chronica was completed
before book two of Matthew's Flores, that is, before 1250-1252. The Gesta


3 Ibid., pp. 113-114.


5 Ibid., pp. 102-103. (Vaughan is doubtful as to whether book two was actually written out
by Matthew; ibid., p. 108.) Dates assigned to events in the Flores differ frequently from
those assigned by the Chronica and Historia. According to the Flores, Queen Edith died
"nonas Aprilis" in 1075. The Chronica and Historia ascribe the event to "decimo quinto
kalendas Januarii" 1074. The Flores places the quarrel between Gregory VII and Henry IV
under the annal for 1078 (instead of the Chronica's 1077) and includes in this same annal
two events that are considered under the year 1087 in the Historia and Chronica: the
death of Robert Guiscard and William's promotion of Maurice to the bishopric of London,
William to Norwich and Robert to Chester. Why should Matthew have revised his dating
of events in the Flores when only a couple of years before he had retained intact the
Chronica's scheme of dating in his writing of the Historia? It is likely that this 'revised'
chronology, found also in the opening annals of the abridgement of the Chronica in
Vitellius A xx [henceforth ''], stems from Matthew's incorporation of details from a
collection of monastic annals termed by Vaughan, Matthew's 'new material'.

6 For discussion of this chronicle and Matthew's 'new material' see Vaughan, Matthew
Paris, pp. 105-109 and 115-116. 's annal for 1074 draws upon the Abbreviatio's account
of the restoration of St Wulfstan, (f. 77v and AC p. 171) and it incorporates most of
those additions that Matthew made to Wendover's Flores including his erroneous dating
of the consecration of Lanfranc (f. 77r, C/ ii. 7), the attack on John, archbishop of
Rouen by the monks of St Ouen (f. 77r, C/ ii. 11) and the decapitation of Waltheof and
his burial at Croyland (f. 78r, C/ ii. 19). It contains many details that are not to be
found in the Chronica, Historia or Abbreviatio and these are presumably drawn the 'new
Abbatum was completed in two stages by 1255. Its account of the Conquest spans the abbacies of Frederick and Paul. The Estoire de Seint Edward le Rei was probably produced at some point during the period 1236-1245. Based largely upon two works by Ailred of Rievaulx, the Vita Aedwardi Confessoris and the De Genealogia Regum Anglorum, it possesses the singular attraction of ending with an account of the Conquest independently compiled by Matthew Paris. That compilation draws upon book one of the Flores. These works provide examples of annalistic, biographical and poetical workings of historical material on the Conquest employing both Latin and Anglo-Norman as the linguistic media. The imagination and versatility that underlay Matthew's historical technique are clearly demonstrated.

material; it elaborates upon the reason why William was crowned by Aldred rather than Stigand, it mentions the consecration of Queen Mathilda under the annal for 1068 and it supplies several specific dates for events such as William's plundering of the monasteries in 1070 ('secundo nonas aprillis') and the council of 1072 that dealt with the primacy dispute ('vi Idus aprilis'). Its chronology, like that of the Flores, is frequently at variance with that of the Chronica; the death of Queen Edith is included in the annal for 1075 rather than 1074, as indeed it is in Matthew's Flores. The translation of St Nicholas to Bari is considered under 1077 rather than the Chronica's 1087 and the statement that a girl laden with gold could have traversed the kingdom of England in safety is to be found in the annal for 1087 instead of that for 1085.

7 Wats, pp.29-34 (GA i. 41-66).

8 Estoire, p. xxii. See introduction, pp.11-12.

9 J.P. Migne (ed.), Beati Aelredi Abbatis Rievallensis Opera Omnia, PL, cxcv (1853); Genealogia Regum Anglorum cols. 711-738 and Vita Sancti Edwardi Regis, cols. 738-790. The Gesta implies that abbot Laurence of Westminster compiled a history of Edward the Confessor; Wats, p.53 (GA i. 159). In fact, he commissioned the work from Ailred, having collected some of the raw materials; Thomson, Manuscripts, i. 46. See Estoire, pp. xxiii-xxix for analysis of the precise extent to which Matthew depended on the works of Ailred. His original contributions include material on the character and rule of Harold (ll. 3615-3634, 3895-3922, 4067-4344 and 4445-4510) and a lavish description of Edward's church at Westminster (ll. 2290-2323). See also Fritz, Über Verfasser, passim.

10 The Estoire's use of the Flores was first established by Vaughan, Matthew Paris, pp. 39-41 and 102-103. He cites two metaphors that Matthew added to the Flores in his description of the battle of Hastings and that appear in corresponding passages in the Estoire; FHI i. 591, 595 and 596 and Estoire ll. 4529, 4557, and 4568. In addition, the Flores's assertion that Edward remained childless because of a reluctance to propagate heirs from a daughter of Godwine, (pp. 588-589), is paralleled in ll. 1267-1270 of the Estoire.
Even the least scholarly of monastic readers for whom these texts (with the exception of the Estoire and possibly the Historia) were written, must have noticed the remarkable degree of consistency in their portrayal of the events of 1066. The uniform texture of Matthew's argument concerning the political and moral issues at stake in this year and the simplicity of his characterisation of the chief protagonists are atypical of his handling of the reign of William I as a whole. They will receive brief preliminary consideration.

Matthew's non-annalistic works express most succinctly the conclusions he has reached concerning events that preceded and succeeded William's landing at Pevensey on 28 September 1066. According to the Gesta Harold rashly usurped (temere usurpavit) the kingdom of England 'quod eum exili iure contingebat'. The Estoire likens the son of Godwine to "a false one and a pretender" who "breaks the covenant to which he has sworn/ Towards God and his people perjured." These convictions bind closely the works of Matthew, and their expression hinges on a literary recreation of Harold's political and religious isolation in 1066.

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11 The Estoire is dedicated to Queen Eleanor of Provence, wife of Henry III at ll. 49-72. P. Binski suggests that the Cambridge copy was made for Eleanor of Castile, daughter-in-law of Henry III around the time of her marriage to Prince Edward in 1254; 'Reflections on La Estoire de Saint Aedward le Rei: Hagiography and Kingship in Thirteenth-Century England', Journal of Medieval History xvi (1990), 333-349, 339 and see also P. Binski, 'Abbot Berkyng's Tapestries and Matthew Paris's Life of St Edward the Confessor', Archaeologia, cix (1991), 141-144, 95. His argument is based on a reference in Eleanor's wardrobe accounts for 1288 (PRO E101/352/11 mem. 2) for the repair of the Queen's books of the lives of the blessed Thomas and St Edward. HA iii. xxxii. suggests that the Historia was intended for the king.

12 Wats, p. 29 (G1 4 i. 41).

Roger Wendover's *Flores Historiarum* contains material suggestive of Harold's political isolation in this year. His annal for 1059 recounts Harold's ill-fated fishing expedition, his claim, from captivity, that he had been sent by King Edward on matters of great moment and his confirmation, on oath, of the kingdom of England to Duke William of Normandy. Roger's original contribution to this, the version of William of Malmesbury, consists of an allusion to the belief that Harold had been commissioned by the King to bring Duke William to England in 1059. While the role of Edward in the events of 1059 is not entirely expunged, the degree of his involvement is tacitly called into question under the annal for 1066: Harold denies the validity of the oath he swore to William on the grounds that it was made under duress and without consultation of the nation. The *Chronica Maiora* and the *Flores Historiarum* retain this version unaltered. It is left to the *Historia Anglorum* to further the suggestion that the political manoeuvres undertaken by Harold in 1059 lacked royal authorisation. In the prologue to the *Historia*, Harold claims that he had journeyed to Normandy with the intention of arranging his own marriage to William's daughter. There is no suggestion whatsoever of Edward's implication in the events of 1059. This omission might conceivably be attributed to the process of abridgement at work in the *Historia*. Only the *Estoire* upholds William's claims to the throne, and its attempt to free Edward of a charge of complicity in the succession of Harold further betrays its conviction. The *Abbreviatio* 

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14 CM i. 529.

15 Ibid. i. 529, n. 4.

16 Ibid. i. 538-539.

17 Ibid., i. 529 and FH i. 579.

18 HA i. 5-6.

19 *Estoire*, ll. 4083-4087, 3618-3628, 3903 for statements of William's claim to the throne. The way in which the *Estoire* seeks to free Edward of any blame for Harold's usurpation is discussed by Binski, 'Reflections', pp. 341-343.
Chronicorum, briefly alluding to the rumour that Edward had sent Harold to promise the throne in 1059, decisively rejects it on the grounds that it 'appeared to differ from the truth'. In short, Matthew seeks to eradicate any suggestion of the complicity of Edward in events of 1059. The proud and deceitful King Harold, who lacked the legitimacy inherent in royal support, is made solely responsible for subsequent political upheavals.

Harold's crimes were not limited to political indiscretion. An indiscreet and perfidious perjurer, he epitomized moral injustice and invited religious opposition. Matthew's conviction of the justice of William's cause and his vilification of Harold's religious and moral virtue hinge on simplistic character portrayals of the two men. Matthew once more built upon material that he had derived from Roger Wendover. The latter's hasty and astute King Harold, who extorted an oath of faith, crowned himself and greedily appropriated the booty gained at Stamford, was no match for the Norman duke who sought the sanction of apostolic authority for his enterprise and procured a favourable wind with the help of St Valery. Harold's sins were synonymous with those of the inebriated English who prepared for battle by singing and feasting. William's army confessed their sins, attended mass and as a result, were protected by the hand of God. The Flores Historiarum contains the earliest, lengthiest and most original of Matthew's portrayals of the events of 1066. It is heavily laden with suggestions of the divine favour that accompanied the Norman cause; the mysterious voice that prophesied

20 AC, p.168. The annals of Osney indirectly comment upon Matthew's coverage of this dispute; H.R. Luard, Annales Monastici 4 vols. (1864-1869), iv, p.7.

21 CM i. 537-542 based largely upon William of Malmesbury's GR i. 280-282 and 297-300.

22 CM i. 541.

23 FH i. 593-599.
the supremacy of William and his successors for one-hundred and fifty years
years, the cross at Waltham that bowed down to Harold and foretold his
demise. 24 Most striking is the analogy drawn between Christ's entry into
Jerusalem and William's arrival in London in 1066, when Norman and
Englishman alike are said to have welcomed him with the words 'Blessed be
he who comes in the name of Christ'. 25 Harold of course had received no
such welcome. The Flores is the first of Matthew's works to indicate papal
disleasure at Harold's seizure of the English throne and the disregard for
ecclesiastical solemnity and the consent of prelates that it implied. 26

The Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei adopts and elaborates upon the
portrayal of Harold found in the Flores, deriving its ammunition from the
works of Ailred and the additions by Matthew. Son of the attainted traitor
Earl Godwine, Harold is first encountered in bloody and deadly combat with
his brother Tostig, a foreshadowing of his crushing of Tostig at Stamford. 27

24 Ibid. i. 598 and 597. A reference to Harold's burial at Waltham is to be found in
Matthew's short genealogical chronicle that occupies ff. iiirv of CCCC 16.

25 FH i. 599. The reference is based upon Mark 11:9. Matthew's description of the arrival
of Richard of Cornwall in the Chronica's annal for 1240 is couched in similar terms; '...at
his arrival all seemed to be united with the inhabitants of heaven, and were refreshed with
inexpressible joy and exultation; for, raising their hands towards heaven, they cried,
"Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord." ' (CM iv. 71. I have cited the
308.) It is interesting to note, by way of comparison, that Matthew's Vie de Seint Auban
models its portrayal of Offa's search for the relics of St Alban, on the journey of the Magi;
M.R. Kauffmann, 'Hagiography, Pictorial Narrative, and the Politics of Kingship: Studies
in the 'Matthew Paris' Saints' Lives and Illustrations to the Life of St Louis' (unpublished
PhD thesis, Courtauld Institute, 1992), pp. 50 and 166.

26 FH i. 598. This particular passage strengthens the argument for Matthew's authorship
of the Flores; it possesses the anti-papal sentiment that pervades his works in general. The
Pope and cardinals are said to have hidden their displeasure at Harold's actions until his
defeat at Hastings when they rapidly sided with the more powerful and victorious hand,
(duke William). Matthew likens them to 'reeds tossed by a whirlwind'. For a brief
consideration of Matthew's anti-papalism see Vaughan, Matthew Paris, pp. 141-142.

27 Vita, col. 766 and Estoire, ii. 3133-3237. Ailred's Vita departs from the anonymous Vita
written in the eleventh century in its expression of hatred for the Godwinesons; F. Barlow
(ed.), Vita Aedwardi Regis Qui Apud Westmonasterium Requiescit, (Nelsons Medieval
Adoption of Ailred's violent metaphorical imagery is not the only means by which Matthew launched his literary crusade against Harold. The wicked perjury implicit in Harold's seizure of the throne is conveyed by means of direct speech, composed by Matthew, in which Harold renounces all claim to kingship of the English and acknowledges Edward's desire that it pass to William. An admonition delivered rather unfittingly by archbishop Stigand warns of the religious isolation Harold will suffer if he breaks the promises he made in 1059:

\[
L'\text{arceveske Stigand respunt,} \\
E \text{li prelat ki presunt sunt;} \\
'Duc Haraud, ben le sacez} \\
Ke si cest cuvenant fausez, \\
Pur moi le di, a ki apent \\
A fere ceu seint sacrement, \\
N'ert prelat en la regiun \\
Ki vus face l'enuncciun, \\
N'ert humme de nostre commune \\
Ki vus mette eu chef curune.\] 29

The Historia retains this simplistic comparison of the religious virtues of Harold and William. In 1066 William 'deservedly provoked' and aided by the vengeance of God defeated Harold, who, having crowned himself without ecclesiastical authority and boldly denying all that had been said, 'chose the crime of perjury'. Only the account in Vitellius A xx maintains an air of

28 EStoire, Il. 3615-3634 and 3895-3912.
29 Ibid., Il. 3913-3922.
30 HA i. 5-6. Matthew's rubrics to his picture of the crown of Harold on f. 86v, CCCC 26, make plain his affiliations: 'Scutum et corona regis Haroldi sibi regnum usurpantis'. In the list of kings from Ine to Henry III that occupies the first flyleaf of CCCC 16, Harold is described as 'ignobilis' and in the royal genealogies with which Matthew prefaced the Abbreviatio Chronicorum in B.L. Claudius D vi. the medallion representing Harold is shaded black, (f.11v).
neutralité and this stems probably from the brevity of the text rather than any conscious intention of Matthew. 31

The various accounts of the Conquest in Matthew's historical works are characterized by consistent interpretation of characters and events. A literary juxtaposition of the stereotypical tyrannus (Harold) and pius dux (William), coupled with sustained emphasis upon the political and religious misdemeanors of Harold, are subtly interwoven to form the tightly-knit argument upon which Matthew's portrayal of a turbulent period of history is based. This is not to say that passionate and poetical narrative falls by the wayside. Matthew devotes some of his most creative writing to the description of the battle of Hastings in the Flores. Amidst the sounds of clashing armour, the neighing of horses, the crashing of spears, the reverberating of shields, the groans of the wounded and the cries of the dying, Harold, greedy for treasure and unmindful of promises, battled with the circumspect and magnanimous Duke William. 32

Owing considerably less to purposeful clarity of thought, Matthew's handling of the period between 1067 and 1087 is characterised by ambiguity. His most heavily rewritten and reinterpreted account of these twenty years is contained in the Historia Anglorum, and it is largely upon the evidence of this text that subsequent discussion of Matthew's historical approach to the reign of the first Anglo-Norman king will be based. 33

31 V reads as follows: 'Obiit Aedwardus rex, patronus ecclesie Westmonasterii, quam restauraverat, et conventum sub ordine sancti Benedicti in eadem ordinaverat in vigilia Epiphanie. Cui successit Haraldus filius Godwini, xvi kal. Maii et Willelmus dux Normannorum Angliam intravit vi idus Octobris, et bellum fuit inter eum et Haraldum, ii idus Octobris, et Willelmus dux Normannie, perempto Haraldo, factus est rex Anglie.'

32 FH i. 595-596.

33 Hý, i. 5-35.
Tyrannus or christianissimus rex? Indecisive characterisation of King William is a salient feature of the Historia's account of the years following the Conquest. Roger Wendover's account of William's reception in London, attributed to the year 1067, is brief and to the point. The king, he claimed, was received with much exultation by clergy and people. Matthew seizes the opportunity to build upon this theme the foundations of a pious portrayal of his subject in the opening pages of the Historia. Having killed the proud and deceitful king Harold and defeated his enemies, Duke William travelled joyously to London and on account of his 'piam iustitiam et iustam pietatem' he was graciously received. Appearing to the people 'quasi hostiam de caelo transmissam', he was honoured with precious gifts, the ringing of bells and religious processions. Matthew's Duke William is once again the Christ-like figure of the Flores. He is even worthy of comparison with the royal founder of St Albans upon whom Matthew lavished much literary attention. An allusion to Beornred of Mercia in relation to the tyrannical injustices of Harold invites the drawing of an analogy between William and King Offa who ousted Beornred from the kingship of Mercia in 757. The message conveyed by the opening lines of the Historia is clear. William, the popular 'triumphator magnificus', had achieved in 1066, a moral as well as a military victory.

34 CM i. 1.

35 HA i. 7-8. This simile is employed also in Matthew's Vitae Offarum with reference to the friendship between King Offa of Mercia and Charlemagne, Wats, p.14 (B.L. Nero D i ff.17v-18r). The image of William presented here is a little at odds with that conjured up by Matthew's glosses on the Merlin prophecies in the Chronica Maiora, where William, 'detestans pompam talem et ritum Sarracenum', was responsible for the iconoclastic demolition of a statue of the British king Lud which was believed to guard the gates and city of London. CM i. 201.

36 HA i. 8. D. ASC (F), s.a.757.
By the time the middle of the account for 1067 is reached, Matthew's portrayal has undergone a remarkable alteration of stance. Employing Henry of Huntingdon as a source, Wendover states that, the Conqueror, returning from Normandy in 1067, expelled the English from their possessions and bountifully distributed them amongst his warriors. When Matthew came to write the *Historia* in 1250, he considered the action disagreeable. William, 'tyrannizans', distributed the goods 'ingrate more'. This unfavourable depiction of the Conqueror represents a drastic change of opinion. Had Matthew been asked to explain his *volte face* he might have pointed an accusatory finger at what he perceived to be the turbulent and changeable character of the king himself. In the *Flores Historiarum*, William, realizing, in 1067, that he had attained a position of supremacy, 'in alium virum subito est transmutatus'. The *Abbreviatio* similarly notes the King's sudden acquisition of a wicked streak; Edgar the Aetheling fled to Scotland in 1067 having witnessed the kingdom of England in dangerous circumstances and 'cor regis in arcum pravum conversum'. The king was a while abandoning this mood if the *Historia* is to be believed. In the annal for 1076 the *Historia* deplores William's tyrannical oppression of the nobles, his extortion of money, his seizure of property and his fattening of Normans and foreigners on the proceeds. In his pillaging of the monasteries in the spring of 1070 William acted 'sanctorum patrum non deferens sanctionibus, cartis aut statutis', and those clergy whom he had caused to die in exile and poverty

37 *CM* ii. 1.

38 *HA* i. 8.

39 *FH* ii. 1-2.


41 *HA* i. 22-23.
had heartily condemned him for his tyrannical behaviour. The tyrannus of these years is a far cry from the William who, laden with symbols of divine favour, fought at Hastings on St Calixtus' day 1066. The William of 1067 onwards is a pater ferarum, a father of wild beasts, holding in low esteem human affection.

The christianissimus rex re-emerges in the annal for 1087 where he is discovered piously bequeathing bishoprics to his three chaplains and commending himself to the prayers of religious men. On his deathbed, suffering from an internal rupture that he had incurred at Mantes, he prayed submissively that part of his treasure be used to construct a monastery for the redemption of his soul. He confessed himself to have sinned greatly against the English nobility whom he had deceived by false promises. A marginal addition in the autograph manuscript alongside the annal for 1087 tells of 'Iste Willelmus conqueror Angliae, rex christianissimus', who founded two monasteries, at Battle and Selby, the first in honour of the victory obtained at Hastings and the second, in atonement for his poisoning of a relative. There follows a brief philosophical excursus on the king's inability to repent until finally he receives communion.

The fervour with which Matthew endeavours to attach the epithet christianissimus to his image of the Conqueror is made equally explicit by his omission of material included in Roger Wendover's Flores Historiarum. The latter, relying on William of Malmesbury's De Gestis Regum, tells of

42 Ibid. i. 13. This attempt to show ecclesiastical disapproval of William's deeds parallels the similar treatment of Harold outlined above. Matthew's genealogical chronicle on ff.iirv of CCCC 16, summarizes the nature of William's rule in one sentence: 'Bonas legas sancti Edwardi tenere, iuravit sed in regno confirmatus iuramentum fregit.'.

43 HA i. 29.

44 Ibid. i. 32-35.
William's burning of the church of Mantes in 1087, resulting in the fiery deaths of two nuns who had been unwilling to abandon their sanctuary.45 None of this is to be found in the Historia. Moreover the manner in which Matthew has tailored his account of subsequent events is intriguing. In Roger's account, the king incurred a disease by approaching too near the burning church.46 In the Historia, Matthew explains the king's ill-health in terms that are deliberately vague. 'Et repentino impetu facto et occulto, multas civitas et vicos francorum, spreto corporis periculi succendit.'47 Roger's reference to money bequeathed by William for the rebuilding of St Mary's church is omitted in the Historia, where the king's deathbed request for the construction of a monastery is fulfilled by Henry I's work at Reading.48 Matthew's clever manipulation of Wendover's annal for 1087 seeks to exclude material that might have enabled the piety of his protagonist to be called into question. Matthew thus completes the circular character portrayal of the Conqueror that dominates his account of events in the Historia.

Matthew's Flores Historiarum, although a later work, shows signs of greater confusion in its portrayal of William. That confusion stems in part from its amalgamation or material located in Wendover's Flores, the Historia and Abbreviatio and its incorporation of new material added to the margins of the Chronica.49 It seems concerned on the one hand to omit material

45 CM ii. 24.
46 Ibid. ii. 24.
47 HA i. 33-34.
48 CM ii. 24 and HA i. 35.
49 Vaughan, Matthew Paris, pp. 103-109. Drawn from Matthew's 'new material' is the Flores's account of the death of William I found also in the Gesta: FH ii. 17 and Wats. p.31 (G4 i. 53).
unfavourable to William, the murder of Robert of Comines in 1068, the rebellion of Roger of Hereford in 1075 and the murder of Bishop Walcher of Durham in 1080. Suggestion of William's direct implication in the execution of Waltheof is avoided. Yet the resultant portrayal is no simpler as a result. The William of 1067 who, 'exultant in victory gave praise to God and constructed an abbey...' is the William who in 1070 rummaged through monastic coffers for treasures and charters of liberty. The *Flores*, although later in date, cannot be regarded as a maturation of the representation of the Conquest contained in the *Historia*.

It is the lingering indecision of the *Historia* that first creates an image of split personality in the Conqueror and pushes it beyond that imparted by Wendover's *Flores*. Matthew's own awareness of the inconsistency of his approach is apparent in the annal for 1086 where he seeks to reconcile discordant elements in his characterisation of the king; 'Et quia mundanas eius ferocitates descripsimus eiusdem pia opera non praetereamus.' Matthew's *Flores* seeks a similar reconciliation when it suggests that the personal piety of the king allowed his tyranny to escape divine punishment. Dual personality in a leader was not wholly undesirable. Christian magnanimity and fortune in war combined to produce the *prudentissimus*

50 *FH* i. 9.

51 Ibid. ii. 3-4.

52 *HA* i. 30. Matthew's attempt to achieve balance in his portrayal of William is reminiscent of his treatment of the abbots in the *Gesta*; in the latter work he frequently turns from an appraisal of each abbot's good deeds to a consideration of his *negligentia* with a variant of the phrase 'Sed quia non est homo qui non peccet...'. Wats, pp.33, 35, 40, 42, 59, 61, 67. (*GA* i. 62, 71, 94/95, 108/109, 181, 193, 215).

53 *FH* ii. 15. Kauffmann suggests that the common concern of contemporary writers on political legitimacy such as Gerald of Wales in his *De Principis Instructione* and John of Wales in his *Communilogium*, was to attempt definition of the characteristics of a tyrant as opposed to those of a legitimate ruler; 'Hagiography. Pictorial Narrative and the Politics of Kingship', pp. 178-180. Matthew appears to be battling with a similar concern.
rector. The *Estoire* is brimming with this kind of philosophy. Its opening lines seek to define two types of good and holy kingship, that based on might and bravery and that on good counsel, peace and moderation. 54 Edward is a lamb in peace and a lion in war, Cnut, a good Christian and a good governor. 55 Matthew's *Vie de Seint Auban* terms Offa 'Agnes en pais, liun en guerre. 56 In the *Historia*, however, an amalgamation of the two facets of William's personality is never entirely convincing. The king is merely one or the other at various stages in the narrative. There even appears to be a clear chronological pattern to Matthew's attribution of certain characteristics to William. Early in 1067 he is a popular, christian king. From the middle of the annal for 1067 until the early 1080s he is tyrant, inexorable to those who rebel against him. The closing years of his reign witness the reappearance of the most Christian ruler, almsgiver and penitent.

Matthew's paradoxical portrayal of the reign of William stems in part from the nature of the historiographical tradition upon which he entered. William of Malmesbury betrays perhaps earliest recognition of the gulf that divided the English and the continental approaches to the events of 1066 and the ensuing years. In the preface to book three of his *De Gestis Regum* he noted that,

De Willelmo rege scripserunt, diversis incitati causis, et Normanni et Angli: illi ad nimis efferati sunt laudes, bona malaque iuxta in caelum praedicantes; ista, pro gentilibus inimicitii, foedis dominum suum proscidere convitiis. 57

54 *Estoire*, ll. 1-22.

55 Ibid., ll. 910-913 and 387.


57 *GR* ii. 283.
William's testimony is amply born out by the sources. William of Poitiers's unfinished *Gesta Guilielmi*, completed in around 1077, is primarily eulogistic.\(^{58}\) William, duke of Normandy, the brave warrior who outstripped Xerxes, Agamemnon and Julius Caesar, was fully justified in avenging the perjury committed by the 'mad Englishman' Harold who had sworn fealty to him at Bonneville. Spiritually fortified with the body and blood of Christ, wearing around his neck the relics on which his opponent had sworn and bearing aloft the papal standard, William set about the necessary task of reforming Christian rites in England through conquest. Following his victory, the English people cheerfully acquiesced in his leadership at London and the English church *voluntarily* gave him goods to carry to Normandy.

Meanwhile the 'abominable tyrant' Harold lay rotting in a *tumulus* by the seashore.\(^{59}\) The authors of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and John (Florence) of Worcester contribute nothing to the elaborately pro-Norman literary edifice constructed by William of Poitiers. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* suppresses any hint of a promise of the throne to William and laments the suffering of the English.\(^{60}\) 'Florence' passionately maintains that Harold 'quam rex ante suam decessionem regni successorem elegerat a totius Angliae electus est.'\(^{61}\)

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60 ASC s.a 1066.

The consistency and simplicity of the very different approaches to the Norman conquest adopted by early English and continental sources were not sustained in writings of later years. The demise of a clear-cut, dual historiographical tradition was only to be expected as natural processes of social integration strove to soften cultural divides and the passing of time blurred memory and weakened prejudice. By 1121 the monk of Peterborough who penned version E of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* could indulge in a little eulogy of the Conqueror, claiming unexpectedly that 'King William of whom we speak was a very wise man and very powerful and worshipful and stronger than any predecessor of his had been.'62 A while later, Henry of Huntingdon, who presented a threefold justification for William's anger in 1066, could criticize the ferocity of the Normans, the injustice of their taxes and the greed of their princes.63 A similar degree of confusion is mirrored in a domestic chronicle written by Symeon of Durham, the *Historia Dunelmensis Ecclesiae*.64 Marching north to avenge the murder of Robert of Comnines in 1068, William's army is surrounded by a thick mist at Allerton thanks to the meteorological talents of St Cuthbert. For his desire to have visual proof of Durham's claim to possess the relics of the saint, William is gripped by an intense heat and forced to flee.65 Only a page or so later, however, he is 'the most excellent King William'.66

Conscious attempts to steer a middle course were occasionally made. William of Malmesbury confessed a desire for balance in his account of the

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62 ASC (E), s.a. 1086.
63 Historia, pp. 198, 199 and 208.
64 The *Historia Dunelmensis Ecclesiae* was edited by T. Arnold in *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia* 2 vols. (Rolls Series, 1882-1885).
66 Ibid., p. 122.
Norman Conquest 'quia utriusque gentis sanguinem traho'. Having alleged that Harold paid for his perfidy at the hands of an unwarlike race, William justifies his words:

Nec hoc dicens virtuti Normannorum derogo quibus tum pro genere tum pro beneficiis, fidem habet. sed mihi videntur errare qui Angli numerum accumulant et fortitudinem extuivant.

William of Newburgh is similarly diplomatic in his suggestion that the duke made war on Harold 'vel dominandi vel causa ulciscendi iniurias'. Yet even these giants of twelfth-century historiography fall prey to lingering uncertainties. William of Malmesbury could speak with great passion of the devastation of the north yet condemn the rebellion of 1075, and although William of Newburgh believed the duke to be 'blessed with success and uniquely prominent among bastards', he had nevertheless 'gained the kingdom at the price of much Christian blood'. When Roger Wendover began to compile his account of the Conquest in the early years of the thirteenth century, his sources, numbering twelve, contained all the necessary ingredients for an ambiguous interpretation of the reign. William of Malmesbury's king who regularly attends mass stands alongside Henry of

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67 GR ii. 283.

68 Ibid. i 282.


70 GR ii. 308-309 and 311-314. Walsh and Kennedy, William of Newburgh, p. 41.

71 Wendover's sources were the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the Peterborough Chronicle, John of Worcester's Chronicon ex Chronicis, William of Malmesbury's De Gestis Regum, Henry of Huntingdon's Historia Anglorum, Ailred of Rievaulx's De Genealogia Regum Anglorum, the chronicle of Robert de Monte, the Historia Eliensis, Ralph Diceto's Abbreviation Chronicorum, the Annales Sancti Stephani Cadomensis, the Vitae Pontificum and the chronicle of Sigebert de Gembloux.
Huntingdon's evil tyrant who contrived by a most wicked plan that, where there used to be the conversation of humans and the practise of holy worship, ran stags and untamed animals. It is scarcely surprising that Matthew failed to eliminate from his portrayal an ambiguity that stemmed from early conflicting, partisan accounts, crude attempts to amalgamate those accounts in the twelfth century, and the compilative techniques of later writers such as Diceto and Wendover. Moreover, Matthew's resultant confusion regarding William I coloured his portrayal of another early Norman figure; ambivalence also swathed his account of the first Norman abbot of St Albans, Paul, who is condemned for smashing the tombs of his Anglo-Saxon predecessors and failing to translate the relics of Offa yet praised for his reforms, his building work and his acquisition of land for the abbey. Matthew could conclude that his good deeds exceeded his bad deeds. As in the case of the Conqueror, the balance of Matthew's opinion was finely pivoted.

An ambivalent portrayal of the Conqueror is not the only observable feature of the Historia's handling of the reign of William I. At several points in the Historia's account of these years it is possible to detect an 'anglicizing' of information extracted from Wendover's Flores via the Chronica Maiora, the superimposition of a pro-English interpretation of events. The text betrays Matthew's considerable solidarity with English resistance in the 1060s and 1070s. Wendover's English nobles who flee in fear of perpetual vassalage are transformed in the pages of the Historia into gallant rebels who prefer to try their own strength and virtue rather than submit to the most ingracious tyrant

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72 CA i. 22 and 20.

73 Wats, pp. 29-34 (GA i. 51-66).

74 Wats, p. 66 (GA i. 64).
William and the pride of the Normans.\textsuperscript{75} This alteration in stance perhaps owes something to the claim made by Matthew's Flores that the nobles preferred to die rather than to flee shamelessly.\textsuperscript{76} An empathetic appreciation of the plight of the English at a grass roots level led Matthew to touch upon the defensive measures of the provinces:

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... unde usus inolevit, ut in domibus comprovincialium gesa, clavae, secures, parietibus et postibus appenderentur ut sic a profugis quasi a praedonibus excubantes defenderentur.\textsuperscript{77}
\]

Furthermore, in his account of the conquest of Maine, Matthew describes the English as \textit{invictissimi} and hints at the notion that, through this devastating expedition, the English had paid back the Normans for the events of six years previous.\textsuperscript{78} Matthew's opinions of certain key individuals similarly betray his sympathy for the English cause. Hereward the Wake, leader of the rebellion centring on Ely in 1071, is described as \textit{nobilissimus et in armis strenuissimus}.\textsuperscript{79} Lanfranc's alleged condemnation of English prelates as simple idiots, ignorant of letters, stirred strong emotions in Matthew who claimed with uncharacteristic generosity that the archbishop, although a holy man, had allowed his knowledge to inflate him with secular pride.\textsuperscript{80} Matthew's sensitivity to issues of nationality is apparent even in his reference

\textsuperscript{75} CM i. 2 and HA i. 8.

\textsuperscript{76} FH i. 2.

\textsuperscript{77} HA i. 14.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid. i. 18. The account of the devastation caused by the English in Maine stems ultimately from the entry in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (D and E) for 1073.

\textsuperscript{79} HA i. 15.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid. i. 14-15.
to a former abbot of St Albans, Paul of Caen, whose cordial relationship with William and Lanfranc was, according to Matthew, 'ratione sanguinis et patriae'. Matthew's tendency to whitewash the English cause (in stark contrast to his handling of it under annals for 1066), is apparent in his treatment of Stigand whom he manages to associate with the Norman opposition. To Wendover's condemnation of Stigand as man who held honours not with a view to religion but to satisfy his avarice, Matthew adds the accusation that he was 'regis W[illelmi] fautor subdolit'. Stigand thus becomes an honorary Norman. By the offloading of a deviant Anglo-Saxon Matthew hoped to sanitize the English cause and justify the empathetic stance that his account of the reign of William adopts.

Matthew's eagerness to salvage English esteem is clearly displayed in his treatment of Anglo-Scottish relations during the reign of William I. Both Wendover and Paris retain Malmesbury's whimsical claim that, in 1066, the age of gold became the age of clay. Wendover blames this transformation on the sins of the English. Paris, exerting the kind of anglicizing influence outlined above, reproached the Normans for having driven the 'nobilitas' of the English kings to Scotland, resulting in the saddening fact that

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\text{Nec usque ad tempora haec scribentis,}
\text{videlicet annum gratiae MCCL est}
\text{inventus rex Angliae titulo sanctitatis}
\text{insignitus.}^{84}
\]

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81 Ibid. i. 23.
82 CM ii. 6 and HA i. 13.
83 CM ii. 3 and HA i. 9.
84 Ibid. i. 9. This claim is paralleled in the Estoire at ll 3441-3448.
The kings of England no longer possessed the nobility that gave rise to holiness. Perhaps uncomfortable with the political subordinacy implicit in the image of a vanquished regal nobility seeking refuge in Scotland, Matthew lays emphasis upon the homage paid by the Scottish kings to the kings of England. The annal for 1072, accompanied by a small bearded representation of King Malcolm with a toppling crown or coronet by his side, concerns Malcolm's oath of homage, following his defeat by the Conqueror, with 'innumeris tam Anglorum quam Normannorum agminibus'.\(^85\) A marginal addition recalls three other occasions on which this particular aspect of Anglo-Scottish relations was called into play. The note instructs the reader to turn four folios for an account of how, in 1090, Malcolm king of Scotland paid homage to William Rufus, and proceeds to tell of the homage paid by the Scottish kings to Henry II and his son Henry le Jeune in 1163. Returning to the year 1135, Matthew touches on the request of King Stephen that,

\[
\text{idem rex faceret ei homagium et respondit quod pri[us] fecerat homagium Matildi filiae regis H[enrici] nepti suae.}^{86}
\]

The prominence Matthew gives to the oaths sworn by the Scottish kings reads like an attempt to counterbalance the disturbing political connotations of the devolution of the 'regum Angliae nobilitas' upon the 'reges Scotorum'.\(^87\) His affection for the \textit{gens anglorum}, a term he employs in the

\(^{85}\) \textit{H.A.} i. 16-17.

\(^{86}\) Ibid. i. 16, n. 5.

\(^{87}\) Matthew's sensitivity regarding this issue may stem from the fact that the King of Scotland could legitimately claim to be heir of Edward the Confessor through Margaret, daughter of Edgar the Aetheling.
Gesta Abbatum and the Flores Historiarum, is evident throughout the Historia. 88

Why did Matthew's account of the reign of William, written nearly two centuries after the duke's landing at Pevensey, so clearly favour the English cause? Matthew was almost certainly English himself, and the Historia, as its title suggests, sought to provide a rendition of English history. 89 Yet neither of these factors sufficiently explains why he so subtly rewrote Wendover's conveniently compiled account of these years. Explanation of Matthew's tendency to 'anglicize' history requires the exploration of three potential avenues of influence, the documentary sources, non-annalistic works written by Matthew in the 1240s and the ideologies and prejudices current in England during the reign of Henry III.

Extant documentary sources to which Matthew may have had access are relatively few. That he possessed some knowledge of the charter evidence pertinent to the Conquest is clearly shown by the autograph transcripts surviving in the Liber Additamentorum. 90 A marginal addition in the Historia, beside the annal for 1083, suggests that he knew of Domesday Book and given his proven use of Exchequer records, it is not entirely improbable that he may have viewed it, although this cannot be firmly

88 Wats, p.31 (GA i. 53) and FH ii. 17.

89 On Matthew's nationality see Vaughan, Matthew Paris, p. 1 and HA iii. viii-ix. Vaughan suggested that whilst no great importance should be attached to the phrase 'historia anglorum' in the prologue to the Historia, the writing of the latter work entailed the omission of much of the material in the Chronica that was not relevant to the history of England; Matthew Paris, pp. 111-112. Galbraith argued that the Historia, the Flores and the Abbreviatio were attempts to regain scale and provide his contemporary history with a literary character like that of Wendover's Flores: Roger Wendover and Matthew Paris, p. 41.

90 N, f. 154 and CM vi. 33-34. Both charters are to be found in B, ff.176r-v. in the same order in which they occur in Matthew's Liber Additamentorum.
established. Could it be that Matthew's patriotic portrayal of the reign of William I stems from the information supplied by charters of St Albans?

The *Liber Additamentorum* contains copies of only two charters dateable to the reign of William the Conqueror. The first, issued sometime between 1070 and 1087, grants to the monastery of St Albans all the customs that archbishop Stigand had possessed, including sac, soc, tol and team. The charter states that William acted 'pro Dei timore et sancti Albani amore Lanfranci archiepiscopi me fidelis deprecatione', lending weight to suggestions in the *Chronica, Historia* and *Gesta* of Lanfranc's close association with the monastery. The second charter, again dated to between 1070 and 1087, confirms to St Albans all those lands, churches and tithes that it had held on the day that William became king and it protects the abbey against arbitrary seizure of its property. Both charters adopt a tone that is paternal and supportive, vouching for continuity at the abbey. It is hard to believe that they might have aroused stirrings of pro-English sentiment.

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91 *HA* i. 27, n. 1; 'Nota quod tunc factus est magnus liber qui habitus in thesauro Westmonasterii dicitur Domesdai, et dicitur sic, quia nulli parcit, sicut nec magnus dies judicii.' Matthew's familiarity with Exchequer records stemmed from his acquaintance with a baron of the Exchequer, Alexander Swereford; Vaughan, *Matthew Paris*, pp. 17-18.


93 *CM* ii. 16, *HA* i. 23 and Wats, p.31 (*GA* i. 51-52).

94 *CM* vi. 33-34.

95 Domesday Book does reflect to some extent the negative consequences of the Conquest. Territorial losses sustained by the abbey during the period 1066 to 1087 include one hide of scrub at Abbots Langley appropriated by Herbert fitz Ivo but transferred subsequently to the Count of Mortain, (f. 135, col. d). With regard to the manors of Codicote and Oswick in Broadwater hundred, Domesday supplies the information that 'The Count of Mortmain's men annexed 15 acres of this land in the abbot's despite as the men of the hundred testify.'(f. 135, col. d) In addition, Domesday affords a degree of evidence for a more peaceful Norman infiltration of the land market by its references to twenty unnamed Frenchmen living on or holding land from the abbey, (f. 135, cols. c and d, f. 136, col. a) Geoffrey of Bec, for instance, held a total of three and a half hides from the abbot of St Albans scattered variously across the hundreds of Dacorum and Cashio and the half
It seems clear that the patriotic championing of the gens anglorum displayed in Matthew's account of the Conquest in the Historia cannot be traced to the negative resonances of primary sources. Yet two non-annalistic works written by Matthew in the 1240s may well mark a crucial stage in the development and maturation of his pro-English sympathies in recounting events of the distant past. The Gesta Abbatum and the Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei deserve closer inspection.

The picture presented by Matthew in the Gesta was one ripe for further exploitation by a monk intent, in the Historia, on conveying a worm's-eye view of English suffering during the reign of William I. The Gesta localizes and anglicizes an account of the Conquest. Events of national significance are anchored firmly to a St Albans context and viewed almost wholly in terms of their consequences for the monastery and its tenants. The Gesta would have its audience believe, for instance, that abbot Frederick, 'dux et promotor efficassimus' and distinguished supporter of the English, administered the oath that William swore at Berkhamstead on the relics of St Alban.96 This is entirely unsubstantiated by the primary sources yet

hundred of Hitchin. (f. 135, col. d, f. 136, col.a). For a more detailed discussion of the losses suffered by the abbey, including its loss of Caddington to the canons of St Pauls and Edward of Salisbury's seizure of Great Gaddesden see R. Abels, 'An Introduction to the Hertfordshire Domesday' in A. Williams and G.H. Martin (eds.), The Hertfordshire Domesday (Alecto Historical Editions, London, 1991), pp.23-25. Such entries in Domesday Book can, however, be misleading. Twenty years after the Conquest, the abbey remained by far the greatest landholder in Hertfordshire. Its twenty properties were assessed at 134 hides and half a virgate and they yielded revenues of £241 18s per annum. The shire's second wealthiest lord, the king, received revenues amounting to a mere £132. For these figures see Abels, 'An Introduction to the Hertfordshire Domesday', p.20. Domesday's evidence for the material welfare of St Albans during the Conquest period could scarcely differ more starkly from that which it provides for the wasta ridden counties of the north. Yet, as P. Taylor noted, nine years of recovery and territorial acquisitions under abbot Paul make it 'impossible to gauge what the picture would have looked like at the nadir of the abbey's fortunes.' P. Taylor, 'The Early St Albans Endowment and its Chroniclers' (forthcoming).

96 Wats, p.30 (GA i. 47). Frederick is firmly associated with English resistance by the Gesta's statement that Harold 'Frethriccum praecordialiter diligebat'; Wats, p.29 (GA i. 44).
illustrates well the author's desire that St Albans appear central to the events of these years. The *Gesta* similarly localizes and anchors Wendover's statement that in 1067 the English nobles, fleeing to deserted and wooded locations, ambushed the Normans. This is paralleled in the *Gesta*’s tale of Turnot and his heirs who sought a similar revenge having been deprived of the manor of Flamstead.\textsuperscript{97}

The *Gesta* adopts a pro-English viewpoint. Its obsession with the Norman yoke of servitude and English resistance to it is ubiquitous. Turnot and his heirs, donning Robin Hood garb ‘quia pati iugum Normannorum dedigneantur’, defended the right of the English to freedom from a yoke of servitude last borne in the time of Brutus.\textsuperscript{98} Wulfstan of Worcester, Walter of Hereford and Frederick of St Albans, openly resisting king William, constituted the ecclesiastical arm of English resistance, the secular arm entrusted to the leadership of Edgar the Aetheling ‘Englondes derlyng’ in whose bosom ‘tota spes resposita fuit Angligenarum’.\textsuperscript{99} Together they opposed a crafty tyrant. The William of the *Gesta* possesses none of the mitigating features of his literary counterpart in the *Chronica* and the *Historia*. At Berkhamstead the king pretended to moderate his harsh policy, and then resumed a general oppression of the English people.\textsuperscript{100}

\textsuperscript{97} CM i. 2 and Wats, p. 28 (*GA* i. 40).
\textsuperscript{98} Wats, pp. 28 and 29 (*GA* i. 40 and 42).
\textsuperscript{99} Wats, p. 30 (*GA* i. 47). In the later pages of the *Gesta*, Thomas Becket openly laments before abbot Simon, the degree of trust that he had placed in King Henry II ‘in cuius sinu reposita fuit spes mea tota’. Wats, pp. 59-60 (*GA* i. 186). The latter phrase closely parallels that which Matthew employs in his description of the trust placed by the English in King Edgar although this is probably coincidental. Matthew makes no deliberate attempt to cast Edgar in a treacherous light.
\textsuperscript{100} Wats, p. 30 (*GA* i. 48).
laying traps and snares, he conveyed potential malefactors to Normandy.\footnote{Wats, p. 29 (GA i. 44-45).} 'Oppressor injuriosus ac perjurus', he attracted people with bland words and false promises, executing a policy of divide and rule.\footnote{Wats, p. 30 (GA i. 45).} It is surprising given the venom of the attack on the Conqueror in the \textit{Gesta} that he retains even a vestige of decency in the pages of the \textit{Historia}.

Did Matthew's fresh and very English interpretation of the reign of William I in the \textit{Historia} make use of ideas formulated at an earlier stage in the pages of the \textit{Gesta}? There is evidence to suggest that when Matthew came to write the opening pages of the \textit{Historia}, he derived a certain amount of inspiration from the \textit{Gesta}. Although Matthew makes only one specific reference to the 'librum de Gestis abbatum Sancti Albani', for material pertaining to abbot Paul, there are at least four instances in which information supplied by the \textit{Historia}, yet absent in the \textit{Chronica}, quite clearly parallels that found in the \textit{Gesta}.\footnote{I-L4 i. 23, for the reference to the \textit{Gesta}.} Both texts exhibit an interest in the lengths to which Englishmen grew their hair and beards 'after the manner of Trojans and orientals'.\footnote{Wats, p. 30 (GA i. 48), and HA i. 11. The Bible views long hair as a sign of dedication to God; \textit{Samuel} 1:1:11 and \textit{Numbers} 6:5. Was Matthew silently praising the religious virtues of the English? The \textit{Historia}, having noted that the English adopted the Norman custom of shaving their hair, lamented in the same sentence the demise of ancient customs and true holiness and honesty; p. 11.} Both scandalously divulge the alleged familial relationship between abbot Paul of St Albans and archbishop Lanfranc of Canterbury. The \textit{Gesta} discloses the belief of some that Paul was son of Lanfranc. The \textit{Historia} describes Paul as 'nepos' and then, as if under the influence of the \textit{Gesta}, suggests that others believed him to be an even closer relation ('consanguinitate propinquior').\footnote{Wats, p. 31 (GA i. 51-52), and HA i. 23.} Moreover, the \textit{Gesta}'s intimation...
that Lanfranc despised English prelates as much as William is echoed in the

Historia's declaration that

coepit prelatos Anglie, licet sanctos et
Deo acceptos, pro simplicitate
contemnere et idiotas vocare et
aliquos de literature ignorantia
acusare.\textsuperscript{106}

The Historia's lamentation at the growth of a custom of hanging axes and
javelins from the door-posts of provincial houses in an attempt at self-
defence against fugitives and robbers is clearly influenced by a passage in the

Gesta where it is learnt that

unde domus cuiuslibet pacifici, quas,
municipium obsidendum, arcubus et
sagittis, gaesis et securibus, cum
clavis, sicis et furcis ferreis, fuerat
communita, ostia series, et repagulis
noctibus obseranda.\textsuperscript{107}

The uncanny similarity of sentiment shared by the Gesta and the Historia,
coupled with evidence for the latter's plundering of the domestic chronicle,
suggests that one avenue of development in Matthew's approach to the
Conquest has been unearthed. The pro-English sympathies of the Gesta,
centring on an acclamation of Frederick's heroic leadership of English
resistance and an unfavourable portrayal of the Conqueror, permeated the
subsequent rewriting and abridgement of the Chronica in the pages of the

Historia.

\textsuperscript{106} Wats, p.30 (\textit{GA} i. 48) and \textit{HA} i. 14-15.

\textsuperscript{107} \textit{HA} i. 14 and Wats, p.29 (\textit{GA} i. 42).
Popularly assigned to the 1230s or 1240s, the *Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei* is the second of Matthew's non-annalistic works that may well mark an important stage of development in his fresh envisualisation of the reign of William. 108 The *Estoire* constitutes an oasis of pro-English feeling drawing upon a rich mixture of hagiographical adulation of the English royal line and surreptitious disapproval of the Norman invaders. Edward's predecessors are, without exception, epitomies of good kingship and moral virtue. Edmund Ironside is as brave and bold as a lion, and Queen Emma as beautiful as a sapphire. 109 Even the 'unready' King Ethelred attracts copious praise. As a 'good governor' he was 'adorned with bravery and intelligence', and 'held the kingdom by courage'. The vast Danegelds he paid in order that he might spare the lives of his people. 110 The virtues of Edward the Confessor are extolled at greater length. The wise king, he lamented the despoilation of his people having glimpsed a black devil perched upon his treasure chest. 111 The gentle king, he welcomed the task of bearing to Rome the deformed beggar Guil Michel. 112 The holy king, his attendance of mass at Westminster was accompanied by the miraculous transformation of the Eucharist into a smiling baby Jesus, the whole scene witnessed by Leofric and Godiva. 113 His desire to remain chaste explained his reluctance to receive a wife and when encouraged to do so by the 'barons of the realm', he lived in marriage 'as in a monastic order'. 114 In short,

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108 For the dating of the *Estoire* see introduction, pp. 11-12.

109 *Estoire*, ll. 159-160 and 140.

110 Ibid., ll. 131-137 and 189-193. The depiction of Ethelred in the *Estoire* is not entirely consistent. See ll. 194-200 for a condemnation of Ethelred's ferocity.

111 Ibid., ll. 936-1057.

112 Ibid., ll. 1919-2022.

113 Ibid., ll. 2514-2597.

114 Ibid., ll. 1249-1250.

361
Sa char venqui par chastete,  
Le mund par humilite,  
E diable par ses vertuz, 115

Above all, Edward was 'of gentle blood and legitimate'. 116 The Estoire places great emphasis upon the legitimacy of the English royal line. Ethelred was of 'royal blood' and Emma 'of legitimate line'. 117 The parallel drawn between legitimacy and good kingship is made implicit by the poem's condemnation of all tyrants as 'bastards'. Harold Harefoot who 'abased the English' was 'the bastard son of Cnut'. 118 Cnut himself, by slaying the English royal line 'filled the land with bastardy'. 119 Harold Godwineson, whose tyrannical reign the Estoire condemns, is one of the three bastard kings who succeeded King Edward. 120 Faint disapproval of Anglo-Norman kingship hinges on this question of legitimacy. William is termed explicitly 'bastart' and his son William Rufus was the last of the Estoire's illegitimate trio. 121 It is paradoxical that a work openly favouring William's cause in 1066, and strongly condemning Harold's perjury, is a mine of pro-English sympathies

115 Ibid., II. 29-31. For analysis of the political resonances of the cult of Edward in the thirteenth century and the influence of contemporary political theory on Matthew’s Estoire, see Binski, ‘Reflections’, passim and Kauffmann, ‘Hagiography, Pictorial Narrative, and the Politics of Kingship’, ch.4. Kauffmann notes the affinity between the Estoire and the ideals of baronial opposition; p. 204.

116 Estoire, I. 105.

117 Ibid., II. 143-144.

118 Ibid., II. 450-453.

119 Ibid., II. 768-773.

120 Ibid., II. 3823-3833. It is intriguing that the Estoire silently omits the claim of Ailred’s Vita that Harold survived the battle of Hastings; Fritz. Uber Verfasser, p.77.

121 Estoire, II. 3016 and 3830-3831.
rich in adulation of Anglo-Saxon monarchy and pervaded by tacit criticism of Norman moral virtue. 122

Ambivalence and pro-English bias are features shared by the *Estoire* and the later *Historia*. Is there evidence of a direct textual connection between the two? The *Estoire* certainly contains ideas in common with other works attributed to Matthew. Like the *Gesta* it bestows the title 'darling of England' on Edgar the Aetheling. 123 Like the *Chronica Maiora*, dependent ultimately on Wendover, it describes Harold's reluctance to act upon an oath made under compulsion. 124 Certain metaphors employed by the *Estoire* in its description of the battle of Hastings are ultimately derived from Matthew's *Flores Historiarum*, thus the *Estoire's* assertion that the English attacked the Normans 'Cum fait dromuntz wage en und' owes it inspiration to the *Flores* claim that William charged the English 'quasi prora navis fluctus procellosos penetrando'. 125 Alongside the *Historia* it shares the belief that, with the Norman Conquest, there ended in England the nobility of the English royal line. 126 The *Historia*, however, is far more likely to have derived this notion

122 Matthew frequently alludes to William's illegitimacy: he is termed 'bastardus' in the genealogical chronicle on ff. iiiiv of CCCC 16 and in the list of kings that opens that same manuscript.

123 *Estoire*, I. 830 and Wats, p. 30 (GA i. 47).

124 *Estoire*, II. 4319-4320 and *CM* i. 538.

125 *Estoire*, I. 4557 and *FH* i. 595. Richard Vaughan was the first to notice the textual connection between the *Estoire* and Matthew's *Flores*, *Matthew Paris*, pp. 174-175. The sources for the *Estoire's* account of the Norman Conquest are considered in great detail by Fritz, *Uber Verfasser*, pp. 77-89. From Matthew's *Flores* are taken ll. 4311-4344 (William's landing in England), ll. 4521-4553 (the preparations for Hastings) and ll. 4627-4638 (the search for Harold's body and the wish of his mother that it be buried in Waltham. From Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia* are derived ll. 4576-4583 (the description of the battle of Hastings and William's feigned flight) and possibly ll. 4574-4585 (a speech by William). ll. 3615-3534, 3895-3922, 4066-4402, 4265-4310 and 4445-4510 are influenced by the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Orderic Vitalis.

126 *Estoire*, II. 3799-3804 and *HA* i. 9.
from the _Chronica_ than from the _Estoire_.\textsuperscript{127} There appears to be little positive evidence that the _Historia_ made use of the _Estoire_ in its account of the Conquest. That the ideology that Matthew formulated in the _Estoire_ may have impressed itself upon his later works in a less tangible way cannot be overlooked.

Why were Matthew's non-annalistic accounts of the Conquest, written in the 1230s or 1240s, pervaded by a patriotic championing of the _gens Anglorum_?\textsuperscript{128} It is worth noting that his historical works do not uniquely exemplify the Englishness of Matthew's outlook. Whilst a tendency to attribute to Matthew and the 'St Albans School' sole responsibility for a revival of Anglo-Saxon style outline drawing has long since been replaced by a general acknowledgement of the broader basis of this revival in the thirteenth century, Matthew's considerable contribution in this area is unquestionable.\textsuperscript{129} The flighty outline figures that occupy the margins of his historical works and the delicate drawings that adorn the pages of his _Vitae duorum Offarum_ and _Vie de Seint Auban_ are proof enough of this.\textsuperscript{130} His script too betrays a veneration for the cultural achievements of Anglo-Saxon

\textsuperscript{127} _CM_ ii. 2.

\textsuperscript{128} Matthew was almost certainly English; Madden, _HA_ iii. vii-ix and Vaughan, _Matthew Paris_, p. 1. See ibid., pp. 141-143 for the influence that Matthew's nationality exerted upon his prejudices.


England. Denholm-Young considered the broken-back nature of Matthew's ascenders to be reminiscent of English half uncial. 131

Matthew's reverence for things English and, by implication, the English in history, stems chiefly from tides of thought that lapped the shores of thirteenth-century England. A growing consciousness of England as a geographical and political unit, a sensitivity to the needs of the gens Anglorum and an affection for English heritage underly many of the cultural and political achievements of the reign of Henry III. Four extant maps of England attributable to Matthew Paris are a lucid illustration of the fair degree of accuracy with which a Benedictine monk could depict the coastline of the British Isles in the middle years of the thirteenth century. Novel in their orientation towards the north, his maps make a clear distinction between Anglia, Scocia and Wallia, although his placing of counties such as Kent and Wiltshire leaves much to be desired. 132 Only through an appreciation that England constituted a finite and mappable expanse of territory could the concept of partes nostrae emerge. Loyalty to that concept led the anonymous author of the Song of Lewes to pray that the Lord 'Restore to its vigour the kingdom of the English' and a smith in 1232 to exclaim that '[Hubert de Burgh] ...restored England to the English'. 133 The 'English' are the key to many of the political wranglings that plagued the reign of Henry III. Numerous attempts were made in these years to enshrine


in the embryonic English constitution faith in the *naturalis* or native-born.\textsuperscript{134} The famous *Petitio Baronum* of 1258 for instance, requested that castles be placed in the custody of men 'born in the kingdom' and that the king refrain from marrying women to those who were not 'true born Englishmen'.\textsuperscript{135} Endeavours to boost the status of the *naturalis* within governmental and administrative circles were coupled with occasional emulation of Anglo-Saxon governmental technique; the King's Council of 1236 discussed the reinforcement of Anglo-Saxon obligations to build bridges.\textsuperscript{136}

King Henry III's promotion of the cult of Edward the Confessor is a clear manifestation of his respect for English heritage. Between the years 1235 and 1236 the story of King Edward was painted in the chancel of the Chapel of All Saints at Clarendon. During the 1240s work was begun on a new shrine to which the body of the Saint was translated in 1269. Henry commissioned the painting of the Coronation of Edward above the head of the royal bed in the painted chamber at Westminster between 1263 and 1272.\textsuperscript{137} His rebuilding of the Confessor's church at Westminster added around two

\textsuperscript{134} Emphasis on the need to entrust political power to the *viros naturales* may have stemmed from the general 'Englishness' of the baronage after the Conquest of Normandy by Philip Augustus in 1204. No great magnate involved in English politics after 1219 personally held lands in Normandy; Carpenter, *Minority*, p. 261. Carpenter described the mid thirteenth-century as marking 'a stage in the 'making' of England, when political society was almost completely Anglicized...' 'King Henry III's Statute Against the Aliens: July 1263', *English Historical Review*, cvii (1992), 925-943, 942-943. R.C. Stacey suggested that 1230 marked the end of the Anglo-Norman realm as a political ideal; after this year, he argues, there were an increasing number of arrangements whereby families deliberately rationalized their holdings by exchanging lands held on one side of the channel for lands held on the other; *Politics, Policy, and Finance Under Henry III 1216-1245* (Oxford, 1987), p. 173.


\textsuperscript{136} Stacey, *Politics*, p. 104.

thousand pounds each year to his construction costs during the period 1245 to 1261. Finally, he was buried in the grave of the last West Saxon kings.\textsuperscript{138}

Out of growing appreciation of the worth of England and the English emerged a sensitivity to the perceived suffering of the \textit{viri naturales} at the hands of foreigners and a nagging unease at the patronage received and influence wielded by Savoyard, Lusignan and Poitevin nobles in and around Henry's court from the middle years of the 1230s.\textsuperscript{139} English national identity developed within the context of an escalating xenophobia that can be traced through the proclamations, petitions and statutes issued in these years; the appeal of the magnates against papal provision of foreigners into benefices, the proclamation of 1240 that sought the expulsion of all ultramontane merchants from England for having lent at usury, the \textit{terre Normannorum} Inquests of January 1244, the \textit{Petitio Baronum} of 1258 outlined above and the statute of 1263 that proposed the confinement of important offices to native-born men and the expulsion of all aliens except those accepted in common by the faithful of the realm. Xenophobia was not uniformly and consistently felt during the reign of Henry III. It has recently been argued that Henry's foreign favourites did not arouse widespread opposition or even much popular interest before the period 1258-1285.\textsuperscript{140}


\textsuperscript{140} Ridgeway, 'King Henry III and the "Aliens"', p. 86. Stacey suggests that the events of 1258 were not the inevitable product of thirty years of rising grievances but 'a relatively
native and foreigner could often seem harmonious. Simon de Montfort, a Frenchman by birth, could be described as 'the shield and defender of the English, the enemy and expellor of aliens' by the *Melrose Chronicle*, and as *naturalis* by that famous xenophobe Matthew Paris.\(^{141}\) The *familia* of William de Valence could be composed chiefly of Englishmen.\(^{142}\) No statute banning aliens from office was ever introduced.\(^{143}\) Yet with Clanchy it is difficult not to feel that 'the baronial wars heightened sentiment for the suffering of England and the English among both royalists and rebels'.\(^{144}\) The *Song of Lewes* clearly displays the kind of sympathy for English suffering that Matthew lavished upon the those valiantly resisting the Norman foe in 1066:

May the Lord bless Simon de Montfort and also his sons and his army! who exposing themselves magnanimously to death, fought valiantly, condoling the lamentable lot of the English who, trodden under foot in a manner scarcely to be described, and almost deprived of all their liberties, nay of their lives, had languished under hard rulers, like the people of Israel under Pharoah, groaning under a tyrannical devastation.\(^{145}\)

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\(^{143}\) Carpenter, 'King Henry III's "Statute" ', p. 942.


\(^{145}\) Wright, *Political Songs*, p. 75.
That Matthew's tendency to 'anglicize' history stems in part from moods of patriotism and xenophobia current in courtly circles in the middle years of the thirteenth century seems entirely probably. Several encounters with Henry III during the course of his life may well explain the esteem in which Matthew holds Edward the Confessor. Present at the marriage of Henry and Eleanor of Provence in 1236 and at the feast of Edward the Confessor at Westminster in 1247, Matthew received some historical information (including a list of canonized kings of England) from the king on the occasion of the latter's stay at St Albans in 1257.\textsuperscript{146} The possible influence of these personal encounters on Matthew's perception of the distant past and its protagonists cannot be entirely ruled out. Yet Matthew's xenophobia perhaps owes its origins rather more to personal experience than contact with courtly circles. He had every reason to share the fear of foreigners that is so predominant a theme in the \textit{Song of Lewes}. The \textit{Gesta} chronicles the devastating effect upon the monastery of St Albans of the civil war that erupted on the death of John and it laments the hopeless position in which the abbot found himself:

\begin{quote}
Sustinuit igitur, dum uni satisfaceret, alterius depraedationes, dum uni obsecundaret, alterius infestationes.\textsuperscript{147}
\end{quote}

Matthew had, after all, entered the monastery of St Albans on 21 January 1217, the year in which these events occurred.\textsuperscript{148}

\textsuperscript{146} Vaughan, \textit{Matthew Paris}, pp. 2-4.

\textsuperscript{147} Wats, p. 76 (G.4 i. 259). Matthew also includes in the \textit{Gesta} an account of the losses sustained by the monastery during the civil war as originally documented by William of Trumpington: Wats, pp. 83-84 (G.4 i. 295-298). The injuries inflicted by Fawkes de Breaute were admirably avenged by St Alban in the form of the execution of Fawkes' followers at Bedford.
Matthew Paris has always attracted attention. Often denounced as a bigot, a xenophobe and most recently a male chauvinist, the colourful simplicity of his art, the rich vitality of his prose and verse and the astounding breadth of his talents have defied the criticisms of all but the most sceptical.\(^{149}\) It is therefore something of a surprise to discover that his endeavours as antiquary and observer of the distant past have remained largely unnoticed. Matthew's portrayal of the Norman Conquest and the reign of William I displays, most notably, an originality of thought that stems from his reluctance to rely on purely plagiaristic techniques of reconstructing the past. His capabilities as a researcher are remarkable; in the *Chronica*, returning to the sources employed by Roger Wendover, he makes five additions to the *Flores*, derived from the works of Henry of Huntingdon and William of Malmesbury.\(^{150}\) Moreover, details unique to the *Gesta*, and not to be found in other works by Matthew, echo near-contemporary sources for the Conquest. Its statement that Stigand became archbishop while Robert of Jumieges was still alive was perhaps inspired by John of Worcester's account of this event, and the *Gesta*'s description of Lanfranc's journey to Rome in 1072 appears to be under the influence of Miles Crispin's *Vita Lanfranci*.\(^{151}\)

\(^{148}\) B.L. MS. Nero D i, f. 165v; 'Hoc anno ego frater Matheus Parisiensis habitum suscepi religionis, die sancte Agnetis.'

\(^{149}\) Rosalind Miles regarded Matthew's alleged failure to name the maidservant who witnessed an assassin entering the King's bedchamber in 1238 as evidence of sexism; *The Women's History of the World* (London, 1989), p. 11. Yet he does name her; 'Quaedam autem puella reginae, cum forte vigilaret, psalterium psallebat ad candelam; erat enim sancta et Deo devota, nomine Margareta Biseth' *CM* iii. 497. In the margin of CCCC 16, f. 157v, Matthew noted her death in 1242.

\(^{150}\) The five additions to the *Chronica* are *CM* ii. 2, the foundation of Battle (from Henry of Huntingdon), p. 7, the consecration of Lanfranc, p. 11, a reference to a charter describing the primacy dispute, contained in William of Malmesbury's *De Gestis Regum*, *GR* i. 11, the attack on John Archbishop of Rouen by the monks of St Ouen (derived partly from the *Annals of St Stephen, Caen*) and p. 19, the execution and character of Waltheof.

\(^{151}\) Wats, p.29 (*GA* i. 45), claims that the imprisonment of Stigand was merited 'quia, vivente Roberto archiepiscopo, cathedram ascendit episcopalem'. The *Chronicon ex Chronicis* of Florence or John of Worcester, states that Stigand was deposed at the Council
In his reworkings of the *Chronica* in the *Flores* and in Vitellius A xx Matthew drew on material not to be found in the text of Wendover. In general, however, Matthew's most extensive rewriting of the account of the Conquest, that contained in the *Historia*, depended for its inspiration on historiographical tradition, non-annalistic works penned by him in the 1240s and ideas concerning national identity and the status of aliens that circulated in the middle years of the thirteenth century. If his characterization of the Conqueror is riddled with ambiguity, his account of the events of 1059 and the plight of the English during the reign of William reveal considerable consistency of thought. If Matthew was not the *magnificus historicus* that Walsingham believed him to be, his historical vision possessed that zest and sense of purpose that were never far away from anything that Matthew touched.

of Winchester in 1070 because 'vivente archiepisco Roberto, non solum archiepiscopatum sumpsit, sed etiam eius pallio, quod Cantariae remansit', Thorpe, *Chronicon*, ii. 5. The accounts of Lanfranc's journey to Rome are to be found in *G.A.* i. 46 (Wats, p.30) and in J.P. Migne (ed.), *Vita Lanfranci* by Miles Crispin in *PL*, cl, col.49. In the *Vita*, Pope Alexander II informs Lanfranc that, 'Non ideo assurexi ei quia archiepiscopus Cantuarie est, sed quia Becci ad scholam eius fui. et ad pedes eius cum aliis auditor sedi'. In the *Gesta* his words are 'Assurgo tibi, tanquam magistro et deosculor tanquam paedagogum et non tam archipraesulem.'
Conclusion

What was Matthew’s understanding of time itself? How did he regard the passing of decades, centuries and millennia? What did he make of matters temporal in a century when Alexander of Hales, Robert Grosseteste, Eustachius of Arras, John Pecham and Matthew of Aquasparta, were busy reconstructing Platonic, Augustinian and Boethian definitions of time and eternity? 1 His works suggest that he adhered to the conservative belief that worldly time was a finite dimension. Beside his account of the Nativity of Christ in the Chronica’s annal for 1AD he spoke of the advent of Christ after twelve hundred and fifty years.

Cum fuerint anni transacti mille
ducenti et quinquaginta post partum
Virginis almae. Tunc antichristus
nascetur demone plenus. 2

The medieval concept of a closed historical chronology evidently gripped Matthew for he must have authorized the insertion into the CCCC 26 of three and a half leaves on the Sibylline prophecies. 3 Nine men of the Roman senate had simultaneously dreamt of nine suns in the sky. They approached the beautiful, wise and eloquent Sibyl, daughter of King Priamid in the hope that she would interpret the meaning of this. She requested that they ascend Mount Aventinum where she prophesied that the nine suns were nine future


2 CA i. 81.

3 Ibid. i. 42-52 (CCC 26, ff. 8-10). This interpolation is not, however, in Matthew’s hand.
generations. She predicted the birth of Jesus in the fourth and the coming of the Antichrist in the ninth. Leader of the tribe of Dan, son of perdition and skilled in the art of magic, the Antichrist would unleash the forces of Gog and Magog that Alexander the Great had strove to contain. Matthew’s firm conviction that this would happen in the year 1250 led him to conclude his Chronica in that year, although he later resumed it when the Last Judgement failed to occur. Having summarized the events of the previous fifty years, he broke into apocryphal verse. He wished to end his work before the world ended him and he cited elemental disturbances as evidence of the proximity of that event.

Compatible with a belief in a closed time system is the notion that events within that system had themselves been predetermined. Matthew’s adherence to the idea of a divine plan, a predetermined course of events is most lucidly demonstrated by the extensive glosses that he added to the prophecies of Merlin that he had had copied from Wendover into the Cronica’s annal for 465. The prophecies sprang originally from chapters six and seven of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia Regum Britanniae, completed in around 1136 and widely disseminated from the middle years of the twelfth century until the end of the Middle Ages. Alain de Lille had ‘unravelled’ them in the 1170s. The illustrations of Merlin and the red and white dragons that Matthew drew in the margins of the

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4 Ibid. i. 44 and 50.
5 Ibid. v. 191-198.
6 Ibid. i. 198-210.
7 Alani de Insulis Opera Omnia. PL, ccx (1855).
Chronica are the earliest known pictorial representations of the Merlin legend and his textual gloss, although chiefly a paraphrasing of the work of Alain, is also novel in a number of ways. It constitutes the most extensive early thirteenth-century commentary on the Prophecies and in addition it updates Alain’s interpretation to include contemporary figures such as Henry III, Frederick II and that ‘hoary old man on a snow white horse’, Innocent III. Matthew was fond of moulding prophetic utterances to contemporary events. He had done so in the Estoire when he had considered the fruit of Edward’s severed green tree symbolism for Henry III rather than Ailred’s Henry II. The eschatological speculations of Merlin provided Matthew with a framework of history within which he could link past and present. And it could be argued that Matthew was fond of playing havoc with historical perspective for as well as happily indulging in anachronistic references to barons and counsel in the Estoire and saddling Edward with the ideals of thirteenth-century kingship.

Matthew’s belief in the inevitability of past events walked hand in hand with a faith in the predictability of the future. Bodleian Library, Ashmole 304, a collection of fortune-telling tracts is almost solely in his hand. It contains the Experimentarius of Bernard of Chartres, the Pronosticon Socratis Basilei and the Pronostica Pitagorice.

8 CCC 26, f.33v.


10 Estoire, l.3846. Vita col.774.

Considerationis, works enabling the reader to determine his fate or obtain an answer to a particular question by reference to lines of verse and arc diagrams representing the responses of judges, kings, patriarchs or signs of the zodiac. As Matthew stated in the prooemium on folio 2r the book was intended to enable the reader to avoid future dangers revealed by the stars, although this itself smacks of anything but predeterminism.

So man moved within a finite expanse of time, his deeds and their outcome determined for him. Matthew, the monkish time traveller, swung between prophetic future and historic past, glossing the latter with the varnish of contemporary events. Predeterminism removed history from men's hands. They became the unwitting participants, the observers or the actors. For Matthew, time was the stage and historical events a single prolonged medieval morality play. There were heroes - the Magi king Offa, the learned king Alfred, the radiant Edgar, the benevolent Ethelred, the virginal king Edward the Confessor and the blessed pope Leo (both hands included). And there were the villains, the lascivious Edwiu with his liking for mothers and daughters, the wicked Quendrida with her predilection for murder and the crafty Jaenberht with his taste for foreign intrigue. The gruesome deaths of Mohammed, Hardecnut and Earl Godwin testified to their wickedness in life. The early vitae of the Gesta play to this theme of good versus evil in as far as the personality of each


13 Lewis considers the juxtaposition of historic past and prophetic future to have been pervasive in the thirteenth century citing Princeton University Library MS. 57 as indicative of this - (on one side is a genealogical role stretching from Alfred to Henry III and on the other are the prophecies of Merlin) - The Art of Matthew Paris, p.96.
abbot is shaped out of the 'benevolentia' and 'negligentia' attributable to him. In the *Gesta*, the moral drama is internalized. The noble Saxon abbots who enjoyed fruitful relations with the West Saxon dynasty were also the seducers of women who emerged from the bedroom only when leasing monastic land to illiterate relatives. Matthew's actors and actresses performed against a backdrop of manuscript illumination. His illustrations of Offa and the abbots in Nero D i, his portraits of the West Saxon and Anglo-Norman kings in his genealogical chronicles and his heptarchic diagrams set the stage. The actors had only to deliver their lines; both the *Vitae Offarum* and the *Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei* employ direct speech as a means of injecting life blood into their protagonists.

The dramatization of history necessitated its simplification. Matthew knew that history had never been as black and white as it appeared on his page. He had engineered its two-tone facade. Characters were whitewashed. Offa was vindicated of the murder of Ethelbert, and his motives in establishing the archiepiscopal see of Lichfield were given a generous spoonful of benefit of the doubt. The St Brices's day massacres failed to work their way into any of Matthew's accounts of Ethelred and Harold I and Hardecnut were neatly extracted from English history to make way for the smooth succession of Edward the Confessor. Matthew's history was a history that had been cut and pasted, but never in such a way as to distort a sense of the linear

14 Matthew's autograph copy of the *Estoire* would have been illustrated because in reference to his translation of Ailred's *Vita* he stated that: 'E pur lais ki de lettrure/Ne sevrent, en putraiture/Figuree apertement/L'ai en cest livret present,/Pur co ke desir e voil/Ke oraille, ot, voient li oil', *Estoire* ll.3961-3966.

15 Ibid., ll.1069-1073. See also, for example 640-655, 1917-1025, 1064-1081, 1505-1584, 2717-2775, 3064-3074 and Wats, p.7. 9. 10.
progression of era upon era. The editorial process merely accentuated
the calibre of those who had toed the historical line. When certain
figures proved to be beyond Matthew's help he threw them into the
'refuse pit' of Carolingian France. By virtue of their alleged
association with the Carolingian kings, Quendrida, Jaenberht and
archbishop Stigand were deprived of historical credibility. Matthew's
patriotism made his casting of the villains a much simpler process.
The historical scenarios that Matthew created by processes of
whitewashing and patriotic condemnation were further neatened by
the superimposition of numerical patterns. Mohammed's sins against
the Trinity determined his three grisly modes of death and it was only
fitting that Edward the Confessor's possession of the seven gifts of
the Holy Spirit should have led him to cure seven blind men. In
addition, Matthew tirelessly numbered the kingdoms of the
heptarchy, the abbots of St Albans and the kings of Wessex.
Numerical patterns pervade Matthew's vision of history endowing it
with comforting symmetry.

Shaping, bleaching and patterning the past did not prove too
extensive a drain on Matthew's historical integrity. He reserved for
Alfred, the honour of 'protomonarchus' even though he might
justifiably have worked the notion of protomonarchy into his Vitae
Offarum the first ever Life of Offa of Mercia, founder of St Albans.
Moreover, despite his famed xenophobia he exhibited a awkward
reverence for Charlemagne and William the Conqueror. On occasion
Matthew gave every impression of having his finger on the historical
pulse. He shared with Offa himself an interest in the king's legitimacy
and his conclusion that Offa only ever termed himself 'King of the
Mercians' in charters is surprisingly sound.

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The histrionics of Henry, the treacheries of the Tartars, the
fulminations of Frederick and the perfidies of the papal see were not
the sole landmarks on Matthew's mental horizon. He thought about
the past and his thinking materialized on the page in the form of
detailed highlights of Anglo-Saxon history, bound together by the
thread of a coherent overview of Anglo-Saxon England. He was not
a scholarly historian. Yet if he contributed little to our knowledge of
the Anglo-Saxon past, he boxed it up, adorned it with the colourful
wrapping paper of his likes and dislikes and ensured its survival. The
past was malleable property. It served a purpose. It told a
premonitory story and its cast tangoed across the pages of Paris to
bewitch and bemuse the audience of the future.
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