

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-08929-6 - Church and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays presented to C. R. Cheney on his 70th Birthday

Edited by C. N. L. Brooke, D. E. Luscombe, G. H. Martin and Dorothy Owen

Excerpt

[More information](#)

CHARTER AND CHRONICLE: THE USE OF ARCHIVE SOURCES BY NORMAN HISTORIANS

by MARJORIE CHIBNALL

TO SPEAK OF 'archive' as distinct from 'narrative' sources in any part of north-west Europe during the eleventh century is something of an anachronism. This is not merely because contemporaries saw no sharp distinction between the two,¹ but because to some extent they interpenetrated one another. Merovingian and Carolingian charters might be used to provide details for the lives of saints venerated as monastic founders and at the same time to preserve a record of former monastic lands secularised by powerful lords or devastated in war. Chronicles might be pillaged by the writers of diplomas who prefaced their gifts with a brief history of the house. As long as chanceries remained so rudimentary that many charters were drafted and written in the scriptoria of beneficiaries, history and charter might at times be composed by the same men in much the same language. And until sealed writ-charters were generally recognised as instruments for transferring livery of seisin rather than records of previously witnessed acts of donation, a class of title-deeds clearly distinguished from the miscellaneous records of monastic houses did not exist.

Even historians dealing with more than domestic history, whether their concern was with papal pronouncements or the canons of councils, might find the frontier between document and narrative ill-defined. Rhetorical invention of dramatic speeches was so much an accepted device for conveying different opinions that a letter or even a papal bull might be invented purely to enliven the narrative. The canons of councils were not always formally promulgated in writing; attendant dignitaries carried home short summaries of canons which were not standardised when they reached the hands of historians who, while preserving many of them, diversified them still further by mixing

¹ See C. R. Cheney, 'The records of Medieval England' in *Medieval Texts and Studies* (Oxford, 1973), p. 3; David Knowles, C. N. L. Brooke and Vera London, *The Heads of Religious Houses in England and Wales 940-1216* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 5.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-08929-6 - Church and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays presented to C. R. Cheney on his 70th Birthday

Edited by C. N. L. Brooke, D. E. Luscombe, G. H. Martin and Dorothy Owen

Excerpt

[More information](#)

MARJORIE CHIBNALL

canon and commentary. The boundaries between categories of sources only gradually became clearer; even in the late twelfth century they were not always rigidly drawn.²

Norman historical writing proper may be said to have begun early in the eleventh century, but it drew on older traditions well-established in other provinces, and on some historical materials surviving from pre-Norman Neustria. The early records of Saint-Wandrille, which are the best preserved, illustrate the nature of these materials. From the early ninth century, a period of considerable historical activity, the *Gesta abbatum Fontanellensium* and a *Vita Condedi* survive. The author of the *Gesta* copied the *Liber Pontificalis* for the form of his work; the substance he found to some extent at least in the archives of his house.³ He cited between forty and fifty ancient donations, including a number of royal gifts; the confusion that he shows over the date of the abbey's foundation may have arisen from a misunderstanding of two genuine diplomas of Clovis II. Besides these he made use of Carolingian privileges of immunity, records of exchanges, judicial decisions and several documents relating to the internal administration of the monastery. If one of his objects was to preserve a record of the endowment of the house, events justified his foresight. Threatened by invasions of the Northmen, the monks of Saint-Wandrille abandoned their abbey c. 858⁴ and scattered to Chartres, Boulogne and Ghent, taking with them the relics of their saints. When the abbey was restored by Duke Richard I and the monks returned, they were obliged to leave their saints behind in Ghent and found many of their former possessions in the hands of powerful laymen. In so far as they were able to recover their lost treasures, it was with the powerful support of the Norman dukes backed, where necessary, by their own historical researches. Of their three saints, Wandrille and Ansbert were lost beyond recovery, and only after hunting for clues among the manuscripts of Saint-

² By the time of the 1148 Council of Rheims the canons of church councils were promulgated with sufficient formality for John of Salisbury to confine his account in the *Historia Pontificalis* to informal explanations of some of them (M. Chibnall, *The Historia Pontificalis of John of Salisbury* (Nelson's Medieval Texts, Edinburgh, 1956), p. 8). But secular laws in England at least were rarely so clearly formalised until later, and J. C. Holt has shown how Howden mixed text and context in recording and explaining the assizes of Henry II (J. C. Holt, 'The assizes of Henry II: the texts', in D. A. Bullough and R. L. Storey (eds.), *The Study of Medieval Records* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 85–106).

³ For the composition of the *Gesta* see F. Lohier and J. Laporte, *Gesta sanctorum patrum Fontanellensis coenobii* (Rouen-Paris, 1936), pp. xxiv–xxvi, xxxvi–xxxvii; F. Lot, *Études critiques sur l'abbaye de Saint-Wandrille* (Paris, 1913), pp. xi–xiii.

⁴ *Miracula sancti Wandregisili*, AA.SS, July v, 281–91.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-08929-6 - Church and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays presented to C. R. Cheney on his 70th Birthday

Edited by C. N. L. Brooke, D. E. Luscombe, G. H. Martin and Dorothy Owen

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Charter and Chronicle*

Bertin⁵ were they able to argue that St Wulfram had never left Saint-Wandrille and to make a 'discovery' of his body there in 1027 plausible enough to convince many of their contemporaries, and even such eminent later scholars as the Bollandists.⁶

The case for the recovery of former lands was supported by evidence drawn from a number of sources. For one restoration, that of the island of *Belcinnaca* in the river Seine by William, count of Arques, between 1032 and 1047, the documentation is particularly good.⁷ A forged diploma of King Theoderic III, dated 673, was probably produced in the early eleventh century, slightly before the charter of William of Arques.⁸ This diploma, granting the island where St Condedus had lived, was plainly based on the ninth-century *Vita Condedi*⁹ and also on the *Gesta abbatum*¹⁰ of the same period. Both these works had made use of earlier diplomas and so, by the interborrowings of charters and narratives, the tradition of possession was handed on until the property could be secured to the restored monastery with all the weight of ducal sanction. Because of the widespread loss and destruction of the earliest Norman archives,¹¹ few cases can be documented quite so clearly; evidence surviving from Anjou, Maine and other parts of northern France, where the early sources are richer, indicate that the story of *Belcinnaca* is typical of many others.¹²

The interdependence of charter and chronicle was closest in *Vitae sanctorum* and histories of limited scope composed in monasteries. Ducal history had other methods. It owed its beginning to the encouragement of Duke Richard I and his son Richard II in the last decade of the tenth century, when intellectual life was just beginning to revive

⁵ H. van Werveke, 'Saint-Wandrille et Saint-Pierre de Gand', in *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* J. F. Niermeyer (Groningen, 1967), pp. 90–2.

⁶ The fascinating story of the relics does not concern us here, since the monks made use only of narrative sources; the most recent treatment, with full references to earlier discussions, is by R. C. van Caenegem in 'The sources of Flemish history in the *Liber Floridus*', *Liber Floridus Colloquium* (Ghent, 1973), pp. 77–80.

⁷ Printed, Lot, *Saint-Wandrille*, no. 15, pp. 56–7. This restoration was included in the general charter of William the Conqueror (1082–7); see Marie Fauroux, *Recueil des actes des ducs de Normandie (911–1066)*, Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de Normandie XXXVI (Caen, 1961), no. 234.

⁸ Lot, *Saint-Wandrille*, no. 1, pp. 23–4.

⁹ AA.SS, October IX, 356–7.

¹⁰ Lohier and Laporte, *Gesta*, pp. 39–40.

¹¹ See C. H. Haskins, *Norman Institutions* (Cambridge, Mass., 1925), pp. 241–9.

¹² Cf. for example the interborrowings of the early charters of St Nicholas, Angers, and the *Historia Sancti Florentii Salmuracensis* (Migne, PL. clv), 481; P. Marchegay and E. Mabile, *Chroniques des églises d'Anjou* (Paris, 1869), p. 255; L. Halphen, *Le comté d'Anjou au XIe siècle* (Paris, 1906), p. x and no. 34; and the use of early diplomas by Odorannus of Sens in his life of Théodechilde (R. H. Bautier and Monique Gilles, *Odorannus de Sens, Opera Omnia* (Paris, 1972), pp. 42–4, 76–9).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-08929-6 - Church and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays presented to C. R. Cheney on his 70th Birthday

Edited by C. N. L. Brooke, D. E. Luscombe, G. H. Martin and Dorothy Owen

Excerpt

[More information](#)

MARJORIE CHIBNALL

after the disruption of the Norman invasions and the slow rise of the new duchy.¹³ Dudo of Saint-Quentin, who undertook the task at the bidding of the two Richards, was a secular canon, later dean of Saint-Quentin, employed at the ducal court. His work, though a panegyric full of unreliable legends rather than a history, cannot be rejected out of hand and has been used with caution by historians since shortly after his own day. He owed the great bulk of his material to oral tradition and in particular to the stories of Richard I's brother, Count Ralph of Ivry, whom he addressed in one place as 'huius operis relatores'.¹⁴ There is no reason to suppose that even the laws of Rollo, which he described,¹⁵ were written down in Rollo's day. Charters, at least from the time of Richard I, were a different matter; Dudo must have known, and may have used them. As a chaplain of Richard II who, on one occasion, gave himself the somewhat grandiose title of chancellor,¹⁶ he was certainly engaged in the production of charters as well as in the writing of history. Two charters are known to have been drafted by him;¹⁷ it has even been proved that he wrote some lines of each with his own hand.¹⁸ Charters and history alike were composed in Dudo's bombastic, rhetorical style.¹⁹ But, while both bear the stamp of his literary training, it must be recognised that he used earlier diplomas very rarely, and then merely as the factual basis for rhetorical speeches; he did not transmit them with the verbal faithfulness of the ninth-century monks of Saint-Wandrille. There is independent proof that the abbey of Saint-Denis had held property at Berneval in Normandy before the ninth-century invasions, and that possession was restored by the first dukes;²⁰ Dudo in his account of the baptism of Rollo and subsequent benefactions states that Rollo gave the property. He may have combined the stories of Ralph of Ivry with information in the 968 charter of Richard I, which restored Berneval as his father

¹³ See J. Lair, *Dudonis Sancti Quintini 'De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum'* (Caen, 1865), pp. 9–20.

¹⁴ Lair, *De moribus*, p. 125.

¹⁵ Lair, *De moribus*, pp. 171–2.

¹⁶ It is possible that the title at this date meant no more than *scriba* or *notarius* (Fauroux, *Recueil*, p. 41).

¹⁷ D. C. Douglas, 'The ancestors of William fitz Osbern', *EHR*, LIX (1944), 73–4.

¹⁸ Marie Fauroux, 'Deux autographes de Dudon de Saint-Quentin', *BEC*, CXI (1953), 229–34; Fauroux, *Recueil*, nos. 13, 18.

¹⁹ Douglas, *EHR*, LIX (1944), 73 n. 10, notes some common phrases, such as 'Dudo pretiosi martyris Christi Quintini canonicus' in the Saint-Ouen charter (Fauroux, *Recueil*, no. 18), and 'quemdam clericum pretiosi martyris Christi Quintini canonicum nomine Dudonem' in the history (Lair, *De moribus*, p. 295).

²⁰ Félibien, *Histoire de l'abbaye royale de Saint-Denis* (Paris, 1706), nos. XXXIII, LII, XCIII.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-08929-6 - Church and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays presented to C. R. Cheney on his 70th Birthday

Edited by C. N. L. Brooke, D. E. Luscombe, G. H. Martin and Dorothy Owen

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Charter and Chronicle*

William and his grandfather Rollo had granted it.²¹ However his brief statement, though consistent with the information in the charter, never exactly repeats its words.²² Similarly, if he used any charters of Duke Richard I in his account of the restoration of Saint-Ouen and Mont-Saint-Michel and of the foundation of Fécamp, there is no certain echo of their language in his panegyric.²³

A similar conclusion can be drawn from the writings of William of Poitiers, the court historiographer of William the Conqueror who, like Dudo, was a secular canon, not a monk.²⁴ Educated in the schools of Poitiers, he was well-read in classical authors and had at least a rudimentary training in law.²⁵ A man of good family, trained as a knight, he may have frequented William's court before he took orders; afterwards he was in constant attendance on William as one of his chaplains. His history shows a keen interest in laws: there are references to the *lex transfugarum*,²⁶ to Duke William's establishment of the Truce of God in Normandy,²⁷ and to the laws that he established after the conquest of England.²⁸ But his comments are general: they correspond only roughly to passages in the *Leis Willelme* which, though not written down until after William the Conqueror's death, were to some extent a record of practice, based on the code of Cnut which William of Poitiers may have seen.²⁹ His allusions do not prove research in law-books; very probably he owed his knowledge of the laws promulgated by William the Conqueror to his own experience of the business of the court, just as Dudo of Saint-Quentin was familiar with charters primarily because he was employed in drafting them.

Neither of these men spent his life in close contact with the resources of a monastic library. Both visited many abbeys with the duke, and had opportunities of exploring archive resources which, though probably scanty when Dudo was preparing his work, were

²¹ Fauroux, *Recueil*, no. 3. His account has sometimes been regarded as indicating a lost charter of Rollo, but this is unlikely (*ibid.* p. 20, n. 3).

²² Lair, *De moribus*, pp. 170–1. Dudo's words, 'Brenneval cum omnibus appenditiis' correspond only roughly with the formula of Richard I's charter, 'Britnevallem...cum omnibus suis adjacentibus'.
²³ Lair, *De moribus*, pp. 290–1.

²⁴ See Guillaume de Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi ducis Normannorum et regis Anglorum*, ed. R. Foreville (Paris, 1952), pp. vii–xiii.

²⁵ R. Foreville, 'Concepts juridiques et influences romanisantes chez Guillaume de Poitiers', *Le Moyen Age*, LVIII (1952), 43–83.
²⁶ Foreville, *Gesta Guillelmi*, p. 64.

²⁷ Foreville, *Gesta Guillelmi*, p. 118.

²⁸ Foreville, *Gesta Guillelmi*, pp. 232–4, 'Latrociniis, invasionibus, maleficiis, locum omnem intra suos terminos denegavit. Portus et quaelibet itinera negotiatoribus patere, et nullam injuriam fieri jussit.'

²⁹ Cf. F. Liebermann, *Gesetze der Angelsachsen* (3 vols. Halle, 1903–16), I, 497, 511; III, 277ff.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-08929-6 - Church and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays presented to C. R. Cheney on his 70th Birthday

Edited by C. N. L. Brooke, D. E. Luscombe, G. H. Martin and Dorothy Owen

Excerpt

[More information](#)

MARJORIE CHIBNALL

becoming much more plentiful half a century later. But neither lived long years among the traditions and records of a single great religious house. In this they differed from the third eleventh-century ducal historiographer, William 'Calculus', monk of Jumièges and contemporary of William of Poitiers. Of his early life, and whether he was an oblate monk or came to the cloister in mature years, nothing is known; however his style, so much simpler than that of either Dudo or William of Poitiers that he apologised for it,³⁰ suggests a monastic education, as do his written sources. His preface explains that he used a number of books in collecting his material; for the early period the stories that Dudo had preserved in a written record (*carta*) were the most important.³¹ Most of his sources were chronicles, such as the *Historia Francorum Senonensis*, or *Vitae sanctorum*; he may have had a few written genealogies,³² and he relied to some extent on oral information. Occasionally, however, the content or language of his History suggests the use of charters. His mention of the gift of the château of Dreux to Duke Richard's sister, Matilda, as her dowry, may possibly have been derived from a lost act.³³ Although his account of the restoration of his own abbey of Jumièges is not free from legend, one or two phrases have the wording of a formal deed. A lost charter may lie behind his note of William Longespée's gift to the first abbot 'cum tota villa, quam ab alodariis auro redemit';³⁴ the term *alodarius* is not a very common one, and occurs in this spelling in only three of the ducal charters collected by Marie Fauroux, two of which are general grants to Jumièges.³⁵ It was only natural that a monk, touching however briefly on the history of his own monastery, should turn for information to the charters of his house. Even in a hundred years one of the great restored monasteries of Normandy would accumulate a substantial collection of written records of various kinds.

The embodiment of traditions in charter and chronicle may be traced in other abbeys, including Saint-Ouen and Mont-Saint-Michel. At Saint-Ouen, Rouen, restoration came by slow stages, at first poorly

³⁰ Guillaume de Jumièges, *Gesta Normannorum ducum*, ed. J. Marx (Rouen-Paris, 1914), p. 1. That he was a monk of Jumièges when he wrote is known from Orderic Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. A. Le Prévost (5 vols. Paris 1838-55), II, 3, III, 85; ed. M. Chibnall (Oxford Medieval Texts, 1969ff.), II, 2-4, III, 304.

³¹ Cf. Marx, *Gesta*, pp. 1, 2.

³² Cf. Marx, *Gesta*, p. 88.

³³ Marx, *Gesta*, p. 83; cf. Fauroux, *Recueil*, p. 24 n. 19.

³⁴ Cf. Marx, *Gesta*, p. 40.

³⁵ See Fauroux, *Recueil*, no. 36, 'Do etiam . . . in Vado Fulmerii unum alodarium'; no. 220, 'in Amundevilla . . . sex homines liberos qui vocantur allodarii'. The third charter (no. 52) is for Saint-Wandrille. In three other charters the word is spelled *alodeir*, *aloter* and *aloer*.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-08929-6 - Church and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays presented to C. R. Cheney on his 70th Birthday

Edited by C. N. L. Brooke, D. E. Luscombe, G. H. Martin and Dorothy Owen

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Charter and Chronicle*

documented. That some temporal restitution was made by Rollo is recorded in the general charter of Richard II, which says of Rollo 'partim restituit, partim et dedit, sed propriis cartulis ad notitiam futurorum minime descripsit'.³⁶ Legends, written down towards the late eleventh century, attributed to Rollo more extensive gifts and privileges than those recorded in Richard II's charter. These were associated with the return of the saint's relics to Rouen, when Rollo was said to have walked barefoot from the city to Longpaon to meet them. The story occurs in various records: in a collection of miracles attributed to the saint,³⁷ in the sermon by John the Deacon, monk of Saint-Ouen, describing the translation,³⁸ and in the collection of mixed legend and genuine tradition of the early dukes that circulated with the tract called the *Brevis relatio de Willelmo nobilissimo comite Normannorum*.³⁹ A variant version of this last collection, written after Henry I's death, can also be found in the *Additamenta* to Robert of Torigny's *Interpolations* in the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* of William of Jumièges.⁴⁰ In spite of considerable differences of detail, there are one or two close verbal resemblances in the record of Rollo's gift. John the Deacon attributes to Rollo the following words: 'Hunc locum... amodo Longum pedanum nuncupari censeo, et ab hoc ad usque urbis moenia, omnem quae infra adjacet terram beato Audoeni liberaliter concedo.' The *Additamenta* makes him say, 'Et ego do ecclesiae vestrae et vobis totam terram, quae adjacet ab isto loco usque ad menia civitatis.' No grant in these terms occurs in the genuine charter of Richard II, but there may have been a lost document used by both. If so, it was almost certainly an interpolated version, for John the Deacon goes on to describe an immunity in terms improbable before the middle of the eleventh century: 'venerabile coenobium... juxta priscorum privilegia regum nostra auctoritate, ut immune et absolutum maneat ab

³⁶ Cf. Fauroux, *Recueil*, no. 53. The restoration of monastic life came only at the end of the tenth century (Dom Pommeraye, *Histoire de l'abbaye royale de Saint-Ouen de Rouen* (Rouen, 1662), pp. 142–6).

³⁷ *AA.SS*, August IV, 821ff. Cf. Fauroux, *Recueil*, p. 20.

³⁸ Migne, *PL*. CLXII, 1151–4. John was active in the first quarter of the twelfth century.

³⁹ For details of the manuscripts of this collection see T. D. Hardy, *Descriptive Catalogue of Materials relating to the History of Great Britain and Ireland*, RS (3 vols. London, 1862–71), I, no. 16. Though printed by Silas Taylor, *History of Gavelkind* (London, 1663), pp. 183–210, and J. A. Giles, *Scriptores rerum gestarum Willelmi Conquestoris* (London, 1845), pp. 1–23, it has never been critically edited. The account of William the Conqueror's life is followed by a collection of stories of his predecessors dating from the reign of Henry I; this may have come from Saint-Ouen, though gifts to Fécamp and Jumièges are described.

⁴⁰ Marx, *Gesta*, pp. 335–41.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-08929-6 - Church and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays presented to C. R. Cheney on his 70th Birthday

Edited by C. N. L. Brooke, D. E. Luscombe, G. H. Martin and Dorothy Owen

Excerpt

[More information](#)

MARJORIE CHIBNALL

omni judiciaria exactione, auctorizaliter constituo'. In these stories, although the legendary and apocryphal element is stronger than in the ninth-century *Gesta abbatum* of Saint-Wandrille, there is a similar attempt to use charter material.

At Mont-Saint-Michel, towards the middle of the eleventh century, the monks were engaged in interpolating two of their genuine diplomas, and the privileges so claimed were then recorded in several short chronicles and historical notes. During a protracted vacancy between 1058 and 1060, when they were resisting the imposition of an abbot from outside their own house, they produced a crude forgery of a supposed bull of John XIII granting freedom of election, and interpolated it in a genuine diploma of King Lothair.⁴¹ They further interpolated a reference to this alleged papal confirmation and a grant of additional ducal and episcopal customs in a charter of Duke Richard II.⁴² The first two documents were incorporated in a brief treatise, written c. 1058–60, and were later copied into a short account of the early history of the abbey. This was transcribed both into the preliminary folios of the great Cartulary of the abbey, and into a collection of historical works which included the *Chronicle* of Robert of Torigny.⁴³ Both these volumes were written and decorated in the early years of Robert's abbacy, shortly after 1154. Besides this, references to the supposed grant of privileges occur in several versions of the annals of the abbey. One of the earliest of these was written not later than 1070; the annals were copied into a volume, transcribed in the scriptorium of Mont-Saint-Michel, which was taken to St Augustine's, Canterbury, probably by Abbot Scolland.⁴⁴ The documents, authentic and forged, were part of the historical record of the abbey; even the illustrations

⁴¹ The forgery is critically discussed in L. Halphen and F. Lot, *Recueil des actes de Lothaire et de Louis V rois de France (954–987)* (Paris, 1908), p. 53 n. 1. The diploma is printed pp. 56–7.

⁴² Fauroux, *Recueil*, no. 49, pp. 158–62; cf. J. F. Lemarignier, *Étude sur les privilèges d'exemption et de juridiction des abbayes normandes*. Archives de la France monastique, XLIV (Paris, 1937), pp. 75 n. 46, 264.

⁴³ Bibliothèque municipale d'Avranches, MS 210 (Cartulary) and MS 211 (Chronicle); the account is printed by E. de Robillard de Beaurepaire, *Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de Normandie*, XXXIX (1877), 371–4.

⁴⁴ BL MS Royal 13 A xxiii, fos. 96–96v. The annal for 965 reads, 'Auctoratum est sacro scripto tam a domno Papa Iohanne quam a Lothario Francorum rege ut monasterium montis sancti Michaelis perpetualiter insigniatur ordine monachili, utque nullus nomine vel officio abbatis fungatur ibi nisi quem iudem monachi de suis elegerint praeesse sibi.' This manuscript has been dated and ascribed to the scriptorium of Mont-Saint-Michel by F. Avril in *Millénaire monastique du Mont-Saint-Michel* (4 vols. Paris, 1967–71), II, 206 n. 8; J. J. G. Alexander, *Norman Illumination at Mont St. Michel, 966–1100* (Oxford, 1970), p. 28. For a fuller version of the annals written c. 1120 see L. Delisle, *Chronique de Robert de Torigni* (Rouen, 1872–3), II, 217.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-08929-6 - Church and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays presented to C. R. Cheney on his 70th Birthday

Edited by C. N. L. Brooke, D. E. Luscombe, G. H. Martin and Dorothy Owen

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Charter and Chronicle*

of the great Cartulary combine legend and dramatisation of deeds of gift.⁴⁵

No doubt the collection and preservation of these miscellaneous records was due partly to the election of the historian, Robert of Torigny, as abbot in 1154. Robert was a passionate bibliophile and a great collector; if he made very little use of archive sources in his somewhat arid *Chronicle* and his interpolations in William of Jumièges,⁴⁶ he was well aware of the place records played in the traditions of his house. One section of the great Cartulary contains *acta* of the years 1155–9, which describe donations, purchases, law-suits and all the miscellaneous business of the abbey;⁴⁷ it reads like the first draft of a projected *Liber de rebus in administratione sua gestis*. But Robert's work was also typical of an attempt, very general at that time, to arrange and preserve materials that had been steadily increasing in volume and diversity since the early eleventh century in every great monastic house.

The miscellaneous historical and semi-historical material produced in western European monasteries during the period 1049–1122 has been described as 'vast and varied';⁴⁸ and in Normandy this was true not only of more consciously written historical treatises, but also of the raw materials of administration that accumulated in increasing quantities. Too little has survived from the very early archives of Norman monasteries for any accurate assessment of their bulk to be made. But certainly in the older houses by the end of the eleventh century charters might exist in sufficient numbers to demand classification: the earliest press-marks of the charters of Saint-Ouen, Rouen, date from this period.⁴⁹ Documents regulating relationships between bishops and abbots, though rare, were beginning to appear.⁵⁰ Records were kept for various purposes, of which the preservation of titles to monastic lands and privileges was only one. The rights of patrons too needed to be

⁴⁵ Cf. Avril, *Mont-Saint-Michel*, II, plates xxxi, lII, lIII, lIV; Alexander, *Norman Illumination*, plate 19h; A. Boinet, 'L'illustration du cartulaire du Mont-Saint-Michel' in *BEC*, lxx (1909), 335–43. Similar collections were being made in other parts of Europe at about this date; see J. Leclercq, 'Monastic historiography from Leo IX to Callistus II', *Studia Monastica*, xII (1970), 74–5. C. Manaresi, 'Il Liber instrumentorum seu chronicorum monasterii Casauriensis' in *Rendiconti dell'Istituto Lombardo di Scienze e Lettere*, lxxx (1947) describes a chronicle produced in the abbey of S. Clemente di Pescara, where charters were copied beside the narrative like *pièces justificatives*.

⁴⁶ His historical work has been critically assessed by R. Foreville, 'Robert de Torigni et Clio' in *Mont-Saint-Michel*, II, 141–53. ⁴⁷ Printed, Delisle, *Torigny*, II, 237–60.

⁴⁸ Leclercq, 'Monastic historiography', p. 57. ⁴⁹ Cf. Fauroux, *Recueil*, pp. 179, 311.

⁵⁰ Cf. the document in which the monks of Saint-Evroult announced the election of Roger of Le Sap as abbot in 1099 (Orderic, *Historia* (C) v, 262–4).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-08929-6 - Church and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays presented to C. R. Cheney on his 70th Birthday

Edited by C. N. L. Brooke, D. E. Luscombe, G. H. Martin and Dorothy Owen

Excerpt

[More information](#)

MARJORIE CHIBNALL

safeguarded: they were entitled to liturgical commemoration and various spiritual benefits. Records of their gifts, made often in the monastic chapter, were preserved in such documents as the earliest charter-roll surviving from Saint-Evroult, which is almost as much a chapter minute book as a collection of charters.⁵¹ The acts, mostly in narrative form, give such details as how one man granted his tithes to the abbey and received a free gift of five shillings to buy a psalter for his son whom he was sending to school;⁵² or how another came into the chapter-house and promised to give himself to the abbey with all his possessions on his death, in return for the full commemoration due for any one of the monks.⁵³ Rolls of this kind may have been kept with the charters, or brought into the church and laid on the altar on days established for the commemoration of benefactors.⁵⁴ Among the materials intended for reading aloud to the monks in the course of the daily horarium and at special times in the commemoration of saints were passages from the lives of the abbey's saints, and accounts of the early history of the house and the gifts of its benefactors.⁵⁵ Intended primarily for the instruction of the monks themselves, they often contained passages copied from both authentic and interpolated documents.

Lastly, there is evidence that a number of official records were finding their way into Norman monastic repositories. In the later years of Duke William the *acta* of his councils appear to have been sent out in something approaching official form.⁵⁶ Papal bulls were rare until towards the close of the century, as the clumsy forgery of the monks of Mont-Saint-Michel in 1058–60 illustrates; but lists of some canons of provincial councils were being sent out. If canons of papal councils were not generally promulgated in any official form at this time, synopses of some decrees circulated: lists of canons of the 1095 Council

⁵¹ Printed, Orderic, *Historia* (Le P.) v, 182–95.

⁵² Orderic, *Historia* (Le P.) v, 190, no. xxxii.

⁵³ Orderic, *Historia* (Le P.) v, 191, no. xxxvii.

⁵⁴ Cf. the roll containing the names of benefactors and their families, preserved at Saint-Evroult (Orderic, *Historia* (C), II, 114).

⁵⁵ Cf. Pommeraye, *Saint-Ouen*, p. 248, who describes the *Livre Noir* of Saint-Ouen as 'un recueil de Vies de Saints qu'on lisoit autrefois aux collations ou conferences qui se tenoient dans le chapitre ou dans le cloistre avant complies', and Dom J. Hourlier, 'Les sources écrites de l'histoire montoise antérieure à 966', in *Mont-Saint-Michel*, II, 124–8.

⁵⁶ See M. de Boilard, 'Sur les origines de la trêve de Dieu en Normandie', *Annales de Normandie*, IX (1959), 169–89, where early manuscripts containing the details of the truce are described; also Pierre Chaplais, 'Henry II's reissue of the canons of the council of Lillebonne', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, IV (1973), 628–32, and Orderic, *Historia* (C), III, 26, for the canons of the council of Lillebonne.