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978-1-108-04869-9 - Liber Monasterii de Hyda: Comprising a Chronicle of the Affairs of England, from the Settlement of the Saxons to the Reign of King Cnut; and a Chartulary of the Abbey of Hyde, in Hampshire. A.D. 455-1023

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### Liber Monasterii de Hyda

Edward Edwards (1812–86), librarian, writer and utilitarian, has been described as a founder of modern librarianship. Employed to catalogue the Earl of Macclesfield's library in 1861, he came across the large illuminated manuscript of the chronicle and cartulary that comprise this work, first published in 1866. The Latin text moves chronologically from 455 and the 'Legend of Albina' through six centuries of medieval English history, finishing at 1023 and the reign of King Cnut. Edwards, as editor, displays a librarian's zeal for detail: his extensive introduction provides a thorough history of Hyde Abbey, from foundation to dissolution. In the appendix, English translations of Anglo-Saxon charters and testaments (including those of Alfred the Great and King Eadred – the only known wills of Anglo-Saxon kings) provide further insight into England in the early middle ages.

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ON the 26th of January 1857, the Master of the Rolls submitted to the Treasury a proposal for the publication of materials for the History of this Country from the Invasion of the Romans to the Reign of Henry VIII.

The Master of the Rolls suggested that these materials should be selected for publication under competent editors without reference to periodical or chronological arrangement, without mutilation or abridgment, preference being given, in the first instance, to such materials as were most scarce and valuable.

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The works to be published in octavo, separately, as they were finished; the whole responsibility of the task resting upon the editors, who were to be chosen by the Master of the Rolls with the sanction of the Treasury.

The Lords of Her Majesty's Treasury, after a careful consideration of the subject, expressed their opinion in a Treasury Minute, dated February 9, 1857, that the plan recommended by the Master of the Rolls "was well calculated for the accomplishment of this important national object, in an effectual and satisfactory manner, within a reasonable time, and provided proper attention be paid to economy, in making the detailed arrangements, without unnecessary expense."

They expressed their approbation of the proposal that each chronicle and historical document should be edited in such a manner as to represent with all possible correctness the text of each writer, derived from a collation of the best MSS., and that no notes should be added, except such as were illustrative of the various readings. They suggested, however, that the preface to each work should contain, in addition to the particulars proposed by the Master of the Rolls, a biographical account of the author, so far as authentic materials existed for that purpose, and an estimate of his historical credibility and value.

*Rolls House,*  
*December 1857.*



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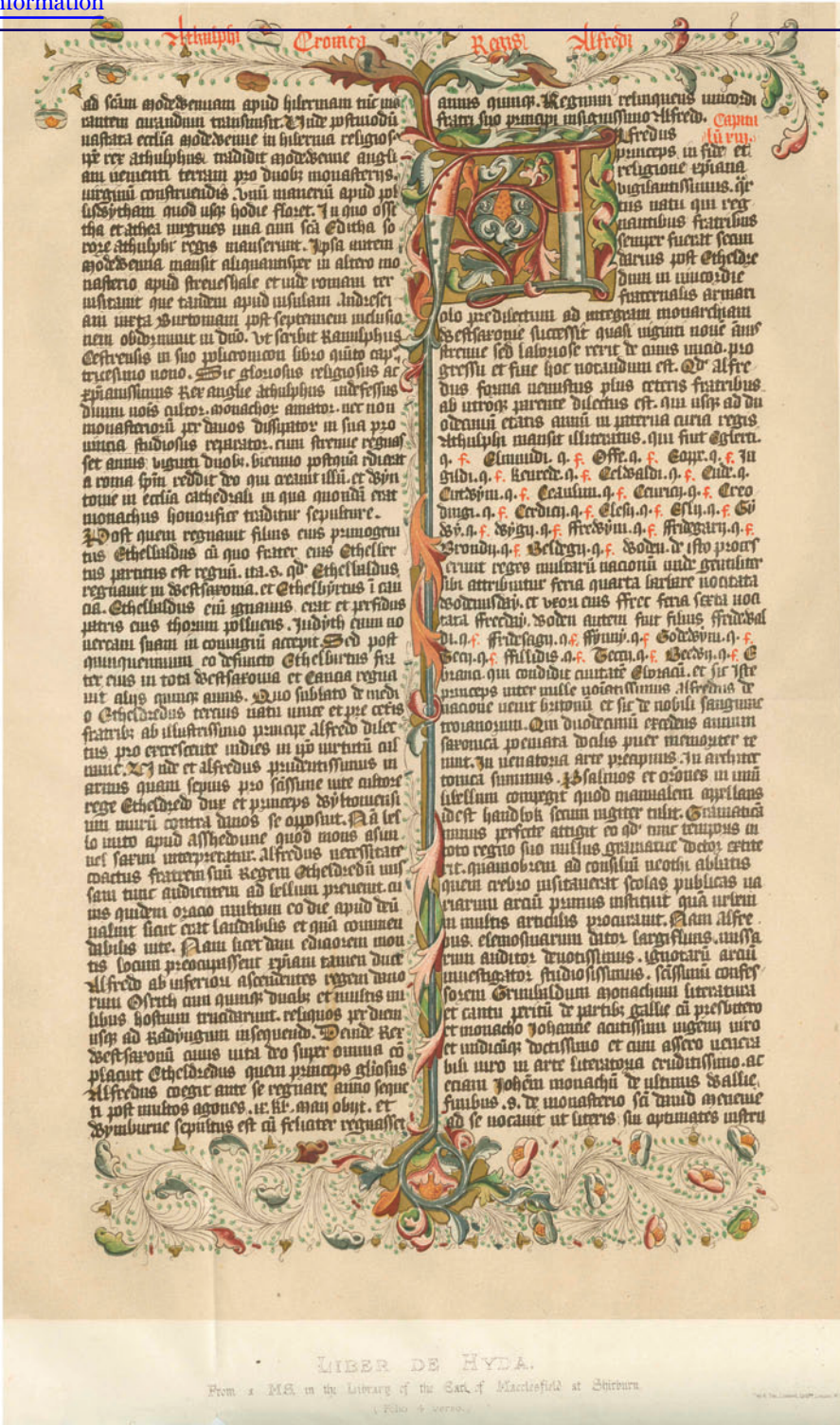
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THE REIGN OF KING CNUT;

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**A.D. 455—1023.**

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BY

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## INTRODUCTION.

THE Chronicle and Chartulary of Hyde Abbey, now first printed, was discovered by the Editor, in 1861, in the library of the Earl of Macclesfield, at Shirburn Castle, in Oxfordshire. The publication in 1861 (in this series of the *Chronicles and Memorials*) of the first volume of Mr. Hardy's *Descriptive Catalogue of Manuscripts relating to the early History of Great Britain* led to the identification of the Macclesfield MS., as the original volume from which John Stow, the historian of London, made, in the year 1572, that abridged and unfinished transcript of "LIBER DE HYDA," which is preserved among the Lansdowne Manuscripts in the British Museum. Of this Lansdowne MS. (No. 717), Mr. Hardy gives the following account, under the year 959, the date at which Stow's abridgment terminates :—

" 1143. ' Liber Monasterii de Hida.'

" MS. Lansdowne, 717, f. 1 (paper).

" MS. Stowe, Press 3, 33.

" Incip.—' *Regnum, quod modo Anglia nominatur, olim dicebatur Albion.*'

" Expl.—' *ut testimonium cum vadio inter nos incon-*

" ' *cusse permaneat.*'

" This work contains a short account of Albion ; the Heptarchy ; the kings who have taken the cowl ; descent of the Saxons from Ebrancus, king of Britain who conquered Germany ; Ethelwulf ; Alfred stops at S. Bertin on his way to Rome ; he invites Grimbold ;

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“ the letter of Fulco, archbishop of Rheims, to Alfred ;  
 “ Grimbald’s sermon ; the foundation of Oxford Uni-  
 “ versity ; King Alfred’s will ; Edward the Elder founds  
 “ Cambridge ; Athelstan, Guy of Warwick, and Colbrand  
 “ (from G. Cornubiensis ; ) Edred’s will (English and  
 “ Latin) ; the foundation of Hyde ; donations to Hyde.  
 “ The author quotes Vigilantius, *De Basilica Petri* ;  
 “ Ralph de Diceto ; the *Floriarium Historiale* of Flo-  
 “ rentius ; Bonagratia de Villa Dei ; Ralph of Chester ;  
 “ Girardus Cornubiensis ; Marianus Scotus ; Henry of  
 “ Huntingdon ; Lantfrid, *Life of Swithuin* ; Beda ;  
 “ Vincentius, &c.

“ The leaves in the Lansdowne MS. have been mis-  
 “ placed. It is apparently a reconstruction of earlier  
 “ materials which have been blended along with infor-  
 “ mation of a comparatively recent period, certainly  
 “ some time after the year 1354.

“ It professes to have been compiled in the Monastery  
 “ of Hyde. Hence the origin of the details respecting  
 “ Alfred the Great, Fulco, archbishop of Rheims, and  
 “ St. Swithuin, &c. The whole of the Lansdowne MS.  
 “ is executed without much care, and in some places  
 “ it is almost unintelligible.

“ The Book of Hyde has never been printed, but  
 “ copious extracts from it have been given by Alford in  
 “ the ‘*Annales Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ*,’ and a translation  
 “ [of Stow’s abridgment] has been published in the  
 “ ‘*Church Historians of England*,’ under the editorship  
 “ of the Rev. Joseph Stevenson.”<sup>1</sup>

To this account it may now be added that John Stow’s abridgment is of small quarto size ; consists of fifty written leaves, comprising ninety-five written pages ; extends to but little more than one-third part of the original work ; is fragmentary, and frequently inaccurate,

<sup>1</sup> Hardy, *Descriptive Catalogue of Materials*, &c., i. 563, 564.

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even as respects that portion; and is extremely confused in its arrangement and sequence,—partly from oversights in the transcription itself, partly from the subsequent misbinding. This MS. contains no indication of Stow's opinion either as to the author or the date of his original. But on the recto of the forty-seventh written leaf Stow has subjoined the following note:—

*“ Memorandum that there be in the Booke of  
“ Hyde, in great and large parchment writen,  
“ dyvars of the things before writen, and many  
“ other Testaments of certeyn Saxon kings, which  
“ be writen in bastard Saxon, and translated into  
“ Latyn and Englysshe.”*

Construed strictly, the expression “dyvars of the things” would, of course, imply that there are, in the Lansdowne MS., other extracts than those from the Book of Hyde, but the fact is not so. Prior to the acquisition of this MS. by Lord Lansdowne it belonged to Sir Henry St. George, in whose possession it was in the year 1697.<sup>1</sup>

In the sixth volume, it may be added, of Stow's manuscript “Historical Collections,”—also preserved in the British Museum, but amongst the Harleian MSS. (No. 542, p. 123,)—he speaks again of *Liber de Hyda* in these terms:—

*“ Annales Monasterii de Hyde is an auncyent  
“ booke, conteynyng the orgynalls and encrease  
“ of that howse, w<sup>th</sup> the notable thynys that hapned  
“ there.<sup>2</sup> It sheweth the author that wrote it lyved  
“ about the yere . . . .”*

<sup>1</sup> Tanner, *Notitia Monastica*, 156.

<sup>2</sup> It will be observed that, in this paragraph, Stow describes the Book of Hyde only by its minor and incidental, not by its principal contents. But that laborious antiquary wrote so much and so

rapidly, that similar oversights are common with him. No other MS. is known to which the description will apply. The Stowe Park MS. (herein-after described) is partly a Chartulary, partly a Miscellany or collection of *Adversaria*, with one

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But the intended date is left blank. It is probable that Stow, when writing this paragraph, had in his mind a passage of the MS. he had been abridging (contained on the recto of the seventh leaf, in the "*Chronica Regis Alfredi*"), to which attention will be called hereafter, in a subsequent page of this Introduction.

Stow's  
abridgment  
hitherto  
the chief  
source of  
knowledge  
as to the  
contents of  
the Book  
of Hyde.

The abridgment by Stow, thus described, had, for a very long period prior to the discovery of the Macclesfield manuscript, comprised all that was known of *Liber de Hyda*, with the exception of those various quotations from it which are given by several of our English Church historians, of whom Michael Alford, mentioned in Mr. Hardy's notice, is the most conspicuous. Most, if not all, of these quotations occur in authors—belonging to the Roman Catholic Church—whose works were written and printed in the early part of the seventeenth century (as will be shown in detail hereafter) and therefore subsequently to Stow's partial transcription of the Book of Hyde Abbey. But neither the epitomist nor any one of the citers say a word about the ownership or the abode of the original. Of the MS. formerly in the library of the Duke of Buckingham at Stowe Park ("III. 32" of Dr. O'Connor's Catalogue), and now in the library of the Earl of Ashburnham, an account will be given hereafter. Its contents are wholly different from those of the MS. now printed.

Descrip-  
tion of the  
Maccles-  
field vo-  
lume.

The Macclesfield MS. at Shirburn Castle is a large volume on vellum, measuring seventeen inches and three-eighths, by eleven inches and three-quarters, and is written in double columns, with fifty-eight lines to a

page only by way of "annals" prefixed. The Harleian MS., No. 1761, is strictly what its title describes it to be, "*Registrum Cartarum Abbatiae de Hida*," although it also has tabular "an-

nals" inserted between the Index and the Chartulary itself, which exhibit in parallel columns the chronology of kings, abbots, and bishops of Winchester.

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column. It extends to seventy-eight pages, or one hundred and fifty-six columns, and the text breaks off abruptly in the middle of a word. But the book has rather the look of an unfinished than of an imperfect volume. Its appearance suggests the probability that the labours of the scribe were accidentally interrupted. Some of the pages have richly illuminated borders, and many of them illuminated initial letters; but on the later pages these embellishments are only sketched in outline, or even barely indicated by the pen. The hand is of the close of the fourteenth or beginning of the fifteenth century. Its style and that of the embellishments are shown by the facsimile prefixed to this volume.

The present binding of the MS. is only of the last century. The first and last leaves bear proof that for a long time the book must have been without the protection of a cover of any sort. There is nothing to indicate through whose hands or into what libraries it may have successively passed, in the interval between its departure from Hyde Abbey and its arrival at Shirburn Castle.

The Shirburn library was mainly founded by Thomas Parker, first earl of Macclesfield (of the Parker family), who was lord chief justice of England from 1710 to 1718, and lord chancellor from 1718 to 1726. He was a lover of literature and a gatherer of books from youth to old age, and by him the Shirburn collection was left as an heirloom. It was largely augmented by his son George, second earl, well known for his devotion to astronomical science, and for many years president of the Royal Society. To this earl the eminent collector and mathematician, William Jones (long the friend and fellow-labourer of Newton), bequeathed his own considerable library as an augmentation of the Shirburn collection. All these book-buyers amassed books in various classes of literature, but none of them has left

Notice  
of the  
library in  
which  
*Liber de  
Hyda* was  
found.

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evidence of any special interest in monastic chronicles, or in mediæval literature generally. The library has been much enlarged subsequently to the bequest by Jones, but of the acquisition of the Hyde volume there is no record or clue whatever. On the other hand there is some reason to think that this book may have been at Shirburn prior to the purchase of the castle and estate by the Lord Chancellor Macclesfield, from Thomas, Viscount Gage, to whose father, Sir Thomas Gage of Firle, it had come by his marriage with an heiress of the ancient and stanchly Roman Catholic family of Chamberlayne, which had long been seated here. But this possibility can only be suggested by way of conjecture. All that is certain is, first, that other ancient MSS. now at Shirburn came with the castle to the first Lord Macclesfield; and, secondly, that although the documents which illustrate the gradual formation of the library there are unusually numerous and full, they throw no light on the history of the MS. now in question.

Character  
and con-  
tents of  
*Liber de  
Hyda.*

Beginning with the old legends of Albina and Brute, the first chapter of the Book of Hyde closes with a very brief summary of English history up to the date of the Norman conquest. Seven succeeding chapters describe severally the kingdoms which composed the Saxon Heptarchy. The ninth chapter treats specially of those Saxon kings who embraced a monastic life (“*De regibus Anglorum, qui, terrenum imperium relinquentes, ad vitam monasticam se transtulerunt*”). The tenth describes the origin of the Saxon inhabitants and rulers of England (“*Unde Saxones qui in Anglia regnant traxerunt originem*”). Chapter xi. treats of the union of the kingdoms into a sole monarchy, and is entitled “*De Monarchis.*” Thenceforward each chapter is the chronicle of a single reign,—“*Chronica Regis Adulphi,*” “*Chronica Regis Alfredi,*” and so on, but the term “chapter” ceases to be employed. These regnal chro-