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Article

Published Version

Cleaver, L. (2016) History books at Reading in the twelfth century. *Reading Medieval Studies*, XLII. pp. 25-44. ISSN 0950-3129 (ISBN 9780704915541) Available at <http://centaur.reading.ac.uk/84508/>

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Publisher: University of Reading

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# History Books at Reading in the Twelfth Century

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The Cartulary of Reading Abbey, now British Library, Egerton MS 3031, is a rich source for both the historical records available at Reading and attitudes to the past at the end of the twelfth century.<sup>1</sup> The first of the documents preserved in this manuscript is a copy of a charter of Henry I, dated 1125 (ff. 13r-13v). A rubric identifies Henry as the abbey's founder and claims that the creation of the abbey at Reading was for the salvation of his soul, together with those of his father and brother, his only legitimate son (who had died in 1120), his mother, first wife, and all his ancestors and successors.<sup>2</sup> In January 1136 Henry's body was buried at the abbey, following his death in Normandy in December 1135.<sup>3</sup> The charters in the cartulary demonstrate the importance of Reading's royal connections throughout the twelfth century, as Henry's gifts were confirmed by his successors, Stephen, Henry II and Richard I, and further gifts were made. The authenticity of some of these documents has been challenged, and it seems likely that some of the texts were reworked or created to improve the abbey's claims, but they nevertheless testify to the importance of a connection between the abbey and the heirs of its royal founder at the end of the twelfth century.<sup>4</sup> As Brian Kemp has demonstrated, on the basis of the contents of the charters, the manuscript was probably made c. 1192 and it is extremely likely that it was created at Reading with access to the abbey's documents.<sup>5</sup> Further charters pertaining to Reading were added to the volume in the thirteenth century and the manuscript has a late medieval *ex libris* from Reading Abbey on folio 2v. The collected documents are prefaced by lists of the charters, relics and books belonging to the abbey, together with a list of books at the abbey's daughter house of Leominster.<sup>6</sup> These lists, together with the charters, thus represent the physical, spiritual and intellectual capital of the abbey

at the end of the twelfth century. Although the lists occupy two discrete gatherings, the hands that copied the lists also executed some of the charters in the first part of the cartulary, suggesting that the two parts of the manuscript were produced at around the same time.<sup>7</sup> Amongst the books listed as belonging to Reading Abbey are eight manuscripts containing works on post-biblical history. Remarkably, two of these manuscripts survive.<sup>8</sup> One is a copy of the chronicle compiled at the abbey of Bec in Normandy by Robert of Torigni, now British Library, Harley MS 651. The other is a collection of texts including lives of Charlemagne and Alexander the Great, the Deeds of the dukes of the Normans (*Gesta Normannorum Ducum*), and the Deeds of the kings of France (*Gesta Regum Francorum*). This volume is now divided into two parts: Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 177.210 and British Library, Cotton MS Vitellius A VIII ff. 5-100.<sup>9</sup> The survival of these manuscripts (together with short annals associated with Reading) offers an insight into the historical texts available in Reading's library at the end of the twelfth century, and into the circumstances in which the books were produced.<sup>10</sup> The manuscripts suggest a particular interest in royalty and in Norman histories, yet the volumes appear to have been manufactured in England. This raises questions about the means by which Reading obtained its books in the first seventy-five years of the abbey's existence and its place in wider networks through which histories might be conveyed.

On folio 9v of the Reading Abbey Cartulary, the compiler of the list of books in the abbey's library grouped seven volumes containing post-biblical histories. These were an *Ecclesiastical History* (*Historia Ecclesiastica*), a copy of a chronicle attributed to Eusebius, Jerome, Prosper, and Sigebert of Gembloux, two volumes of the work of Josephus and one attributed to Hegesippus, both of whom were associated with the history of the Jews, a volume with the lives of Charlemagne and Alexander the Great, the Deeds of the Normans and 'other works' (*et alia*), and a History of the English (*Historia Anglorum*).<sup>11</sup> Both *Historia Ecclesiastica* and *Historia Anglorum* were popular titles, thus it is not entirely clear which texts these refer to, but they were probably works by Eusebius and Bede.<sup>12</sup> These, together with the works attributed to Josephus and Hegesippus, were common inclusions in English monastic libraries in the twelfth century.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, the multi-authored chronicle and the volume containing the

Deeds of the Normans were both more recent compilations and less-widely known in England, although other copies of the texts were available in England in the twelfth century.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the manuscripts listed on folio 9v of the Reading library list, in an apparently contemporary addition in the margin of folio 9r there is a further entry for a volume containing an account of the deeds of King Henry and a History of Reading, together with Isidore of Seville's *On the Highest Good*.<sup>15</sup> The editors of *English Benedictine Libraries: The Shorter Catalogues* suggested that the deeds of King Henry might be Roger of Howden's account of Henry II, but the list does not specify which Henry is being referred to, and the text could have been a history of the abbey's founder.<sup>16</sup> Henry I's reign was, after all, well-documented by historians in both England and Normandy. Robert of Torigni produced an account of Henry's deeds in a discrete book as part of his revisions to the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, probably begun in the late 1130s.<sup>17</sup> In the same period Henry of Huntingdon added an account of Henry I's reign to his *Historia Anglorum*.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the existence of a life of Henry I is recorded in Geoffrey Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*, written after 1135, although Ian Short has argued that this text would have been in the vernacular, unlike the Latin title given in Reading's book list.<sup>19</sup> In the earliest surviving manuscript, Gaimar's text ends before Henry I's reign, with an epilogue explaining that this is because 'good queen Adeliza ... was responsible for a long volume about him'.<sup>20</sup> According to the Annals of Reading, probably produced from the middle of the twelfth century and subsequently added to by at least two scribes (now preserved in British Library, Royal MS 8 E XVIII ff. 94-96), the abbey was founded on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 1121.<sup>21</sup> Henry had married Adeliza in January of that year, and the first charter in the Reading cartulary indicates that he was thinking of his successors as well as his predecessors, but the marriage produced no children. Adeliza was the first witness to that charter, and made her own gifts to the abbey.<sup>22</sup> Following Henry's death and Adeliza's remarriage she made a gift to the abbey for the souls of her late husband, her parents, her new husband, their children, and for her own soul.<sup>23</sup> Adeliza visited Reading in 1136 on the anniversary of Henry's death, and was buried at the abbey after her death in 1151.<sup>24</sup> Given her ongoing contact with Reading, it is plausible that she might

have been involved in the creation of a copy of a life of her husband for the abbey, which was bound with a history of the foundation.<sup>25</sup> However as the manuscript is now lost, this must remain speculation.

The survival of two of the post-biblical histories from Reading allows for a more precise assessment of their contents. The volume described as the chronicle of Eusebius, Jerome, Prosper and Sigebert, is in fact the version of Sigebert of Gembloux's chronicle that was revised and extended by Robert of Torigni.<sup>26</sup> This volume, now British Library, Harley MS 651, has an *ex libris* on folio 3 identifying it as the property of the monastery of St Mary's abbey at Reading.<sup>27</sup> The manuscript, like most copies of the work, presents different sections as the work of these earlier authors, with rubrics identifying the contributions of Eusebius (f. 5), Prosper (f. 63v), Sigebert (f. 64) and Robert (f. 147). Robert of Torigni worked on the text of this chronicle during his time as a monk at Bec, and continued it after his promotion to the abbacy of Mont-Saint-Michel in 1154.<sup>28</sup> The earliest securely datable manuscript of the work was made for Mont-Saint-Michel, either at that abbey or at Bec. This manuscript is now Avranches, Bibliothèque Municipale MS 159. In this volume the text and decoration were completed in a single campaign up to the middle of the entry for 1156. The manuscript was then continued in stages at Mont-Saint-Michel, ending with material for 1185. The survival of two copies of the chronicle that end in 1157, together with two manuscripts that contain a different continuation of the text from this point, suggests that a slightly updated version of the Bec exemplar from which the Avranches manuscript was copied was subsequently used as the basis for further copies.<sup>29</sup> The chronicle in the Reading manuscript ends in 1157 with an erasure that probably contained the entry for the birth of Richard I.<sup>30</sup> This end point is also found in a manuscript from Normandy, now Bayeux Chapter Library MS 1.<sup>31</sup> Like both the Avranches and Bayeux manuscripts, the Harley manuscript is a large volume, measuring 34 by 24.5cm, and has been carefully executed and corrected (Fig. 1). However, unlike the Avranches and Bayeux manuscripts, the text is almost entirely set out in two columns. The major divisions in the Harley manuscript are marked by large and ornate coloured initials, and smaller coloured initials occur throughout the volume. Large coloured initials were also used to decorate one of the copies with the Bec continuation, now Rouen, Bibliothèque

Municipale MS 1132. In the Bayeux manuscript space was left for large initials on folios 1, 2 and 67, but the letters were only added much later. Unlike the Avranches volume, none of the initials in the Harley manuscript contains figurative imagery, but the Avranches manuscript is unique amongst copies of Robert of Torigni's Chronicle in having historiated initials. Although the high quality of the Harley manuscript was paralleled in other twelfth-century copies of the text, this does not detract from the time and effort invested in producing the volume, which provided a visually impressive account of the past.

The second surviving history from the Reading list is more modest than Harley MS 651. The first part, Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 177.210, measures approximately 22 by 16.5cm and the text is in a single column. This manuscript contains a contents list in the same hand as the main text and an anathema (identical with those in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby 158; MS Laud Misc. 91; and British Library, Royal MS 3 A IV), which may also have been written by the same hand as the rest of the volume. The contents are given as; a life of Charlemagne, a life of Alexander the Great, the letter of Alexander to Aristotle on the wonders of India, the Deeds of the dukes of Normandy, the Deeds of the kings of France, and excerpts from Gildas on the inhabitants of Britain.<sup>32</sup> The Cambridge manuscript contains the first three of these texts, followed by the Deeds of the kings of France. The Deeds of the dukes of Normandy is now in British Library, Cotton MS Vitellius A VIII ff. 5-100, which was damaged in the Ashburnham House fire, and the excerpts attributed to Gildas are lost (Fig. 2). Robert Cotton frequently dismembered and rebound parts of manuscripts that passed through his hands, and there is no indication that any of the other contents of Cotton MS Vitellius A VIII was once part of the Reading volume. As in Harley MS 651, the different texts and their internal divisions are marked with coloured initials, this time in red, green and yellow. Moreover, despite the different colour choices, some of the initials in the three volumes have strong similarities in their use of foliate forms with scalloped edges and filled with fine lines, and the use of dots following some of the curved lines (Figs 1-2). Similar forms also appear in some of the initials of another manuscript associated with Reading; Oxford Bodleian Library MS Rawl. C. 118 (a copy of Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons on the Song of Songs).<sup>33</sup> With

the exception of the initial at the start of the Cambridge volume, and those at the start of the books of the *Gesta* (Fig. 2), the execution of most of the initials in the manuscript now divided between London and Cambridge is cruder than that in Harley MS 651, but the similarity suggests that the artist of the volume of collected works was attempting to produce something like the decoration of the Harley manuscript.

As Elisabeth van Houts demonstrated, the contents of the manuscript now divided between London and Cambridge find a very close parallel in a volume now in Leiden, University Library MS BPL 20.<sup>34</sup> The Leiden volume is larger than the Reading copy, measuring 32 by 22cm, and its text is set out in two columns. In this case the Deeds of the dukes of Normandy is placed first (ff. 2r-32v), although it is now missing the start of the text. It is followed by the lives of Charlemagne (ff. 33r-38v) and Alexander the Great (ff. 38v-47r), Alexander's letter to Aristotle (ff. 47r-51v), and the Deeds of the kings of France (ff. 52r-59r).<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the Reading version includes changes made to the text in the Leiden manuscript, suggesting both that it is closely related to the Leiden volume, and that it was copied after the last changes were made to the Leiden manuscript in c. 1159.<sup>36</sup> A partially excised late medieval *ex libris* on folio 1v in which the word 'Staunton' is still legible, further suggests that the Leiden manuscript did come to England.<sup>37</sup> On folio 59v of the Leiden manuscript is a genealogy of the Counts of Flanders, which was probably a late addition to the volume and which does not appear to have been part of the Reading manuscript. In the Leiden volume this is followed by a new gathering for the start of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (ff. 60r-101v), followed by excerpts attributed to Gildas (ff. 101v-106) and an account of miracles at Coutances.<sup>38</sup> Given that the excerpts from Gildas are now missing from the Reading volume, it is possible that the Reading manuscript once also contained the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, without the title appearing in the contents list, but it may equally have been omitted when the volume was copied.<sup>39</sup> The library list in the cartulary records that Reading had a copy of Geoffrey's work, which, unusually, was bound with a copy of Augustine's *Contra Academicos*.<sup>40</sup>

Unlike the volume from Reading, the Leiden manuscript is a collection of texts produced in different campaigns of work.<sup>41</sup> Although the first 59 folios follow a standard format, with two columns of forty-seven lines, the Life of Charlemagne starts on a new quire and in a



different hand to those of the Deeds of the dukes of Normandy. There is another change of hand for the Deeds of the kings of France, and a further change for the genealogy of the Counts of Flanders. Geoffrey of Monmouth's work is executed by yet more scribes, and the use of a separate series of quire numbers from folio 60 suggests that this portion of the work was created separately. However, the two parts were bound together in the twelfth century, as a list of contents including works in both sections was added in a twelfth-century hand, and the volume appears in list of the books in the library at the abbey of Bec, perhaps created c. 1163.<sup>42</sup> The identification of this manuscript with Bec is furthered by the format of the contents list on folio 1v, which follows that used at the abbey, and the nature of the text of the Deeds of the dukes of the Normans.<sup>43</sup> As has long been recognised, this manuscript contains the version of the Deeds of the dukes of the Normans created by Robert of Torigni by expanding the version attributed to Orderic Vitalis.<sup>44</sup> In the Leiden manuscript spaces were left for Robert's additions, which were then added by other scribes, in a process that must have been directed by Robert.<sup>45</sup> On the basis of references in the text, van Houts has argued that the manuscript was made c. 1139, during Robert's time at Bec.<sup>46</sup> The account of the Deeds of the kings of France ends in 1137, further suggesting that the whole of the first part of the volume (ff. 1-59) was made in the late 1130s.<sup>47</sup> If the additions to the Deeds of the dukes of the Normans were all made by Robert, the manuscript must have been available to him after his move to Mont-Saint-Michel, but it seems likely that books and people moved between the two abbeys.<sup>48</sup> An additional reason for associating the whole of the Leiden manuscript with Robert is that the initial at the start of the copy of Geoffrey of Monmouth's text was executed by the artist responsible for the decoration of the initials in the first part of the copy of Robert's chronicle now in Avranches.<sup>49</sup> Thus both the surviving histories from Reading could trace their origins to manuscripts associated with Robert of Torigni and Bec.

The connections between the histories preserved in the Reading manuscripts and those produced at Bec raises the questions of where the Reading manuscripts were made and how these texts were transmitted in the twelfth century.<sup>50</sup> In addition to the labours of scribes in monastic scriptoria, in the twelfth century abbeys received books as

gifts and abbots commissioned copies of works. However, thanks to Michael Gullick's work on charters written at Reading Abbey, the creation of Harley MS 651 can be confidently attributed to the scriptorium at Reading.<sup>51</sup> Gullick has identified the hand of Harley MS 651 with that responsible for three charters produced at Reading.<sup>52</sup> The hand of the Harley manuscript is very similar to one of those responsible for the texts in Cotton MS Vitellius A VIII and Gonville and Caius MS 177.210, but Gullick does not think they are the work of the same scribe (Figs. 1-2).<sup>53</sup> The two volumes also have similar decoration, and the use of yellow wash to emphasise the first letters or words of new sentences and the start of names in the manuscript divided between London and Cambridge finds a parallel in another Reading manuscript, now in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawl. A. 376, though this volume was not written by the scribe of the Harley manuscript or decorated with initials like those in the histories.<sup>54</sup> The similarities between Harley MS 651, the volume divided between London and Cambridge and other manuscripts associated with Reading thus suggest that both volumes were made at, as well as for, Reading, and that the abbey had a significant scriptorium in the late twelfth century.

The identification of the scribe of Harley MS 651 in charters from Reading Abbey also helps to refine the probable date of production. On the basis of the names included in the charters, these documents can be dated relatively precisely. Two are from the reign of Abbot William (1165-1173) and the third is from that of his successor Abbot Joseph (1173-1186).<sup>55</sup> This agrees with the evidence of the Harley manuscript, which ends, probably with its exemplar, in 1157, in the middle of the first column, with the rest of the folio left for a possible continuation, and van Houts' suggested date of c. 1159 for the revisions to the Leiden manuscript, copied into the Reading volume, together with the *terminus ante quem* date of the Reading cartulary of c. 1192. Although the scribe may have been active before and after the abbots whose charters he produced, the two volumes of histories derived from Norman sources were probably made in the roughly the same period as the charters, between c. 1165 and c. 1186. Intriguingly, someone made additions to the Reading annals up to and including the year 1181, providing further evidence of an interest in historical events towards the end of this period, although the short annals were a much less ambitious

project than the making of either of the other surviving manuscripts containing histories.<sup>56</sup>

The dates of the charters written by the scribe of Harley MS 651 places his activity within the period of Robert of Torigni's abbacy at Mont-Saint-Michel. Robert's writings demonstrate that he sought elite patronage through his histories, and shed light on some of the driving forces behind the circulation of histories in this period.<sup>57</sup> In the early 1150s, when he was still at Bec, Robert wrote to Gervase, prior of Saint-Céneri, suggesting that the latter write a history of the counts of Anjou and Maine.<sup>58</sup> Robert listed some of the potential rewards for such works, including the favour of the current count, who was the future King Henry II.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, a note in the contents list of Avranches MS 159 declares that a copy of the chronicle was presented to Henry II.<sup>60</sup> The wording of the entry is ambiguous, as it states that the chronicle runs to 1184, and that the book presented to Henry contained the history recorded in these pages, but given the stages of development of the chronicle this need not mean that Henry was given a copy in 1184. Henry had visited Mont-Saint-Michel in 1158, and Robert acted as sponsor to Henry's daughter Eleanor at her baptism in 1161.<sup>61</sup> Robert seems to have commissioned the high quality copy of the chronicle now in Avranches for Mont-Saint-Michel in c. 1156, and it is possible that he also gave a copy to the king in the late 1150s. Equally, two further versions of the text, ending in 1169 and 1182, circulated later in the century, suggesting that Robert was actively disseminating his work throughout his lifetime.<sup>62</sup> Although many scholars have cast doubt on Henry II's interest in literature, writers were keen to dedicate, and presumably therefore to present, works to him and this must have been a mechanism through which books moved.<sup>63</sup> In turn, Henry is described in Robert of Torigni's chronicle entry on the dedication of Reading Abbey's church in 1164 as a generous benefactor to the church.<sup>64</sup> Henry II's eldest son William was buried at Reading in 1156, further cementing the abbey's relationship with Henry I's family.<sup>65</sup> A gift to the king is a potential route by which manuscripts associated with Robert of Torigni might have come to Reading, and in this context it is suggestive that King John received books from Reading in 1208, perhaps having left works at the abbey to be copied.<sup>66</sup> However, royal

connections were only one possible route by which books might have come to Reading.<sup>67</sup>

Robert of Torigni's writings offer further clues about those involved in the circulation of the histories that came to Reading. In a text incorporated into his Chronicle he records that Henry of Huntingdon visited Bec in 1139, where Robert showed him a copy of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*.<sup>68</sup> Henry produced an abbreviated version of Geoffrey's text, and probably provided Robert with copies of his own work, the *Historia Anglorum*. As Patricia Stirnemann has argued, the artist responsible for the Avranches copy of Robert's Chronicle and the initial to Geoffrey of Monmouth's text in the Leiden volume also worked on a copy of a later version of Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* now in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MS Lat. 6042, probably made for Robert in the 1150s, suggesting ongoing contact between the two authors.<sup>69</sup> The record of the 'History of Reading' in the abbey's library list, together with the short annals, indicates that someone at Reading was interested in history, and, like Robert of Torigni and Henry of Huntingdon, might have actively sought out recent texts.<sup>70</sup> As Reading was a post-conquest foundation, with no tradition of historical writing to continue (as there was, for example, at Worcester or Abingdon), it could have seemed appropriate for a monk at Reading to look to Normandy for accounts of history associated with the abbey's royal founder. Moreover, Reading and Bec were united in their role as royal necropolises, as Henry I's viscera had been buried at the house he founded at Pré, which was a Bec priory, and Henry I's daughter, Empress Matilda, was buried at Bec in 1167, having announced her decision to be buried there in 1134.<sup>71</sup> Both abbeys thus had an interest in commemorating Henry I's family, as set out in the first charter of the Reading cartulary.

Yet royalty were not the only potential patrons or subjects of history in the twelfth century. Henry of Huntingdon addressed his summary of Geoffrey of Monmouth's work to Warin the Breton. Warin remains a mysterious figure, and Diana Greenway suggested he might even be a fiction.<sup>72</sup> Henry addressed Warin as a dear friend (*dilectissime*) and framed his letter as a response to a question from Warin about an earlier work. It is thus unclear whether Warin represents another historian, or an interested reader and potential patron, but the inclusion of his name emphasises the importance of a specific envisaged

readership. Whilst historians were a major audience for the works of other historians, the availability of Geoffrey of Monmouth's work at Bec very shortly after the text was written recalls attention to the role of patrons. Geoffrey's work was completed in the 1130s, and it is possible that it was brought into Normandy by one of its dedicatees, Robert, earl of Gloucester, or Waleran, count of Melun, in that decade.<sup>73</sup> The richness of book collections in private hands in this period is demonstrated by the list of books left to Bec by Philip de Harcourt, bishop of Bayeux, who died in 1163.<sup>74</sup> Philip also had a copy of Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum*, a '*Historia Normanorum*', which was probably the Deeds of the dukes of the Normans, and a copy of the life of Alexander with a '*Historia Britonum*', which was probably another copy of Geoffrey of Monmouth's work.<sup>75</sup> Robert of Torigni was thus following a common practice in seeking elite patronage for his work, and networks of intellectual, ecclesiastical, social and political contacts intersected, making it extremely difficult to pin down how specific books moved in this period.

Two additional records in which Reading and Bec are both named demonstrate the extent to which networks of power overlapped in the twelfth century. Bec was an extremely important abbey in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>76</sup> The abbey provided the first two post-conquest archbishops of Canterbury, and was a popular place for both nobles and ecclesiastics, as well as historians like Henry of Huntingdon, to break journeys. The abbot of Bec was an important figure in contemporary politics; Abbot Boso was one of the witnesses to Henry I's charter in favour of Reading, together with the archbishops of Canterbury, York and Rouen, and bishops and abbots from both Normandy and England.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, Henry II's charter confirming Reading's privileges (as copied into the Reading cartulary) was issued at Rouen in 1156/7 and witnessed by his mother, bishops including Philip de Harcourt of Bayeux, and abbots of Norman houses including Bec.<sup>78</sup> In addition to gatherings of churchmen at royal courts, the cartulary records the complex system of landownership that also provided links between houses. In Stephen's reign the king gave lands in East Henedred to Reading in return for an annual payment of 100 shillings.<sup>79</sup> He later granted these revenues to the abbey of Bec.<sup>80</sup> Thus Bec and

Reading were connected, not only as royal necropolises, but also through the complex networks of power and patronage.

The cartulary of Reading Abbey provided an account of the temporal holdings of the monastery, together with a record of how those lands and privileges had been obtained. The emphasis on royal patronage finds a parallel in the other surviving histories from the abbey. Although the routes by which the texts came to Reading remain opaque, the manuscripts were based on exemplars that can ultimately be traced to Bec. In these works the Norman dukes who became kings of England featured alongside heroes such as Charlemagne and Alexander, and were major figures in Robert of Torigni's Chronicle. The emphasis on Norman history in Reading's library list is remarkable, given that many histories produced in England were also available in the latter part of the twelfth century. The arrival of manuscripts of Norman provenance at Reading may have been a result of a combination of the active dissemination of the texts by Robert of Torigni and the communities of Bec and Mont-Saint-Michel, and Reading's own relationships with important patrons. As important abbeys and royal necropolises Reading and Bec had common interests, responsibilities, patrons and visitors. Nevertheless, the quality of the Harley manuscript testifies to the value of Robert of Torigni's chronicle in the eyes of those who copied it at Reading, serving as a reminder that the monks at Reading were not simply passive recipients of history.

### Acknowledgements

This research has been supported by a Marie Curie Actions Grant under the Seventh Framework Programme, for which I am very grateful.

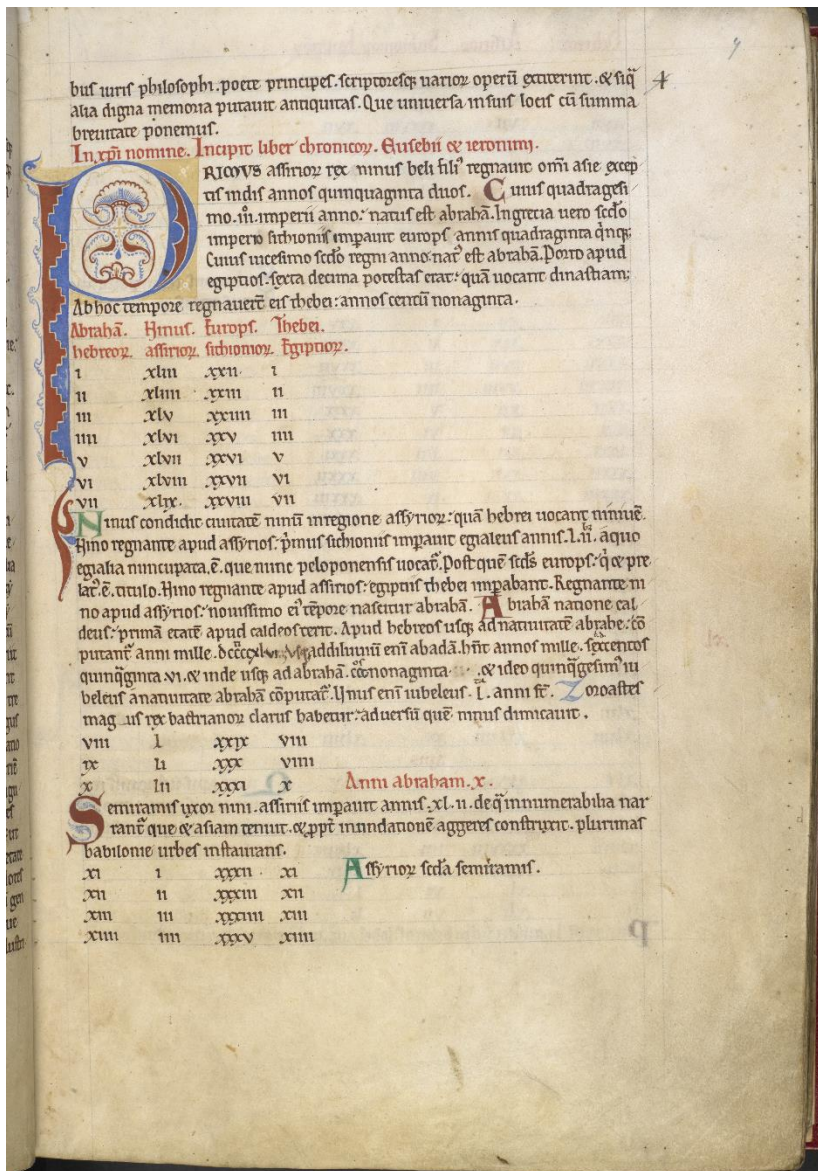


Fig. 1, London, British Library Harley MS 651 f. 7 © The British Library Board.



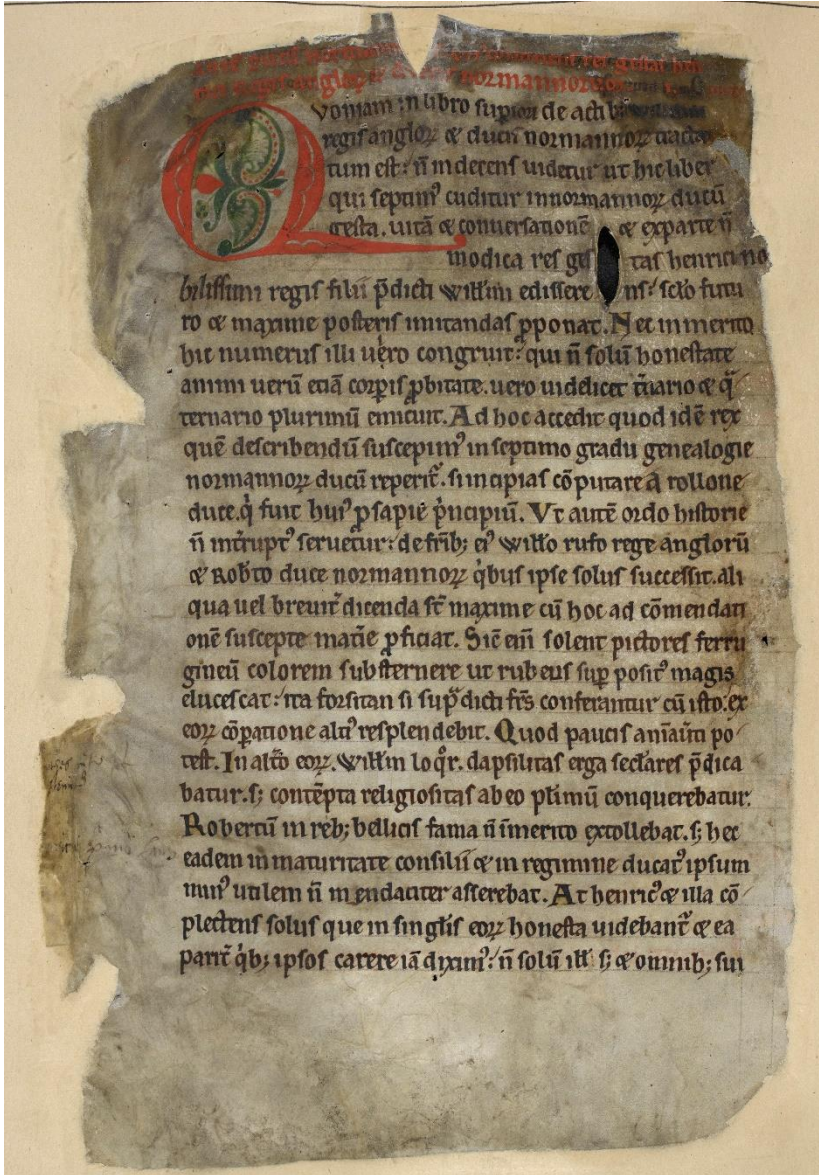


Fig. 2, London, British Library Cotton MS Vit. A VIII f. 77v © The British Library Board.



## Notes

- 1 See B. R. Kemp ed., *Reading Abbey Cartularies*, 2 vols (London, 1986-7).
- 2 'Ego autem consilio pontificum et aliorum fidelium meorum pro salute anime mee et Willelmi regis patris mei et Willelmi regis fratris mei et Willelmi filii mei et Mathildis regine matris mee et Mathildis regine uxoris mee et omnium antecessorum et successorum meorum edificavi novum apud Radingiam monasterium in honore et nomine dei genitricis semperque virginis Marie et beati Iohannis ewangeliste', Kemp, *Cartularies*, I, pp. 33-6 (at p. 33); see also R. Baxter, *The Royal Abbey of Reading* (Woodbridge, 2016), p. 11.
- 3 A. Coates, *English Medieval Books: The Reading Abbey Collections from Foundation to Dispersal* (Oxford, 1999), p. 12; Baxter, *Royal Abbey*, pp. 31-2.
- 4 See C. Johnson, 'Some Charters of Henry I', *Historical Essays in Honour of James Tait*, ed. J. G. Edwards, V. H. Galbraith and E. F. Jacob (Manchester, 1933), pp. 137-42; Kemp, *Cartularies*, I, pp. 19-22, 35-6, 38, 40.
- 5 Kemp, *Cartularies*, I, p. 3; see also R. Sharpe, J. P. Carley, R. M. Thomson and A. G. Watson, *English Benedictine Libraries: The Shorter Catalogues* (London, 1996), p. 420; Coates, *Medieval Books*, pp. 20-1.
- 6 The lists have been edited and published in Coates, *Medieval Books*, pp. 25-36; and Sharpe et al., *Benedictine Libraries*, pp. 421-47; see also M. Gullick, 'Reflections and Observations on Romanesque Manuscripts and Charters from Reading Abbey', in this volume.
- 7 Kemp, *Cartularies*, I, p. 2; Sharpe et al., *Benedictine Libraries*, p. 420.
- 8 For other books from Reading see N. R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books* 2nd edn (London, 1964), pp. 154-8; Coates, *Medieval Books*, pp. 143-54.
- 9 See *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert of Torigni*, ed. E. M. C. van Houts, 2 vols (Oxford, 1992-5), I, pp. cxii-cxiii; E. M. C. van Houts, 'Cotton and the Chronicles of the Norman Conquest', *[Electronic] British Library Journal* (1992), 150-2.
- 10 The annals are preserved in British Library, Royal MS 8 E XVIII ff. 94-6 and Cambridge, St John's College MS A 22 ff. 111-12.
- 11 *Hystoria ecclesiastica in uno volumine / Cronica Eusebii, Ieromini, Prosperi, Sigeberti monachi Gemblacensis, in uno volumine / Iosephus in duobus voluminibus / Egesippus in uno volumine / Vita Karoli & Alexandri, et gesta Normannorum ducum, & alia / Hystoria Anglorum in uno volumine*. British Library, Egerton MS 3031 f. 9v.

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- 12 Sharpe et al., *Benedictine Libraries*, pp. 432-3; Coates, *Medieval Books*, p. 42.
- 13 B. Smalley, *Historians in the Middle Ages* (London, 1974), pp. 38-9; see also Sharpe et al., *Benedictine Libraries*, pp. 6, 37, 54, 82, 85, 178, 190, 483, 486, 490, 503, 506, 509, 635.
- 14 On the volume with collected works see F. Avril, 'Notes sur quelques manuscrits bénédictins normands du XI<sup>e</sup> et du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 77 (1965), 209-13; J. C. Crick, *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth III: A Summary Catalogue of the Manuscripts* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 125; J. C. Crick, *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth IV: Dissemination and Reception in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 24; another twelfth-century copy of Robert of Torigni's Chronicle made in England is British Library, Royal MS 13 C XI; Ralph Diceto also had access to Robert's Chronicle and used it in the creation of his own history: see W. Stubbs *The Historical Works of Master Ralph de Diceto*, 2 vols (London, 1876); another copy of the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* made in England is British Library, Cotton MS Nero D VIII; see also *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, I, pp. xcvi-cii, cxiv.
- 15 Isidorus de summo bono / Gesta regis Henrici et / ystoria Rading' in .i. volumine, British Library Egerton MS 3031 f. 9; Coates, *Medieval Books*, p. 29.
- 16 See Sharpe et al., *Benedictine Libraries*, p. 429; Coates, *Medieval Books*, p. 42, n. 21.
- 17 *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, II, pp. lxxix-lxxx, 200-1.
- 18 Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. and trans. D. Greenway (Oxford, 1996), p. lxx.
- 19 Geffrei Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis*, ed. and trans. I. Short (Oxford, 2009), pp. xii, 457; P. Dalton, 'The Date of Geoffrey Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*, the Connections of his Patrons, and the Politics of Stephen's Reign', *The Chaucer Review* 42 (2007), 24.
- 20 Gaimar, *Estoire*, pp. 354-5.
- 21 British Library, Royal MS 8 E XVIII f. 95; see also Coates, *Medieval Books* pp. 6, 42-3; Baxter, *Royal Abbey*, p. 11.
- 22 Kemp, *Cartularies*, I, pp. 35, 225-6, 301-2, 353, 403-7; Coates, *Medieval Books*, p. 11; Baxter, *Royal Abbey*, p. 36
- 23 'pro anima domini mei regis Henrici et pro anima Godefridi ducis patris mei et matris mee et omnium parentum meorum et pro salute domini mei Willelmi comitis Cicestr(ie) et pro salute anime mee filiorumque meorum', Kemp, *Cartularies*, I, pp. 225-6.
- 24 Kemp, *Cartularies*, I, pp. 301, 353, 416; Baxter, *Royal Abbey*, pp. 36-7.

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- 25 For Anglo-Norman queens as patrons of history see E. van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe, 900-1200* (London, 1999), p. 71.
- 26 The chronicle has been edited many times. The two most recent editions are: L. Delisle ed., *Chronique de Robert de Torigni*, 2 vols (Rouen, 1872-3); R. Howlett ed., 'The Chronicle of Robert of Torigni', *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I* (London, 1889), IV. Professor T. N. Bisson is currently preparing a new edition.
- 27 De monasterio sancta Marie Radyngie.
- 28 See Delisle, *Chronique*, I, pp. iii, xlvi; B. Pohl, 'The Date and Context of Robert of Torigni's *Chronica* in London, British Library, Cotton MS. Domitian A. VIII, ff. 71r-94v', *electronic British Library Journal* (2016), article 1; L. Cleaver, "A most studious man, a researcher and collector of sacred and profane books": Robert of Torigni and the making of the Mont-Saint-Michel Chronicle (Avranches Bibliothèque Municipale MS 159)', *Mapping New Territories in Art and Architectural Histories: Essays in Honour of Roger Stalley*, ed. D. O'Donovan, F. Narkiewicz and N. NicGhabhann (Turnhout, 2016) (forthcoming).
- 29 Manuscripts that end in 1156/7 include Bayeux, Chapter Library MS 1 and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MS Lat. 4862 (which has significant variations in its text, see Delisle, *Chronique*, I, p. vii). In addition, two manuscripts contain the Bec continuation from 1157 to 1159: Bibliothèque nationale de France MS Lat. 4861 and Rouen, Bibliothèque Municipale MS 1132; see also Delisle, *Chronique*, I, pp. xvi, xxii; Howlett, 'Chronicle', pp. xliii-lxv; L. Cleaver, 'The Circulation of History Books in Twelfth-Century Normandy', *Dissemination and Production: The Progress of Information*, ed. C. Johnston (forthcoming).
- 30 See Howlett, 'Chronicle', p. 195.
- 31 See Delisle, *Chronique*, I, p. viii.
- 32 In hoc volumine continentur hi libri. / Vita caroli magni imperatoris romanorum. / Vita alexandri [sic] macedonis. / Epistola eiusdem ad aristotilam de mirabilibus indie. / Gesta ducum normannorum. / Gesta regum francorum. / Expositiones gilde sapientis de habitatoribus britannie. Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 177.210 f. ib.
- 33 Coates, *Medieval Books*, pp. 41, 148.
- 34 *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, vol. 1, pp. cxxvii-cxxviii; Cleaver, 'Circulation'.
- 35 See F. Avril, 'Notes sur quelques manuscrits bénédictins normands du XIe et du XIIe siècle', *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 77 (1965), 209-13; Crick, *Geoffrey of Monmouth III*, p. 125; Crick, *Geoffrey of Monmouth IV*, p. 24; *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, I, cix.
- 36 *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, I, pp. lxxix-lxxx, cxxvii-cxxviii.

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- 37 *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, I, p. cix; D. N. Dumville, 'An Early Text of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and the Circulation of Some Latin Histories in Twelfth-century Normandy', *Arthurian Literature IV* (1985), 4.
- 38 Dumville, 'An Early Text', p. 3; Crick, *Geoffrey of Monmouth III*, p. 125.
- 39 See also *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, I, p. cxii.
- 40 Coates, *Medieval Books*, p. 27; Sharpe et al., *Benedictine Libraries*, p. 427; a manuscript with these contents is now in Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana MS XVII Dextra 6; see also Crick, *Geoffrey of Monmouth III*, pp. 118-19; Crick, *Geoffrey of Monmouth IV*, pp. 125-6.
- 41 See *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, I, pp. cix-cx.
- 42 'Catalogus Librorum Abbatiae Beccensis circa Saeculum Duodecimum', *Patrologia Latina* 150, cols 776-7; G. Nortier, *Les bibliothèques médiévales des abbayes bénédictines de Normandie* (Caen, 1966), pp. 63-6; P. Stirnemann, 'Two Twelfth-Century Bibliophiles and Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum*', *Viator* 24 (1993), 137; B. Pohl, 'Abbas qui et scriptor?: The Handwriting of Robert of Torigni and His Scribal Activity as Abbot of Mont-Saint-Michel (1154-1186)', *Traditio* 69 (2014), 70.
- 43 See 'Catalogus Librorum Abbatiae Beccensis', col. 777; Nortier, *Les bibliothèques*, pp. 64-7.
- 44 L. Delisle, 'Note sur un manuscrit original de Robert de Torigni', *Matériaux pour l'édition de Guillaume de Jumièges*, ed. J. Lair (Paris, 1910), pp. 29-43.
- 45 *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, I, pp. cix-cx, cxxvi.
- 46 *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, I, pp. lxxviii-lxxx.
- 47 See G. Waitz ed., 'Hugonis Floriacensis opera historica; accedunt aliae Francorum historiae', *MGHSSIX* (1851), pp. 343, 395-406.
- 48 Nortier, *Les bibliothèques*, p. 68; Stirnemann, 'Two Twelfth-Century Bibliophiles', p. 137; Pohl, 'Abbas qui et scriptor', p. 48.
- 49 F. Avril, 'La décoration des manuscrits au Mont Saint-Michel (XIe-XIIe siècles)', *Millénaire monastique du Mont Saint-Michel*, ed. R. Foreville, 6 vols (Paris, 1966-71), II, p. 234; M. Bourgeois-Lechartier, 'A la recherche du scriptorium de l'abbaye du Mont Saint-Michel', *Millénaire monastique du Mont Saint-Michel*, ed. R. Foreville, 6 vols (Paris, 1966-71), II, p. 186; see also W. Cahn, *Romanesque Manuscripts: The Twelfth Century*, 2 vols (London, 1996), II, pp. 32-3.
- 50 See also D. Bates, 'Robert of Torigni and the *Historia Anglorum*', *The English and their Legacy, 900-1200: Essays in Honour of Ann Williams*, ed. D. Roffe (Woodbridge, 2012), p. 184.

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- 51 I am hugely grateful to Michael Gullick for sharing his work in progress with me and his patience in answering my questions about the hands of the Reading manuscripts.
- 52 See Gullick, 'Reflections and Observations', p. 5.
- 53 See also Coates, *Medieval Books*, p. 58.
- 54 *Ibid.*, p. 144.
- 55 D. Knowles, C. N. L. Brooke and V. C. M. London ed., *The Heads of Religious Houses: England and Wales*, 3 vols., 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2001-2008), vol. 1, p. 63.
- 56 British Library, Royal MS 8 E XVIII ff. 94-95.
- 57 See Cleaver, 'Circulation'.
- 58 Delisle, *Chronique*, II, pp. 338-40.
- 59 'Hoc enim ad augmentum famae tuae proficiet, et gratiosum me tibi et remunerationis debitorem efficiet; et quod his omnibus majus est, novi ducis favorem non modicum forsitan adquiret', Delisle, *Chronique*, II, pp. xviii, 339; L. Shopkow, *History and Community: Norman Historical Writing in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Washington, 1997), pp. 207-8.
- 60 ... usque ad annum dominice incarnationis mclxxxiiii quem librum presentavit karissimo domino suo H regi anglorum continentem istam historiam et reliquas in hac pagina notates; see also Stirnemann, 'Two Twelfth-Century Bibliophiles', p. 140.
- 61 Delisle, *Chronique*, I, p. 314, II, p. vii; ... et Robertus, abbas Sancti Michaelis de periculo maris, cum alias multis, de fonte susceperunt, et vocata est Alienor de nomine matris suae, Delisle, *Chronique*, II, p. 334; see also V. Gazeau, *Normannia Monastica*, 2 vols (Caen, 2007), I, p. 326.
- 62 Delisle, *Chronique*, I, p. liv; Howlett, 'Chronicle', p. xlvi; Dumville, 'An Early Text', p. 33; the relationships between the later copies of Robert's Chronicle would benefit from further study.
- 63 S. H. Cavanaugh, 'Royal Books: King John to Richard II', *The Library X* (1988), 304-5; J. Gillingham, 'The Cultivation of History, Legend and Courtesy at the Court of Henry II', *Writers of the Reign of Henry II*, ed. R. Kennedy and S. Meecham-Jones (New York, 2006), pp. 25-52.
- 64 Delisle, *Chronique*, I, p. 350.
- 65 Coates, *Medieval Books*, p. 13.
- 66 Cavanaugh, 'Royal Books', pp. 304-5; Sharpe et al. *Benedictine Libraries*, pp. 447-8; Coates, *Medieval Books*, p. 119.
- 67 Shopkow, *History and Community*, p. 237.
- 68 Delisle, *Chronique*, I, pp. 97-8; Stirnemann, 'Two Twelfth-Century Bibliophiles', p. 141; Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p. 559; see also N. Wright, 'The place of Henry of Huntingdon's *Epistola de*

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- Warinum* in the text-history of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britannie, France and the British Isles in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. G. Jondorf and D. N. Dumville (Woodbridge, 1991), p. 74; Bates, 'Robert of Torigni', p. 177.
- 69 Stirnemann, 'Two Twelfth-Century Bibliophiles', p. 122; Pohl, '*Abbas qui et scriptor?*', p. 62; Cleaver, 'A Most Studious Man'.
- 70 See Coates, *Medieval Books*, p. 42.
- 71 Delisle, *Cartulaire*, I, pp. 197-8; See A. Porée, *Histoire de l'Abbaye du Bec* (Evreux, 1901), pp. 294-6; *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, II, pp. 244-7; Shopkow, *History and Community*, pp. 235-6; J. Potter, 'The Benefactors of Bec and the Politics of Priors', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 21 (1998), 188-9.
- 72 Wright, '*Epistola de Warinum*', p. 74; Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p. 559 n. 2.
- 73 See D. Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins: The Roots and Branches of Power in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 31; Crick, *Geoffrey of Monmouth IV*, pp. 5-6.
- 74 Delisle, *Chronique*, I, pp. 343-4; see also Nortier, *Les bibliothèques*, pp. 64-6; Crick, *Geoffrey of Monmouth IV*, p. 215.
- 75 'Catalogus Librorum Abbatiae Beccensis', cols 779-82; see also M. A. Rouse and R. H. Rouse, "'Potens in Opere et Sermone": Philip, Bishop of Bayeux and His Books', *Authentic Witnesses: Approaches to Medieval Texts and Manuscripts*, ed. M. A. Rouse and R. H. Rouse (Notre Dame, 1991), pp. 33-59.
- 76 See Porée, *Histoire de l'Abbaye du Bec* (Evreux, 1901).
- 77 See Kemp, *Cartularies*, I, p. 35.
- 78 Kemp, *Cartularies*, I, pp. 46-9.
- 79 Kemp, *Cartularies*, I, pp. 41-2.
- 80 M. Chibnall, *Select Documents of the English Lands of the Abbey of Bec* (London, 1951), pp. 17-18, 24; Kemp, *Cartularies*, II, pp. 83-4.