

Remembering and Rewriting the Processes of Monastic Foundation at Whitby, Selby, and St Mary's York

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List of Common Abbreviations

<i>ANS</i>	<i>Anglo-Norman Studies: Proceedings of the Battle Conference</i> (various editors)
<i>ASC D</i>	<i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition Volume 6: MS D: A semi-diplomatic edition with introduction and indices</i> ed. by G P Cubbin (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 1996)
Cal. Cha. Roll	<i>Calendar of the Charter Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office</i> , ed. by H. C. Maxwell-Lyte, 6 vols (London, 1903-1927)
EYC	<i>Early Yorkshire Charters</i> , ed. by William Farrer and Charles Travis Clay, 12 vols (Edinburgh: Ballantyne, Hanson and co, 1914-1965)
<i>HSM</i>	<i>Historia Selebiensis Monasterii: The History of the Monastery of Selby</i> ed. and trans. by Janet Burton and Lynda Lockyear (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)
<i>MA</i>	<i>Monasticon Anglicanum. A History of the Abbies and Other Monasteries, Hospitals, Frieries and Cathedral and Collegiate Churches with their dependencies in England and Wales and French Monasteries as were in any manner connected with religious houses in England</i> ed. by William

Dugdale and Roger Dodsworth revd by.

John Caley, Henry Ellis, Bulkeley Bandinel

6 vols (London, 1817-1830)

Ordinale

The Ordinal and Customary of the Abbey of Saint Mary, York (St. John's College, Cambridge, ms. D. 27), ed. by the Abbess of Stanbrook and J. B. L. Tolhurst Henry Bradshaw Society, 73, 75, 84 (1936-1951)

Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*

Amy Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past: Monastic Foundation Legends in Medieval Southern France* (London: Cornell University Press, 1995)

Symeon, *Libellus*

Symeon of Durham, *Libellus de Exordio atque Procursu Istius, hoc est Dunhelmensis, Ecclesie: Tract on the Origins and Progress of this the Church of Durham*, ed. and trans. by David Rollason (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

Selby Coucher

The Coucher Book of Selby, ed. by J. Fowler, 2 vols Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Association Record Series X and XIII (York: Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Association, 1891-3)

Whitby Cartulary

Cartularium Abbathiae de Whitby, Ordinis Sancti Benedicti fundate Anno MLXXVII ed. by J. C. Atkinson, 2 vols (Durham: Surtees Society, 1879-81)

Abstract

In the wake of the Norman Conquest, three new, independent Benedictine monasteries were founded in Yorkshire: Selby, Whitby, and St Mary's York. Many more institutions followed in their wake, but it was the foundation of these monasteries that marked the return of formal monasticism to the region. Despite the lacuna, these monasteries stepped into a rich monastic past which had been passed down through the enduringly popular work of Bede. In this thesis, I consider how those new institutions wrote about and recorded their foundation, how they used their foundations to carve out their place in the world, and what the written sources that are left to us reveal about the communities' memory of the past. I suggest that the surviving evidence points towards a more complex pattern of memorialisation than previous studies have set out, and that the relationship between the abbey's memory of the past and the sources which survive from that abbey, is multifaceted and heterogeneous. Those sources are mere snapshots frozen in time, and whilst they could be representative of the abbey's memory of the past, that was not always the case. The thesis therefore argues for a more granular approach and considers the representations of the foundation process in a variety of different sources. Those sources highlight that in every single case these abbeys entertained numerous versions of the past, and that it is only through highlighting those differences that we can begin to grasp how medieval monastic communities thought about their past.

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Introduction

Selby, Whitby, and St Mary's York, the three monasteries at the heart of this project, were all Benedictine, male houses founded within decades of the Norman Conquest. Along with the foundation of the cathedral priory at Durham, the foundation of these three abbeys has been seen by historians as the return of formal monasticism to the north east of England after it had been swept away during the Viking Age.¹ The so-called 'revival' of northern monasticism has long fascinated historians, and scholars have taken great pains to attempt to reconstruct the events of the revival from a cacophonous mix of different versions of the 'revival' story produced at the institutions which sprang up from it.² That reconstruction largely goes as follows: in the mid-1070s, a band of three monks from Mercia travelled north because they had been inspired by the famous reputation of Bede and wished to resurrect the long-lost monasteries which he had described in the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*. One of them, Aldwin, had been prior of Winchcombe, another, Reinfrid, was an illiterate man who (in the Whitby version of the story) had been inspired by ruins at Whitby to travel to Evesham and become a monk; another, Ælfwig, was a deacon.³ According to Symeon of Durham, the three monks loaded a donkey with the necessary books to carry out the divine office and walked in front of the animal to the north east. They arrived at Monkchester, a place they seemed to have mistakenly believed had a Bedan antecedence, before moving on to Jarrow (with the apparent backing of Walcher, bishop of Durham) before their group fragmented.⁴ Aldwin travelled north to Melrose with Turgot (who had joined the group), before settling at Wearmouth, again with the backing of Walcher, and, finally, moving to Durham

¹ David Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England: A History of its Development from the Times of St Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council 940–1216* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), pp. 165–171.

² Janet Burton, 'The Monastic Revival in Yorkshire: Whitby and St Mary's York', in *Anglo-Norman Durham: 1093–1193*, ed. by David Rollason, Margaret Harvey and Michael Prestwich (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1994), 41–51; Janet Burton, *The Monastic Order in Yorkshire 1069–1215* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 23–44; Anne Dawtry, 'Benedictine Revival in the North: The Last Bulwark of Anglo-Saxon Monasticism?', *Religion and National Identity Studies in Church History* 18 (1982), 87–98; R. H. C. Davis, 'Bede after Bede', in *Studies in Medieval History presented to R. Allen Brown*, ed. by C. Harper-Bill (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1989), pp. 103–16.

³ Symeon, *Libellus*, pp. 200–211.

⁴ Symeon, *Libellus*, pp. 202–207.

to found the cathedral priory, while Reinfrid travelled to Whitby to restart monastic life there.⁵ At Whitby, Reinfrid was joined by a man named Stephen, known commonly as Stephen of Whitby, and, at some point, the community fragmented again. A group of monks led by Stephen travelled first to Lastingham and then to York where they ultimately settled as the monks of St Mary's, and a group of monks travelled to Hackness, before returning to Whitby.

The inclusion of the third abbey in this study, Selby, as a product of the revival is, strictly speaking, a nonsense. It stands apart from the other two abbeys as having been founded not by the initiative of so-called 'revivers', but by a monk named Benedict who had, apparently, fled Auxerre with the finger of that abbey's patron saint, Germanus, sewn into his arm in search of the promised land of Selby which that same saint had shown him in a vision. Yet, it was at Selby where monasticism was first 'revived' in the region. Benedict arrived in 1069, an auspicious year for the foundation, and quickly came to head up a formal monastic community. And although there are differences in the apparent motivations of Selby's founder (most obviously Selby was not a Bedan site) there are nevertheless many similarities. Like Whitby and St Mary's York, Selby was actively sponsored by the new Norman ruling classes, and, alongside St Mary's York and (less widely realised) Whitby, claimed to be in some sense a royal foundation.

This presentation of events is, however, heavily reliant on Symeon of Durham's narrative, who — as myriad historians have shown — was interested in crafting a monastic past at Durham to justify the events of 1083 which saw the clerks who acted as custodians of St Cuthbert's body replaced by the monks of the cathedral priory.⁶ That re-construction also vastly simplifies a complex and contradictory range of sources which often disagree on basic facts of the revival's story. The bulk

⁵ Symeon, *Libellus*, pp. 202-207.

⁶ A convincing line of argument suggest that such a work was necessary to justify the cathedral priory's existence to Bishop Ranulf Flambard. See William Aird, 'The Political Context of Symeon's *Libellus de Exordio*', in *Symeon of Durham: Historian of Durham and the North*, ed. by David W. Rollason (Stamford: Shuan Tyas, 1998), pp. 32-45; Symeon, *Libellus*, pp. lxxxi-lxxxiii. Charles C. Rozier, *Writing History in the Community of St Cuthbert c. 700-1130: From Bede to Symeon of Durham* (York: York Medieval Press, 2020), pp. 118-134.

of scholarship has therefore attempted to unravel these sources to approach the kernel of truth which supposedly lies at the heart of them.

The crucial events of the foundation were, however, enduringly important to the communities, providing them with building blocks with which to construct their identities and establish their place in the world. Who was involved in a community's foundation, and what prompted their engagement, became integral components of a monastery's identity, shaping its subsequent relationships with the wider world.⁷ In this thesis, rather than treating these divergent accounts of the foundation of these three Benedictine abbeys as problems to be explained away and their records as something to be mined for information about the events of the revival, I instead consider how these three institutions came to understand, explain, and remember their own place in the world.

The Background

The region in which these communities lay (which I have designated as 'the north east' above for simplicity) was in reality much more complex than the designation implies. The eastern part of the north was separated from the western by the Pennines and, the north from the south by the Humber. The region was distinct from the south, separated by geography, culture, and (for large parts of its history) politics.⁸ Before the conquest, southern kings had struggled to come to grips with the complex inter-personal politics which led so many of the earls of Northumbria to meet early deaths and, after the conquest, those struggles continued. The north east was, also, a region that was vulnerable to invasion. Yorkshire became firmly part of the Danelaw with a Scandinavian ruling class. One example of this Anglo-Scandinavian rulership of particular interest to this study is the construction of a church dedicated to St Olaf in York by Earl Siward in 1055. This church,

⁷ The seminal English language work on foundation narratives is Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*.

⁸ William Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North: The Region and its Transformation 1100-1135* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), pp. 7-15.

one of the earliest dedicated to the Norwegian king, was the church which was first settled by the community which would become the Abbey of St Mary's. As a result, St Olaf continued to be celebrated in the abbey's liturgy.⁹ Siward rose to prominence during the reign of Cnut at York and succeeded in annexing the earldom of Northumbria to his powerbase at York. Where Siward's loyalties would have lain if a Scandinavian fleet had sailed down the Humber was impossible to guess.¹⁰ So stark were the differences between north east and south that William of Malmesbury complained that he could simply not understand the dialect of those who lived north of the Humber, and texts produced in the Fens wrote about Northumbria as late as the thirteenth century as a mysterious and exotic land of dragons and heroes.¹¹ Yet, the designation of that region of what is now modern-day England as a homogenous 'north east' masks further dramatic differences either side of the River Tees. It is at that river where the traditional limits of *Anglia* may have been drawn. Yorkshire was the northernmost county recorded in Domesday Book; the evidence of a charter in favour of Tynemouth by William Rufus confirming possessions 'north of the Tyne, south of the Tyne, and in *Anglia*' would also indicate that William, or at least the scribes of Tynemouth Priory, believed that the land either side of the Tyne and north of the Tees lay outside the effective limits of royal power and, indeed, of the kingdom itself.¹² It is the region south of that dividing line, Yorkshire, where the three abbeys with which this thesis is concerned were located. It is a region which lay on the effective limits of England and royal government, and which suffered as much as any during the Norman Conquest.

The State of Yorkshire after the Norman Conquest

⁹ ASC D 'MLV On þisan gere forðerde Syward eorl on Eoferwic, 7 he ligeð æt Galmaho on þam mynstre þe he sylð let timbrian 7 halgian \on Godes 7/ Olafes naman', p. 74.

¹⁰ Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*, pp. 27-28; Eleanor Parker, *Dragon Lords: The History and Legends of Viking England* (London: IB Taurus, 2018), pp. 104-105.

¹¹ William of Malmesbury, Parker, *Dragon Lords*, pp. 125-126.

¹² Kapelle, *Norman Conquest of the North*: p. 12; George Molyneux, *The Formation of the English Kingdom in the Tenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 5.

On Christmas Day 1066, when the crown was placed on William's head by Aelfred, archbishop of York, William's conquest of England was still in progress. In his coronation oath, William had sworn to protect the English, and the early years of his reign are typically seen by historians as years of uneasy attempts to assimilate the English into this new order. These early days of apparent co-operation and conciliation were illusory, however, and William was soon faced with a number of serious rebellions to his rule stoked, possibly, by his own inability to forgive those who had stood against him, and visceral English hatred for the man who had conquered England.¹³ The north-east of England became a particular centre of this opposition. In the winter of 1069/1070, William carried out a brutal campaign of reprisals known to historians as the Harrying of the North, through Yorkshire and across the River Tees into the northern part of Northumbria. William's struggles with the north east, and the disorder in the region may have been inflamed by anti-Norman sentiment, but, as Kapelle has argued, there was also a generally held opposition to rule from the south and a complicated web of personal politics with which William struggled to grapple.¹⁴ An early portent of the events which were to unfold came with William's appointment of Copsi as earl of Northumbria in 1067. The appointment was met with outright hostility by Osulf who immediately mobilised troops against him, and, just five weeks after Copsi's installation, Osulf captured Copsi and beheaded him.¹⁵ Osulf himself fared no better and lasted only a few months before he himself was killed, and the earldom continued to change hands frequently as successive earls were killed or deposed by William for their role in rebellions.¹⁶

¹³ David Bates, *William the Conqueror* (London: Yale University Press, 2018), pp. 258-260. Hugh Thomas, *The English and the Normans: Ethnic Hostility, Assimilation and Identity 1066-c1220* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 57-62.

¹⁴ Kapelle, *Norman Conquest of the North* pp. 13-26.

¹⁵ Kapelle, *Norman Conquest of the North*, p. 107.

¹⁶ Richard Fletcher, *Bloodfeud: Murder and Revenge in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) traces the years of bloodshed and violence in eleventh-century north east England and shows how difficult a proposition the region was for William.

If William's problems had a pre-conquest antecedence, his reaction to them did not. By the time of the brutal campaign of reprisals of 1069/1070, William had dealt with several revolts in the north. Accordingly, in Kapelle's judgement, William had settled on the harrying as his only course of action.¹⁷ No matter how many castles he constructed, victories he won, or expeditions he made northwards, his judgment may have been that the northerners would keep causing him problems. Coupled with the invasion of King Swein of Denmark, and the re-appearance of Edgar Ætheling, which almost certainly made the uprising of 1069 appear graver than those which had gone before, William settled on a murderous campaign to once and for all crush the region's capacity to rebel. Modern historians have occasionally been reticent to accept contemporary chroniclers' judgment, but there is a striking uniformity of judgement in these accounts.¹⁸ William's actions were brutal, unacceptable, and unjustifiable. Orderic Vitalis was so 'moved to pity' by the brutality of the harrying that he 'could not commend' William's actions and was sure that God would judge William, a man who his pen had 'frequently had occasion to praise'.¹⁹ Orderic recorded William combing the countryside 'cutting down many in his vengeance, destroying the lairs of others, harrying the land, and burning homes to the ground'. Nowhere, Orderic says, had 'William shown such cruelty'. 'He punished the innocent and the guilty' and the 'whole region north of the Humber' was stripped of 'all means of sustenance', so that one hundred thousand people of both sexes, both young and old, perished.²⁰ Orderic's famous depiction of the events may have been exaggerated, but a similarly violent picture of bloodshed and catastrophe was painted in the Durham *Historia de regibus Anglorum et Dacorum* [*Historia regum*].²¹ In that source, the Durham monks recorded how William and his soldiers left such destruction in his wake that the people of

¹⁷ Kapelle, *Norman Conquest of the North*, pp. 113-118.

¹⁸ For a recent summary of those arguments see Bates, *William the Conqueror*, pp. 314-315.

¹⁹ Orderic Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica* ed. and trans. Majorie Chibnall, ii, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 232-233.

²⁰ Orderic Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica* ed. and trans. Majorie Chibnall, ii, pp. 230-233.

²¹ On the renaming of the '*Historia Regum*' and its authorship see: David Rollason, 'Symeon of Durham's *Historia de Regibus Anglorum et Dacorum* as a Product of Twelfth-century Historical Workshops' in *The Long Twelfth-Century View of the Anglo-Saxon Past* ed. by Martin Brett and David Woodman (Routledge: Abingdon, 2015), 95-112. A new Oxford Medieval Texts edition of the work is forthcoming.

Northumbria were forced to eat 'human flesh, horses, dogs, and cats' and that corpses were piled up decaying in houses and on the roads. Nobody was left to bury them, for people had either perished by the Normans swords, had died of hunger, or had fled. For nine years, nobody was able to cultivate the land, and the entire area lay barren between York and Durham.²²

In the immediate aftermath of the Harrying, the experiences of the north east on either side of the River Tees were rather different. William initially responded by re-appointing Gospatric as earl of Northumbria. Gospatric had been in near constant rebellion since he purchased the earldom from William in 1067 and had been stripped of it by William in favour Robert of Comyn in 1068.²³ William's uncharacteristically lenient approach towards Gospatric may be evidence that he had given up, for the time being, attempts to control his kingdom north of the Tees.²⁴ If this was the case, York would mark the effective limits of his kingdom; the land north of it in the North Riding an effectively barren buffer against Scottish invasion, and the earl of Northumbria left alone to deal with Scottish invasion.²⁵ In 1072, after a campaign against Malcolm, king of the Scots, William deprived Gospatric of the earldom for his role in the 1069 rebellion and appointed Waltheof, in his stead, a man who (like Gospatric and Osulf) was related to the House of Bamburgh.²⁶ William never returned north of the Tees, and the process of hostility, rebellion and replacement of earls would continue until William Rufus abolished the earldom in 1095. It was not until after the death of Malcolm, king of the Scots, and the reign of Henry I, that Norman control began to be extended northwards in any meaningful way.²⁷

²² *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, ed. by Thomas Arnold, ii (London: Rolls Series, 1885) p. 188

²³ Kapelle, *Norman Conquest of the North*, p. 122.

²⁴ Kapelle, *Norman Conquest of the North*, p. 122

²⁵ Kapelle, *Norman Conquest of the North*, p. 122.

²⁶ Kapelle, *Norman Conquest of the North*, pp 126-127.

²⁷ Kapelle, *Norman Conquest of the North*, pp. 191-230. William Aird, 'Northumbria and the Making of the Kingdom of the English', in *Nations in Medieval Britain*, ed. by Hirokazu Tsurushima, (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2010) , pp. 45-60. For the development of Norman rule on the otherside of the Pennines see Richard Sharpe, *Norman Rule in Cumbria 1092–1136: A lecture delivered to Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society on 9th April 2005 at Carlisle* (Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society: Tract series vol XXI, 2006)

In Yorkshire, rather than attempting to work with the pre-conquest elite, William instead began to transplant his supporters to the region. By the time of Domesday, twenty-five of his supporters held 90% of land in Yorkshire and, as Paul Dalton has demonstrated, the Norman achievement of political re-organisation of the county occurred quickly.²⁸ Certain Norman nobles rapidly established themselves in the county and began a process of estate re-organisation that is detectable in Domesday. Amongst many others, William de Percy, Alan Rufus, and Hugh fitzBaldric appear to have been successful in instituting some degree of control in the region.²⁹ The speed with which these lordships had been established has occasionally been invoked to suggest that the destruction wrought by William was less severe than chroniclers had intimated, but it is not easy to see why the two need to sit in opposition.³⁰ It was many of those men just mentioned, too, who sponsored the foundation of the monasteries at the heart of this thesis. These were some of William's most trusted loyalists given an unenviable charge to re-order and restore a troublesome realm. As a part of that process, they were involved in the re-establishment of religious life. By the time of William's death that work was unfinished and uneven, but it was a process which had begun. Although Yorkshire was on the limits of Norman power, there was at least some degree of control.

The Monasteries

As we have seen, scholarship has suggested that the foundation (of St Mary's York and Whitby, at least) were attempts at a 'revival' of the Northumbrian monastic golden age, or represent the 'last bulwark' of pre-conquest monasticism in the region which resisted the Conquest more than most. As we shall see, there is a degree of truth to these claims, but historians' focus on them has

²⁸ Paul Dalton, *Conquest, Anarchy and Lordship: Yorkshire 1066-1154* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 19; John Le Patourel, 'The Norman Conquest of Yorkshire', *Northern History*, 6 (1971), 1-21 took the opposite view. See also Robin Fleming, *Kings and Lords in Conquest England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

²⁹ Dalton, *Conquest Anarchy and Lordship*, pp. 33-78.

³⁰ Dalton, *Conquest Anarchy and Lordship*, pp. 19-25. Bates, William the Conqueror, p. 319.

undermined just how much these institutions were products of the conquest. Their first abbots were all, probably, drawn from northern France, as were the progenitors of their communities. Their lay founders, too, were men and women brought to England from across the Channel, and all three remembered (in some sense) either William the Conqueror or William Rufus as a founder.³¹ The tradition of royal foundation has most readily been recognised at Selby and St Mary's York, where a number of twelfth century sources preserve the claim, but it was also, as we shall see, claimed by the Whitby monks. The origins of all three belong in the reign of William the Conqueror, although the foundations of neither Whitby nor York were completed before his death. All three have been recognised at the institutions which (alongside the construction of the cathedral priory at Durham) brought formal monasticism back north of the river Humber. That judgment may not be as certain as various studies have argued, and, as Thomas Pickles has recently shown, the state of religious observance may not have been as perilously poor prior to the conquest as has traditionally been assumed.³² Only, at Whitby, however, did the monks revive a pre-conquest community of some renown. Here, at least by the reckoning of twelfth-century writers, had been St Hilda's community of Streoneshalh. At St Mary's, the monks settled at the recently constructed church of St Olaf's before moving to a larger patch by it, to found their monastery in honour of Mary. And at Selby, the story the monks tell is of a vast uninhabited paradise, with no former association with monasticism of any kind, where their church, dedicated in honour of St Germanus of Auxerre, was founded. These institutions were, however, just the first of many. Yorkshire was not for long the preserve of Benedictine monks, and the conquest brought new orders, new monks, and new institutions to the county. By 1135, the numbers had exploded.³³ Perhaps not as overtly as Battle Abbey, founded on the site of William's victory, these institutions were

³¹ The identity of Stephen of Whitby and Reinfrid is difficult to be certain about, but the impression is that they were both not originally from Yorkshire. Stephen claims a secular friendship with Alan Rufus and Reinfrid was remembered by the community of Whitby as a soldier in William's army.

³² Thomas Pickles, *Kingship, Society, and the Church in Anglo-Saxon Yorkshire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018)

³³ See Janet Burton, *The Monastic Order in Yorkshire 1069-1215* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

nevertheless products of, and founded during, conquest, and their legacy, history and origins are bound up in the violence and bloodshed which came with it.

Previous Scholarship and Scope of the Work

The aim of this thesis is not to re-construct the narrative of events which historians have settled on, although some of the arguments contained within it call into question how historians have approached the sources for these monastic foundations, but instead to investigate how successive generations of monks who came to reside at Selby, Whitby, and St Mary's York, wrote and understood the arrival of their institutions in Yorkshire. Amongst other sources, all three produced narrative accounts of their foundations; all three produced cartularies which preserved foundational charters, and all three retained a longstanding interest in the events of their foundation.³⁴ What emerges is a complex, interweaving, and occasionally self-contradictory web of information. In all instances, different versions of the foundation story (whether they appear in free-standing narrative, as part of a charter record, or in the abbey's liturgy) emphasise different elements. Naturally, the bulk of this thesis is concerned with the three lengthiest, most coherent expressions of each community's respective foundation contained in three twelfth-century narrative accounts. It is my contention, however, that when considered holistically both as part of a genre of *narrationes foundationis* and alongside each abbey's other sources, the partiality of these narrative accounts becomes apparent. What emerges is not a single collective memory of the past, but memories which could be manipulated, deployed and distorted to suit present needs. The incompatibility of those memorial traditions was not a problem for the communities who wrote them, nor something to be resolved, smoothed out, or brought into line with the other corpus of material which the monastery produced. In doing so, I also suggest that the ease with which

³⁴ For a fuller discussion of the sources see Chapter 1.

medieval historians have designated the written outputs of a monastery as representative of a 'memorial tradition' has distorted the creative, multi-faceted, and (occasionally) malicious ways a medieval institution might turn to the past.

Modern interest in the memory of the past and its role in the construction of history is not new. From at least as early as the 1970s, proponents of what can be described as 'memory studies' have argued for the important and powerful role memory plays in the construction of the past. Typically, it is the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs who is described as the 'founding father' of the field. In truth this designation is artificial, but the notion of a collectively remembered past shared between, and participated in by, members of a group is now well understood.³⁵ Occasionally conceived of as opposites, memory and history are now recognised as inextricably linked and mutually dependent.³⁶ In medieval history, studies have variously focused on medieval theories of memory and their classical models; their reception, modification, and alteration by medieval authors; and the role of memory in the formation of identity — be it regional, national, or institutional identity.³⁷ Historians have also recognised that gender influences memory, both in

³⁵ Maurice Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1925). A more developed thesis was put forward in the posthumously published *La mémoire collective* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1950) translated in to English as *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. by Lewis A Coser (London: University of Chicago Press, 1992). For Halbwachs as a 'founding father' see J. K. Olick and J. Robbins, 'Social memory studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices', *Annual Review of Sociology*, (1998), 105–140. For the development of collective memory without the influence of Halbwachs see Patrick Hutton, 'Collective Memory and Collective Mentalities: The Halbwachs-Ariès Connection', *Historical Reflections*, 15 (1988), 311–22, where Halbwachs could be described as 'largely forgotten' as late as 1988, and Sarah Gensburger, 'Halbwachs' Studies in Collective Memory: A Founding Text for Contemporary 'Memory Studies'?', *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 16 (2016), 396–413.

³⁶ For a famous example see Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', trans. by Marc Roudebush, *Representations* 26, *Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory* (1989), 7–24.

³⁷ To give just some examples for the models of memory see: Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) and Janet Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories: Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). For the role of memory in the construction of collective identity see: James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Patrick Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Amy Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past: Monastic Foundation Legends in Medieval Southern France* (London: Cornell University Press, 1995); Matthew Innes, 'Memory, Orality and Literacy in an Early Medieval Society', *Past and Present*, 158 (1998), 3–36; Elisabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe, 900–1200* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999); Karine Uge, *Creating the Monastic Past in Medieval Flanders* (York: York Medieval Press, 2005); Jennifer Paxton, 'Forging Communities: Memory and Identity in Post-Conquest England', *Haskins Society Journal*, 10 (2001), 95–109; Katherine Cross, *Heirs to the Vikings: History and Identity in Normandy and England, c.950–c.1015* (York: York Medieval Press, 2018).

terms of how memory is recorded and the different expectations on men and women as 'rememberers'.³⁸ Likewise, works such as Mary Carruthers' seminal study on learned or elite memory, to Bronach Kane's more recent exploration of 'popular memory' have explored the way in which social status might influence the depictions and experiences of memory.³⁹ At the same time, medieval historians have identified the influence of memory in an ever widening corpus of sources, and it is now well understood that, alongside *vitae*, chronicles and historical writing, sources such as charters, objects, service books, and financial records document, shape, and are influenced by, the memory of the past.⁴⁰ So, too, has it been recognised that the divisions recognisable to a modern reader between, say, history, hagiography, and legal record, are modern constructs which poorly reflect the understanding of those who were creating and consuming the material in the middle ages.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the middle ages inherited a classical tradition of historical writing with which authors were familiar and knowingly worked; history writing was not a process of fitting together an amorphous, shapeless, blob of disparate *stuff*, but a discipline (or more accurately a sub-discipline of rhetoric) with its own rules, tropes, and expectations in which the authors of the middle ages had been trained.⁴² Medieval authors did not always make explicit statements to their purpose or explain why a particular form of historical writing was chosen, but

³⁸ van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe*; Bronach Kane, *Popular Memory and Gender in Medieval England: Men, Women, and Testimony in the Church Courts, c.1200-1500* (Cambridge: The Boydell Press, 2019); *Reconsidering Gender, Time and Memory in Medieval Culture*, eds. by Elizabeth Cox, Liz Herbert McAvoy, Roberta Magnani (Cambridge: The Boydell Press, 2015).

³⁹ Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*; Kane, *Popular Memory and Gender in Medieval England*. See also Robert Bartlett, *The Hanged Man: A Story of Miracle, Memory, and Colonialism in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

⁴⁰ See for example Constance Bouchard, *Rewriting Saints and Ancestors: Memory and Forgetting in France, 500-1200* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015). A well-known example of objects as a locus of memory is the symbolic use of a knife in land conveyance. See Michael Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307* 3rd edition (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), pp. 38-45. On the role of tombs as mnemonic devices and symbols of dynastic lineage see Anne McGee Morganstern, *Gothic Tombs of Kinship in France, The Low Countries and England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001) and Howard Williams, *Death & Memory in Early Medieval Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). The study of cartularies has been particularly concerned with the role of memory in their creation and function. Joanna Tucker's recent study calls many of these findings into question. Joanna Tucker, *Reading and Shaping Medieval Cartularies: Multi-Scribe Manuscripts and their Patterns of Growth. A Study of the Earliest Cartularies of Glasgow Cathedral and Lindores Abbey* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2020). A useful summary of the historiography is provided pp. 4-24.

⁴¹ R. W. Southern, 'Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing 1-4', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 20-23 (1970-1973)

⁴² Matthew Kempshall, *Rhetoric and the Writing of History, 400-1500* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011)

it is nevertheless clear that authors were aware of and wrote to expectations within their chosen genres.⁴³ Medieval authors themselves were also keenly aware of their role as preservers of memory, uncoverers of a lost past, and saviours of history from oblivion. Patrick Geary identified the new millennium as a hot bed for this activity, as monastic institutions wrestled with a growing sense of dislocation from the past, and, in England, scholars have long argued that the events of the Norman Conquest led to introspection, a return to the archives, and the penning of new histories as monasteries wished to connect themselves to the pre-Conquest past.⁴⁴

One question emerges above all others. If medieval authors were aware of their role as preservers of memory, and if they could write with the expectations of the genre and audience in mind, what did the written outputs they created actually have to do with their community's memory? The relationship between the written word, orality, and memory has been much discussed, but it is worth reiterating that literacy was not the norm. Even amongst religious men, those who could write and engage with Latin were a small group, and those who produced the texts which have survived to us an even smaller group still.⁴⁵ The existence of a text or of a piece of information does not, then, *prima facie* imply that it formed any part in a monastery's commemoration of the past, or that it was genuinely reflective of any belief held within the monastery at large. Geoffrey of Monmouth's fictitious history of the kings of England began, after all, with Geoffrey's claims to be recording an oral tradition 'proclaimed by many people as if they had been entertainingly and memorably written down'.⁴⁶ To deny medieval authors the capacity to invent, therefore, seems ill advised. Another issue centres on the lack of survival of medieval documents. Not only has a great

⁴³ 'Prologues in the Historiography of Twelfth-Century England', in *England in the Twelfth Century*, ed. by D. Williams (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer 1990), 55-81 (repr. in *Legends, Traditions and History in Medieval England* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1992), pp. 125-151)

⁴⁴ Patrick Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, Southern, 'Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing: 4 The Sense of the Past', pp. 246-256.

⁴⁵ Julie Barrau, 'Did Medieval Monks Actually Speak Latin?', in *Monastic Practices of Oral Communication*, ed. by Steven Vanderputten (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), pp. 293-317.

⁴⁶ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of The Kings of Britain: An Edition and Translation of the De gestis Britonum [Historia Regum Britanniae]*, ed. by Michael D. Reeve and trans. by Neil Wright (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), pp. 4-5.

quantity of material been lost, but it has been lost unevenly. As early as one hundred years after the dissolution of the monasteries, antiquarians were lamenting that the generations which preceded them had been narrowly interested in only certain types of evidence.⁴⁷ The result is that our picture of the monastic archive, and our reconstruction of the institutional memory contained within it, is influenced not just by the monks who created our records of the middle ages, but by the interests of antiquaries working in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Without that recognition we are in danger of playing about in a created past which has no relationship whatsoever with the institutions we wish to study.

The sources for Selby, Whitby and St Mary's York were not immune from these twin problems. In fact, the evidence of two surviving library catalogues from Whitby and St Mary's shows just how much we do not have. Many monastic records were spectacularly lost when St Mary's Tower, on the Bootham corner of the precinct of St Mary's, York, was blown up during the English Civil War.⁴⁸ Many, many more were lost more mundane fashion. Nor were these institutions 'hot beds of historical writing'. Compared to the cathedral priory of Durham or the Cistercians who were to arrive in Yorkshire in the twelfth century, there is little evidence that any of these institutions produced a writer of note. And although neither Whitby nor Selby was a poor house, only St Mary's could claim a place amongst the wealthiest abbeys of England at the time of the dissolution, although institutions in the south of England were richer.⁴⁹ In all three cases though, the abbeys entered at least the middling - and in the case of St Mary's York, higher - class of monastic institutions, and all three were given the right to wear the mitre and called to attend Parliament.

⁴⁷ B. A. English and C. B. L. Barr, 'The Records Formerly in St Mary's Tower, York', *Yorkshire Archaeology Journal*, 42 (1967-1970), 198-235, 359-86, 465-518, p. 202.

⁴⁸ 'The Records Formerly in St Mary's Tower', pp. 212-213.

⁴⁹ At the dissolution 22 monks were resident at Whitby and the abbey was valued at £437. At Selby 22 monks and the abbot surrendered and they abbey was valued at £606 and at St Mary's 50 monks surrendered and the abbey was valued at £1650. The valuation of St Mary's made it richer, even, than the cathedral priory of Durham, but Abingdon, St Albans, the Cathedral priory of Canterbury, Ramsey, Reading, Bury, Westminster, Peterborough, and Glastonbury were all valued higher. David Knowles and R Neville Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses in England and Wales* (London: Longman, 1971), pp. 52-82.

Crucially, however, all three institutions were founded (in the very loosest sense of the word) within around a decade of each other and all produced written records of their foundation, in a variety of different ways, in the twelfth century. In the case of Selby and St Mary's York, we can see monks of the abbey recording information about their foundations and their founders from as early as the second decade of that century.⁵⁰ Unlike institutions such as, for example, Glastonbury, with a long (supposed history) which the monks of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries could not have known when they came to write it, the development and dissemination of the memory of these abbeys' foundations can be traced in the written record. The various sources also allow us to consider the patchwork of ways in which the events of the foundation could be recorded, and to consider how the presentation of certain ideas in certain sources do (and do not) bleed into others.

In Chapter 1, I outline the sources which record information about the foundation process. In Chapter 2, I survey the scholarship on foundation narratives and explore the *topoi* of the genre with which the monks that wrote them would have been familiar. In Chapter 3, I consider how the foundation narratives produced by these Benedictine abbeys present their foundation and how they conform to the expectations of the genre. In Chapter 4, I study the presentation of the pre-conquest past in each community's respective foundation stories and interrogate why these features are not as pronounced as an interest in 'reviving' a Northumbrian golden age might suggest. In Chapters 5 and 6, I explore how the Norman past was and was not remembered considering, in Chapter 5, why the royal founders of these monasteries do not appear to form as coherent a part of their past as compared to William's foundation at Battle and, in Chapter 6, what being remembered 'as a founder' really meant.

⁵⁰ See Chapter 1.

Chapter 1: The Sources

The lengthiest expressions of the foundation stories of Selby, Whitby, and St Mary's York appear in three twelfth-century narrative accounts. St Mary's, the last site to be settled by a community of religious — although seemingly established as a formal monastic community before Whitby — produced a foundation narrative first: a first-hand account of the foundation of the community produced by St Mary's first abbot, Stephen of Whitby, before his death in 1112.⁵¹ There has long been scepticism that Stephen's narrative was not in fact authored by him, owing to the version of the text used in the *Monasticon Anglicanum*, but these doubts can be placed aside with certainty. It survives in two twelfth-century copies, one of which is now British Library Add MS 38816. This is a composite manuscript containing Ailred of Rievaulx's, *Miracula sanctorum patrum qui in sancta Hagustaldensi ecclesia requiescunt*; Theodulph of Orleans' summaries of the Old and New Testament; and a work of Hugh of St Victor with an *ex libris* from Byland Abbey. Folios 21r-39v contain a collection of St Mary's material beginning with three royal charters. These charters are followed by the final chapter of the Rule of St Benedict, which is in turn followed by Stephen's narrative. His narrative is then succeeded by a list of charters for deceased founders and important patrons, and the manuscript concludes with a list of confraternity agreements between St Mary's and other institutions. This section of the manuscript has suffered some serious losses: the surviving chapter of the rule of St Benedict is preceded by four stubs and the extant folio only survives as its verso contains the start of Stephen's narrative.⁵² These folios must have been removed before the fifteenth-century Roman foliation which runs continuously across the lacuna. There also appears

⁵¹ Stephen's text survives in several manuscripts. The two twelfth-century copies are British Library, Add MS 38816 and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, Parker MS 139. A version of the text appears in *MA* I, pp. 383-386 printed from another version of the text, Oxford, MS Bodley 39, where it is incorrectly attributed to Simon of Warwick. A new addition and translation edited by Nicholas Karn is forthcoming.

⁵² By Karn's estimations a further two quires would be needed to complete the Rule.

to have been some loss immediately following Stephen's narrative.⁵³ This version of Stephen's narrative in the manuscript is written in a neat, regular, proto-gothic book hand which begins with an enlarged, illustrated, initial 'Q' decorated in the lobe with multicoloured strapwork.

The work also survives in another twelfth century copy, but this was not produced at St Mary's directly. Instead, it is part of a well-known and much studied compilation of northern historical material which survives as Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 139.⁵⁴ That manuscript begins with a copy of a universal chronicle followed by copies of Regino of Prüm's *Chronicon* to 1002; Richard of Hexham's *De gestis regis Stephani et de bello standardii*; a chronicle from Adam to the Emperor Henry V; a letter from Symeon of Durham to Hugh, dean of York; the tract *De obsessione Dunelmi*; a copy of Symeon of Durham's *Historia de regibus Anglorum et Dacorum*, and a continuation of that text by John, prior of Hexham (which is punctuated by both Ailred and Serlo's descriptions of the Battle of the Standard and an account of the death of Somerland); Ailred's *De sanctimoniali de Wattun*; Stephen's foundation narrative; a letter by Thurstan, archbishop of York, to William, archbishop of Canterbury, concerning the establishment of Fountains Abbey; and brief extracts and fragments relating to Northumbrian history.⁵⁵ The origins and relationship of the material within this manuscript are extraordinarily complex and a number of different theories have been advanced to explain when, where, and why the codex was drawn together.⁵⁶ To sum up that argument where it is relevant here: Thomas Arnold and M. R. James placed the manuscript at Hexham, but Thomas Mommsen and Peter Hunter-Blair separately argued that the manuscript

⁵³ Add MS 38816, ff. 34v-35r. This is discussed in more detail below.

⁵⁴ See for example: Peter Hunter-Blair, 'Some Observations on the *'Historia Regum'* attributed to Symeon of Durham', in *Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border*, ed. by N. K. Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968) 63-118, Denis Baker, 'Scissors and Paste: Corpus Christi, Cambridge MS 139 Again', *Materials, Sources and Methods* SCH 11, 83-113; Bernard Meehan, 'Durham Twelfth-Century Manuscripts in Cistercian Houses', in *Anglo-Norman Durham 1093-1193*, ed. by D. Rollason, M. Harvey, and M. Prestwich (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1994), 439-49.

⁵⁵ For a fuller discussion of the contents see: Peter Hunter-Blair, 'Some Observations on the *'Historia Regum'*', pp. 64-69. For a discussion of the title of Symeon's work see David Rollason, 'Symeon of Durham's *Historia de Regibus Anglorum et Dacorum*', in *Long Twelfth Century View*, pp. 95-111, p. 95. n1.

⁵⁶ For a summary of these arguments see, Meehan, 'Durham Twelfth-Century Manuscripts', pp. 440-442.

was more likely produced at a Cistercian scriptorium and, most likely, that of Sawley Abbey. This argument was then subsequently strengthened by Hunter-Blair's examination of the manuscript. On the basis of the manuscript's incipit, he suggested that the manuscript was a Sawley product, and subsequently discovered an erased Sawley Abbey *ex libris* dating to the twelfth or thirteenth century on folio 2r which is now visible only under UV light.⁵⁷ Derek Baker, however, suggested that the text was not a text produced in one part and should, instead, be thought of as a text in five parts which was drawn together into one codex no later than the thirteenth century.⁵⁸ Baker further argued that the section which contains the letter of Thurstan, archbishop of York, to William, archbishop of Canterbury, was copied at Fountains because of the similarities between the copy of Thurstan's letter included within MS 139, and a copy of the same letter in a manuscript produced at Fountains which is now Corpus Christi Oxford MS 209.⁵⁹ This section includes Stephen's narrative written in the same hand as the letter, and, therefore, a copy of Stephen's narrative must have been available to the monks at Fountains. As Bethell, Baker, and Rüffer have all shown, the men who left St Mary's in 1132 to found Fountains were disproportionately drawn from the more literate monks of the abbey, and one of the group who left York to establish Fountains was Ralph, the precentor and librarian of the abbey.⁶⁰ It is possible, if not probable, that those men took manuscripts with them to Fountains from St Mary's, or were able to acquire them from those who remained, and that one of these manuscripts was a copy of Stephen's foundation narrative. As Karn's forthcoming new edition of the text will make clear, the version of the text is, apart from minor scribal differences, almost identical to Add MS 38816 and the two texts were likely copied from the same St Mary's exemplar.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Hunter-Blair, 'Some Observations', p. 118.

⁵⁸ Denis Baker, 'Scissors and Paste' pp. 94-95.

⁵⁹ Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 209, 99v-108v; Baker, 'Scissors and Paste' pp. 99-109.

⁶⁰ Denis Bethell, 'Foundation of Fountains', pp. 19-21; L. G. D. Baker, 'The Foundation of Fountains Abbey, *Northern History*, 4:1 (1969), 29-43; Jens Rüffer, 'The Thirteen Monks Who Left Saint Mary's Abbey, York', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly: An International Review of Monastic and Contemplative Spirituality*, 35.2 (2000), 187-99.

⁶¹ The St Mary's version includes, in the same hand, an obit for Stephen directly following from the end of the narrative; this obit is not included in the Fountains version of the manuscript.

These two twelfth century copies, however, are by no means the last we see of Stephen's narrative. Another copy of the text survives in a thirteenth century chronicle of St Mary's York which is now in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley MS 39. The codex appears to have begun life as a personal manuscript belonging to Abbot Simon of Warwick (1258-1296), and contains a first person recollection of his profession as monk.⁶² This version of Stephen's narrative was printed by William Dugdale in the *Monasticon Anglicanum* and that edition, along with Dodsworth and Dugdale's confusing reference to the text, are responsible for many of the doubts expressed about the authenticity of Stephen's account.⁶³ The intermediate folios between the end of Simon's prologue and the beginning of Stephen's narrative contain the first sixty chapters of the Rule of St Benedict, then the Rule of St Augustine and various Benedictine statutes and charters. Stephen's narrative begins on folio 92r and is headed 'De fundacione abbacie sancte marie virginis'. The text is preceded by an ink drawing in three parts; in the centre is a seated, tonsured abbot holding a crozier in one hand and a book in the other, to the left there are eight monks with their hands clasped in prayer looking up towards their abbot and to the right a picture of the abbey. Stephen's narrative is then followed by brief annals down to 1267 and, finally, a copy of the same letter Thurstan sent to William concerning the foundation of Fountains.⁶⁴ From folio 116r to the end of the volume the manuscript contains a more detailed set of annals which cover the years 1258-1326; these lengthier annals were published as *The Chronicle of St Mary's Abbey, York, from Bodley MS. 39* by the Surtees Society in 1934.⁶⁵ As is readily apparent, the manuscript cannot have been in its final state by the time of Simon's death in 1296 and the lengthier annals continue for a further thirty years. From 1298 the manuscript's interest shifts from St Mary's to St Bee's following a

⁶² Bodley MS 39, f. 1r

⁶³ See above. *MA*, i, p. 383-386.

⁶⁴ Bodley MS 39, ff. 92r-115v

⁶⁵ *The Chronicle of St Mary's Abbey, York, from Bodley MS. 39*, ed. H. H. E. Craster and M. E. Thornton, Surtees Society 148 (Durham: Surtees Society, 1934)

notice that Richard of Eversley, Elias of Wetwang, and Matthew of York (along with four others) had been transferred to St Bees.⁶⁶ It therefore seems possible that one of these three men was the author of the chronicle at this point with, perhaps, Elias or Matthew being the more likely candidates.⁶⁷ From 1312 the annals appear to be updated contemporaneously.⁶⁸ At some point, however, the manuscript may have returned from St Bees to St Mary's York, if indeed it ever left, for Leland's description of St Mary's shows that he consulted it and he quotes specifically from an annal within the chronicle.⁶⁹

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Dodsworth 63 contains one final version of Stephen's narrative. This version is an antiquarian copy surviving amongst Dodsworth's notes. He does not supply a reference for his copy of Stephen's narrative, but it cannot have come from any of the three copies still extant, for there are major differences between this version of the text and those others. As Karn will argue in his forthcoming edition, Dodsworth's version ends with a charter of William II, rather than a record of Stephen's agreement with Archbishop Thomas. It also includes a charter of William I which is otherwise not included amongst St Mary's cartularies but which was later to be enrolled in the patent rolls.⁷⁰ It is not easy to tell what the rationale for this change was, and its survival only in an antiquarian copy frustrates attempts to speculate much further. Based on several transcription errors, Karn suggests that it may be a copy of a manuscript in difficult, late medieval hand, but the trail then runs cold.

Whitby's twelfth-century 'foundation narrative' is a text known to historians as the *Memorial of the Foundation* of Whitby Abbey. It survives in a late-twelfth century pamphlet which can be dated no

⁶⁶ *Chronicle of St Mary's Abbey*, p. xi; p. 29.

⁶⁷ As there is some evidence Richard had spent time at St Bees in 1293 when the chronicle was still being updated at York. *Chronicle of St Mary's Abbey*, p. xi.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, pp. xi-xii.

⁶⁹ Leland, *Collectanea* 4 p. 36.

⁷⁰ This charter was missed by Bates in the compilation of the *Regesta*.

earlier than c. 1176, but contains several elements that point towards an earlier underlying text.⁷¹ The *Memorial* text appears in the cartulary from Whitby Abbey known as the Abbot's Book, now Northallerton, North Yorkshire County Record Office, ZCG VI 1. The Abbot's Book has been central to the study of Whitby Abbey for centuries and has also been referred to as the 'Cholmley MS', 'the Strickland MS' or, misleadingly, *the* Whitby Abbey Cartulary. It formed the basis of J. C. Atkinson's two volume edition of Whitby's cartularies.⁷²

The manuscript's custodial history is straightforward. Following the dissolution, the manuscript, along with the possessions of Whitby Abbey itself, passed into the hands of the Cholmley family. In the nineteenth century, the Cholmley lands and the cartulary passed to the Stricklands through marriage, and the cartulary remained in the possession of the Stricklands until 1980 when Lucy Strickland, who had loaned the cartulary to the Whitby Literary and Philosophical Society during her lifetime died, and left the cartulary to the state.⁷³ It remained on loan to the museum at Whitby for some three decades from the North Yorkshire county record office, but as of July 2018, was returned to the record office as the museum was considered an unsuitable repository.⁷⁴ None of the names which have been used to refer to the manuscript in the past are without problems including its current class mark at the North Yorkshire Record Office, because there has been some suggestion that the cartulary may return to Whitby once improvements to the visitor centre at Whitby by *English Heritage* are completed. On balance, 'Abbot's Book' has the advantage of being

⁷¹ That pamphlet survives at the front of one of Whitby's cartularies; Northallerton, North Yorkshire Record Office ZCG VI 1, ff. 138v-141. The material, as the foliation indicates, was at the rear of the codex when the manuscript was foliated and subsequently moved to the front. The *Memorial* has been edited in Whitby Cartulary vol I, I, pp. 1-7 and translated alongside the rest of the cartulary as *The Abbot's Book or The Cartulary of Whitby Abbey*, trans. by Barrie Wilson (Whitby: Friends of Whitby Abbey, 2014)

⁷² *Medieval Cartularies of Great Britain and Ireland*, p. 209.

⁷³ *The Abbot's Book or The Cartulary of Whitby Abbey*, p.2.

⁷⁴ I am grateful to Anthony Hughes for sharing the notes of the conservation work carried out on the manuscript in September 2018 and to Christine Kroebel at Whitby Museum for informing me that the cartulary had been moved to Northallerton.

the term most commonly used and will be favoured for this reason, even if it implies that the cartulary documented the personal estates of the abbot himself rather than the abbey.⁷⁵

The Abbot's Book is a small codex measuring approximately 210mm x 160mm. It is bound in wooden boards, with a clasp fastening which dates from the fifteenth century. The codex contains 171 folios, of which 143 are foliated, comprised of eighteen quires. The cartulary now begins with two quires numbered from folio 238 to 243. The numbering is clearly a mistake: the last numbered folio at the end of the codex is folio 137, and the material must originally have been located after this folio at the end of the manuscript. After the manuscript had been foliated, but before it had been rebound in the fifteenth century, the two quires from the end of the manuscript were moved to the front. The first of these quires contains the twelfth-century pamphlet and the *Memorial* text. On the recto of the first folio of the quire is a twelfth-century catalogue of Whitby's library, which is followed on the verso by the *Memorial*. The second quire contains a fifteenth-century index of the cartulary on folios 142-143 followed by two blank leaves and six stubs. The material in the first quire is, by approximately fifty years, the oldest surviving material from Whitby. The *Memorial* is succeeded immediately by an abbatial election formula, and a narrative describing the circumstances surrounding the resignation of Abbot Benedict (1139-1148). The aspect of the hand in which the *Memorial* has been written is rather different from the compressed, cramped script with short descenders and vertical compression of the abbatial election formula and narrative. By contrast, the hand of the *Memorial* approaches a display script and the text begins with a large, elaborate, decorated 'N' beginning the first word of the text: *Notum*. These two hands were identified by Atkinson as products of the same scribe, with an intervening period of as much as twenty years between the composition of the *Memorial* and the writing of the abbatial election

⁷⁵ Citations to Atkinson's printed edition will be referred to as 'Whitby Cartulary' and follow his numbering of the charters. These are imperfect because of Atkinson's decision not to ascribe numbers to each appearance of a charter but only to the first instance of its appearance in the Abbot's Book and then simply to mark its location in the British Library manuscript (which has since been refoliated).

narrative which follows it.⁷⁶ A more detailed study of the hands does not support this view. Certainly, there are diagnostic similarities between letter forms in the *Memorial* and the abbatial election narrative, such as an identical inward flick on the 'W', but a closer examination reveals more differences between the individual composition of letter forms than Atkinson had realised. In particular, the feet on the *Memorial* scribe's 'p's slant in opposite directions to those of the scribe of the election narrative, suggesting two scribes who held their pens differently: the scribe of the election narrative frequently flicked the second minim of his 'n', and the two scribes constructed the lobe in their 'b' differently. Again, contrary to Atkinson's belief, the library catalogue which precedes the *Memorial*, is written in a third, different hand with stark differences from the other two. Most noticeably, the ascenders on the catalogue scribe's 'd' slant up to the left, as opposed to straight up, in the examples of the *Memorial* and abbatial election narrative. The catalogue scribe also deploys a different shaped 'p' and utilises a mixture of both a Caroline and Insular 'a'. Despite the close date of the three hands, the twelfth century pamphlet is therefore the product of whom scribes of which only one worked on the *Memorial*.

We also have two further texts which speak of Whitby's foundation that survive in much later copies. One of these texts is a poem concerning the life of St Hilda and the refoundation of the monastery of Whitby. It is contained in a fifteenth-century miscellany owned by a monk of Glastonbury Abbey, and is now Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O.9.38. A. G. Rigg edited the manuscript for his doctoral thesis, published a descriptive index in 1968, and has continued to publish elements from the manuscript throughout his career.⁷⁷ The manuscript is, as a miscellany would suggest, a mixture of disparate material tied together only by the interests of its compiler, and appears to have begun life as an account book. From folio 2 onwards it became a repository

⁷⁶ Whitby Cartulary, p. 10, n 4.

⁷⁷ A. G. Rigg, *A Glastonbury Miscellany of the Fifteenth Century: A Descriptive Index of Trinity College, Cambridge, MS. O. 9.38.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968)

for a selection of literary material.⁷⁸ Much of this material is closely related to Glastonbury, and it is Rigg's suggestion that it may have been owned by a monk of the abbey.⁷⁹ Of present interest are folios 69v-76v which contain a poem that discusses the life of St Hilda, her abbey, and the foundation of the Benedictine community in the eleventh century. It was published separately by Rigg in 1996.⁸⁰ The presence of the Whitby poem in the miscellany is probably explained, as Rigg suggests, by the information contained within the poem that St Hilda's relics were translated to Glastonbury.⁸¹ How and why the Glastonbury monk became familiar with the poem is difficult to say, but it is without doubt a product of Whitby Abbey.⁸²

The poem also shares a relationship with a Whitby text which survives as a fragment in the antiquarian notes of Roger Dodsworth and Richard Rawlinson (although Rawlinson's own notes appear to be little more than a transcript of Dodsworth's), and is commonly referred to as the Dodsworth extract or the Dodsworth fragment.⁸³ It appears in two separate places in Dodsworth's notes, in two different hands, and is given a different source in both places. In Dodsworth 159 the fragment is said to have come out of the collections of Richard Gascoigne from a 'Book of Whitby', and in Dodsworth 118, which appears in Dodsworth's hand, it is recorded that they come from Ralph Starkey a 'diligent searcher of antiquities'.⁸⁴ Most of Richard Gascoigne's notes were deliberately destroyed in a fire by Thomas Watson-Wentworth in the eighteenth century, who, according to the antiquary William Oldys (who witnessed the arson), feared that Gascoigne's notes would provide evidence against his claim to be created Baron Malton.⁸⁵ Some of Gascoigne's collection does however survive in the Vincent collection held at the College of Arms, but,

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 5.

⁷⁹ Although one who appears to have visited Oxford frequently where the manuscript may have been compiled: A. G. Rigg, 'Medieval Latin Poetic Anthologies (III)' *Mediaeval Studies* 41 (1979), 468–505, pp. 504–505.

⁸⁰ A. G. Rigg, 'A Latin Poem on St Hilda and Whitby Abbey', *Journal of Medieval Latin*, 6 (1996), 12–43.

⁸¹ Rigg, 'Latin Poem on St Hilda', p. 12.

⁸² Rigg, 'A Latin Poem on St Hilda'

⁸³ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Dodsworth MS 159, ff. 114r–116r; MS 118, ff. 87r–87v; Rawlinson MS B 167, ff. 89v. The Rawlinson version is wanting at least a folio as the catchwords do not match; folio 90r is the text of the memorial.

⁸⁴ Dodsworth MS 159, f. 126v; Dodsworth MS 118, f. 87r.

⁸⁵ R. E. O. Pearson, 'Richard Gascoigne, (bap. 1579, d. 1661x4), antiquary' *ODNB*

although they do preserve some Whitby material, none of Gascoigne's surviving notebooks include the source of the Dodsworth extract.⁸⁶ The Dodsworth extract concludes with the rhyming couplet 'Gliscens ultorem Regi fert Serlo maerorem/In fundatorem sumens hunc posteriorem' which are found as the penultimate two lines of the Whitby poem in Trinity College MS O.9.38.⁸⁷ In addition to these shared lines, the two sources' narratives run much closer to each other than any other extant source from Whitby Abbey.

It is not possible to date either the poem or the extract with any certainty. Rigg suggested that the poem may have been authored relatively shortly before it was copied in the late fourteenth century, based on an increase in writing on northern saints at the time.⁸⁸ In particular, he drew attention to the *Chronicon metricum ecclesiae Eboracensis*: a metrical account created at York between 1388 and 1396 which begins with the foundation of York by Ebrauc, the supposed great-great-grandson of Brutus, and a poem on the execution of Archbishop Scrope in 1405.⁸⁹ Certainly, there is a great deal of overlap between the themes and format of the texts, but the dating remains tenuous and Rigg himself concedes that there is nothing within either section of the text to preclude a much earlier date.⁹⁰ The extract is similarly frustrating to date. The only contextual clue that Dodsworth provides is a marginal annotation preceding the extract, which states that 'the king is founder of Whitby, York, copied by the Abbot Bensted out of the register and original afore Thomas Lo[rd] Darcy and many others'⁹¹ If it is assumed that this statement is intended to refer to the content that immediately follows it, then the text must have existed by the time of John Bensted's abbacy.⁹²

⁸⁶ London, College of Arms, Vincent MS no 407, ff. 23–34.

⁸⁷ The Latin is tricky, but in the context of the Dodsworth extract should, I think, be translated along the lines of 'Seeking an avenger, Serlo took his grief to the king, adopting him as another founder'. I am grateful to Stephen O'Conor for discussing this couplet with me.

⁸⁸ Rigg, 'Latin Poem of Hilda', p. 13.

⁸⁹ Rigg, *Anglo Latin Literature*, pp. 293–294.

⁹⁰ Rigg, 'Latin Poem of Hilda', p. 13.

⁹¹ Dodsworth 118, f. 87r.

⁹² On the balance of probability the same register that Gascoigne consulted.

Benested did not, however, become abbot of Whitby until 1505 so the note does little to date the extract much earlier than that.

Finally, Selby's foundation was recorded in a twelfth century narrative known as the *Historia Selebiensis Monasterii*. The *Historia* was written in 1174, according to its anonymous author, and survives in one twelfth century manuscript, now Bibliothèque nationale de France MS latin 10940. It is a small codex measuring 190mm x 200mm at its largest point, comprised of eleven quires.⁹³ This is a composite manuscript with a *Gesta abbatum* from Saint Germain at Auxerre bound to the end of the Selby *Historia*.⁹⁴ The *Gesta abbatum* was compiled between 1290 and 1333 and the author of the *Gesta abbatum* explicitly refers to the Selby *Historia*; the Selby text must therefore have arrived at the abbey before then.⁹⁵ The Selby text is not the author's autograph manuscript, for there are a number of errors and insertions as a result of copying mistakes, but the hand of the Selby text is a slow, carefully written, angular, protogothic hand which can be dated to the late twelfth century, shortly after the narrative had been composed.⁹⁶ In addition to the date of the hand it seems likely that the copier of the text was familiar with English scripts for, as Janet Burton has pointed out, he correctly transcribed the letters thorn and wynn and used English terms (such as 'infangenthef') without gloss.⁹⁷ The strong indication, then, is that the *Historia* was produced and copied in England (with Selby itself of course the most likely location for it to have been produced), then subsequently taken to Auxerre.

Charters and Cartularies

⁹³ Pierre Janin, 'Note sur le manuscrit latin 10940 de la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris', *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes*, 127 (1969), 216-224, p. 218.

⁹⁴ The Selby *Historia* runs from folio 3r-48r. The *Gesta Abbatum* runs from ff. 49r-102v.

⁹⁵ For dating see *HSM*, pp. xii- xvi.

⁹⁶ *HSM*, p. xii.

⁹⁷ *HSM*, p. xii

In addition to the four narratives, we also have a good number of these monasteries' foundation charters. These mostly survive in cartulary copies, but a version of Selby's foundation charter survives as a single-sheet, now St Petersburg Institute of History, Russian Academy of Sciences, collection 18, cart 381 1b. Also from Selby survives an eleventh-century single sheet charter of Gilbert Tison in favour of the abbey, which, although unrelated to the foundation itself, reveals a great deal of information about the editorial decisions made during the compilation of Selby's cartulary.⁹⁸

No early single sheets survive from either St Mary's or Whitby, but (as noted above) three important royal charters issued to St Mary's survive in twelfth-century copies. The earliest of these is an elaborate diploma in favour of the abbey supposedly issued by William Rufus, which confirms multiple early grants to the abbey from his father and other lay donors, and clearly served as a foundation charter for the abbey. This charter has never before featured in scholarly discussion, and was missed by both Farrer and Davis in the compilation of *Early Yorkshire Charters* and the *Regesta Regum-Anglo Normannorum*.⁹⁹ That oversight is unfortunate because it is a tremendously important document which adds significant detail to the memorial reconstruction of St Mary's foundation. It is an obvious forgery, but the witness list is coherent and suggests that a lost original underlay it.

For the rest of the foundation charters in favour of these monasteries we must turn to cartulary copies. In all instances we have a good survival of cartularies, but, in several cases, they have been subjected to post-dissolution re-ordering which makes a recovery of their medieval order difficult, if not impossible. As might be expected the cartularies from Whitby, Selby, and St Mary's York begin to appear from the middle of the thirteenth century. Two contemporaneous cartularies

⁹⁸ This charter is now London, British Library, Additional Ch 77127.

⁹⁹ It was, however, known to Richard Sharpe and was due for inclusion in his edition of the acta of William II and Henry I.

survive from Whitby: The Abbot's Book (Northallerton, North Yorkshire County Record Office, ZCG VI 1) which we have already met, and British Library Add MS 4715, a smaller manuscript than the Abbot's Book measuring approximately 170 x 130 mm¹⁰⁰ Folios ii-iii contain a description of the manuscript in the hand of Charles Mason, Woodwardian Professor at the University of Cambridge, who presented the manuscript to the British Museum in 1761.¹⁰¹ The names William Horncastle and Melchior Smith appear in seventeenth-century hands on folios 16v and 184r respectively, but there is no further evidence of the manuscript's prior ownership. It was partially edited by J. C. Atkinson in volume two of the Surtees Society edition.

There is a great deal of overlap between the charters entered in the earliest hand in Add 4715 — a mid-thirteenth-century hand with red rubrication and alternating red, blue, and green initials — and the earliest charters in the Abbot's Book. Many charters are recorded in both manuscripts. Substantial later interpolations have been placed between the original thirteenth-century material in Add 4715 and several attempts have been made to re-order the manuscript to better reflect the manuscript's thirteenth-century order.¹⁰² The most recent attempt was carried out in 1916 with the unfortunate effect that Atkinson's edition no longer accurately or coherently relates to the manuscript, because of his decision to edit the text only partially and to refer to charters which he had transcribed in the first volume by a folio number.

Both the Abbot's Book and Add MS 4715 contain material not present in the other manuscript, and one cannot be the source for the other. More likely, both cartularies were copied from the abbey's originals. A note made by the scribe of Add MS 4715 shows that he, at least for some material, was working from originals in the abbey's archives. On several occasions he inserts the

¹⁰⁰ *Medieval Cartularies* (1032 and 1033 respectively), p. 209

¹⁰¹ British Library Archives and Manuscript Catalogue, Add MS 4715 [http://searcharchives.bl.uk/IA_MS_VU2:IAM_S032-002110214, accessed on 05/06/2020]

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

note that certain manuscripts have not been inserted into the cartulary for, 'certain reasons' but can be found in the boxes (*thesaurarius*) pertaining to the vill in question.¹⁰³ Which manuscript is the older is difficult to establish. The Abbot's Book would appear to be the earlier of the two on the basis of the hands, but Add MS 4715 includes additional witnesses in the witness lists, additional charters and, occasionally, significant variants in spelling. A fifteenth-century index of Add 4715 on folios 181-183 indicates that a reasonable amount of material from the cartulary has been lost, particularly in relation to the Percy family's grants to the abbey. That loss is particularly significant given that these charters are early, and do not appear to be present in the Abbot's Book.

From what can be ascertained from the manuscript in its current state, the internal ordering of the two cartularies was different. The thirteenth-century material of Add 4715 now begins with material relating to Whitby's cell in Middlesbrough. According to the index around half of these folios have been lost; the fifteenth century index indicates that there were eleven folios of Middlesbrough charters but only four are now extant.¹⁰⁴ All but one of the still extant Middlesbrough charters are also to be found in the Abbot's Book, and the sequence of those charters in the cartulary is similar, but not identical, to the order in the Abbot's Book.¹⁰⁵

The Abbot's Book cartulary 'proper' begins on folio 8r of the codex. It opens with a red rubric stating (incorrectly) that all the charters of the abbey are to follow, and a charter of William de Percy, who is identified as the first founder of the abbey in the same rubric.¹⁰⁶ This core continues through to folio 70 almost entirely uninterrupted, save for infrequent later material inserted at the

¹⁰³ 'Memorandum de donatione Heremitorii de Dunseley quae hic non inseritur ex certa causa, set in Thesaurario nostro inter facta de Dunseleya inveniatur' Whitby Cartulary 2 ccccxv, p. 388.

¹⁰⁴ British Library, Add MS 4715, ff. 181-183; ff. 9r - 13v.

¹⁰⁵ Robert Galicien's charter recording a gift in favour of Middlesbrough is missing from the Abbot's Book. Three charters of his are, however, recorded suggesting that the scribe may have mistakenly believed he had already copied the charter and skipped past it, but the other three are missing from Add MS 4715, f. 10r; Whitby Cartulary CXVI, CXVII, CXVIII, CXIX, CCCCVII; Abbot's Book, ff. 23v-24v.

¹⁰⁶ Abbot's Books, f. 8r.

end of blank quires between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. There appears to be no evidence of a charter later than the abbacy of Roger of Scarborough (d. 1244), entered in a thirteenth-century hand. Taken with the the evidence of the hand itself, this makes it reasonable to assume that the manuscript was produced around 1240.

Combined with this thirteenth-century core is substantial set of fourteenth-century additions, with further material in fifteenth-century hands filled into blank spaces. These are now folios 71-137, and comprise six quires of varying length. They are followed by two unfoliated paper quires containing material from the sixteenth century. Folios 8-70 are formed of eight quires of four bifolia each signed i-viii, except for quire ii which lacks one folio. Folios 1r-8v are made up of one quire. The first folio contains a copy of a the Statue of Merton.¹⁰⁷ This statute is copied by the same scribe as the main thirteenth-century hand in the cartulary, but it is the only document in this hand in the quire with the rest of the documents copied later. Strictly speaking, Henry III's statute does not belong in a cartulary, and, coupled with the fact this quire is unsigned, it is likely that the quire was not initially intended to become part of the cartulary. Self-evidently it did eventually become a part of it, however, although a large portion of the material within this quire relates to rents paid to the precentor for the upkeep of the abbey's books.¹⁰⁸ One of these charters is dated to 1318, and it is perhaps reasonable to suggest that this quire was with the cartulary core by this date; the manuscript's foliation indicates that this quire was bound to the front of the cartulary by the fifteenth century.¹⁰⁹ If that quire indicated that the Abbot's Book was always intended for use in the precentor's office, then it may explain the desire for two overlapping cartularies. Such cartularies do exist from other institutions, but the lack of quire signature may caution against over interpreting this evidence.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Abbot's Book, f. 1r, Whitby Cartulary, IV p. 11.

¹⁰⁸ Whitby Cartulary, IX-XIX pp. 14-22; Abbot's Book, ff. 1v-4v.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid XIX, p. 22.

¹¹⁰ For cartulary growth as a bellwether of usage see Tucker, *Reading and Shaping Medieval Cartularies*. For multiple cartularies see particularly p. 96.

Documents of all sorts are well represented in the Abbot's Book and the cartulary contains copies of papal bulls, royal acta, archiepiscopal charters, and local material. There is little evidence that the core cartulary was frequently added to apart from lengthy interpolations. The thirteenth-century section of the cartulary contains uniform quires, in the correct order (according to the quire signatures), with very little material inserted in blank spaces, even when it was clearly the intention of the cartulary scribe to leave space for later material to be added. The structure of the cartulary is difficult to interpret. There is clear evidence of thematic ordering of material, the subsequent placement of each section within the cartulary is bizarre and confused. The cartulary proper begins conventionally with the foundation charter of William de Percy, then with a charter of his son, Alan de Percy, which repeats his father's gift and gives his own assent to those gifts. The Percy documents are then followed by four folios of documents relating to the church of St Laurence at Crosby Ravensworth (Cumbria).¹¹¹ The prominent placement of Crosby Ravensworth may owe something to the fact that the church had been at the heart of a long running dispute which had been settled in the abbey's favour shortly before the creation of the cartulary. That dispute involved King John, the bishops of Carlisle, and the Premonstratensian community at Shap, and was taken to Honorius III in 1222 and 1224. But, if this explains the prominent placement of Crosby in the cartulary, what cannot be explained is the complete failure to record Honorius III's bull with the Crosby Ravensworth material, and nor is it recorded with Whitby's other supposed bulls which begin on the first folio of the fourth signed quire on folio 31r. The entirety of this quire is devoted to papal material with four bulls included and blank folios left from 34r to 38v (inclusive) for more to be filled in. It is only in the fourteenth century that a scribe added Honorius's bull to the cartulary.

¹¹¹ Abbot's Book, ff. 9r–12r.

Two cartularies also survive from Selby Abbey; these are London, British Library, Add MS 37771 and London, The National Archives, DL 42/8.¹¹² Both of these were edited for the *Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Society* by J. T. Fowler as *The Coucher Book of Selby*. British Library, Add MS 37771 is a codex of the early fourteenth century measuring 345x220mm and containing 222 folios. It was partially rubricated with space left at the end of each vill section to fill in *litterae notabiliores*, but the work was only partially completed. They occur at the beginning each section, stop again, and re-start with each topographical section. These do not appear to correspond directly to changes in hand, but it appears that folios were added haphazardly throughout the manuscript, and it likely reflects the fact that a rubricator was never brought in to fill in the blank spaces after the initial work on the original cartulary core was finished. Until folio 65v each charter is given a rubric describing its content, but these stop at this point. The cartulary includes documents of all types, from papal bulls to lay gifts and is organised with a large section of royal charters first, and then topographically according to vill. The royal charters appear in one hand until folio 16r, where a charter for Edward I was entered into the manuscript. It is probably around this date that the cartulary core was completed and piecemeal additions began to be made. The cartulary appears to have been delivered to Sir Leonard Beckwith in 1543 by Robert Rogers (alias Selby), the last abbot of Selby according to a note on the first folio of the codex.¹¹³ From Beckwith's son the manuscript passed to George Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury, and then on to Thomas Walmsley who owned the manuscript when Dodsworth consulted it. It then passed down the Walmsley family until Robert Petre, husband of Catherine Walmsley, sold it to the booksellers T&W Boone of Bond Street who in turn sold the cartulary to Thomas Brooke. Upon Brooke's death in 1903 it was acquired by the British Museum.¹¹⁴ The frequent additions to the cartulary manuscript, alongside the tight binding of the codex as it survives, leave the quire structure almost impossible to describe. The impression is of very irregular quires interspersed with numerous

¹¹² *Medieval Cartularies* (877 and 880), p. 177.

¹¹³ Selby Coucher, p. 2; 'The Records Formerly in St Mary's Tower York', pp. 504-505.

¹¹⁴ 'The Records Formerly in St Mary's Tower York', pp. 504-505.

single leaf additions, but there may be instructive aspects to that quiring which would be revealed during subsequent rebinding work. TNA DL 42/8 had been acquired by the Duchy of Lancaster as early as 1634 when Dodsworth consulted it there and probably passed into that estate on the dissolution.¹¹⁵ It was transferred to the Public Record Office in 1868.¹¹⁶ It is a smaller codex than the British Library manuscript, measuring 250 x 170mm containing, 90 folios. A note in the manuscript dates the register to the abbacy of Geoffrey of Gaddesby (1342x1348) and the manuscript contains a variety of material dating to his abbacy including petitions, rents, writs, and court proceedings. None of this material is relevant to the present study, however, and further discussion of this cartulary is unnecessary.

Compared to the cartularies of Selby and Whitby, the records from St Mary's York are dispersed and now survive in a great deal of disorder with some serious losses, although they nevertheless preserve a substantial part of the records for the abbey's vast estates. The earliest evidence of a St Mary's cartulary comes from the thirteenth century, surviving only as a nine-folio fragment in the Bodleian Library as Dodsworth ms 76.¹¹⁷ Those fragments came in to the Bodleian Library upon the death of Christopher Hatton, but preserve no material of interest for this study.

Another St Mary's cartulary is now London, British Library, Harley MS 236.¹¹⁸ This dates from the early fourteenth century with later additions, measures 215 x 170mm, and comprises 64 folios, including four medieval fly leaves and 60 folios for the codex proper. It was owned by Sir Simonds d'Ewes, passed from him to Robert Harley and then subsequently to the British Museum.¹¹⁹ The manuscript has been foliated three times; once, in Roman numerals, in a fifteenth century hand, once in Arabic numerals around the turn of the seventeenth century, and once again in pencil at

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p. 505.

¹¹⁶ Selby Coucher, ii, p. 364.

¹¹⁷ *Medieval Cartularies* (1099), p. 224.

¹¹⁸ Ibid (1100).

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

the British Museum in 1875.¹²⁰ All of these foliations are imperfect: the pencil foliation does not include the blank folios within the manuscript, the Arabic foliation counts the third folio twice and remains one folio behind throughout the manuscript, while the Roman foliation is now poorly reflective of the surviving manuscript owing to a significant number of lost folios. Nevertheless, the repeated foliation of the manuscript does allow a summary judgement of some of the material that has been lost. The cartulary is comprised of regular quires of six bifolia and reveals two twelve folio lacunae in the Roman foliation; indicting the loss of two whole quires. The most significant of these losses is the manuscript's first quire of twelve folios which is immediately preceded by a section containing royal charters in favour of the abbey from William Rufus, Henry I, Henry III, Edward II, and Edward III.¹²¹ What preceded this section is now impossible to tell. The surviving section begins with the words 'incipit prima' but not all extant copies of St Mary's royal charters are entered into the surviving quire of Harley 236 and it is plausible that more royal material preceded it in the now lost first quire. In addition, there is little evidence of papal material in the cartulary (save for one bull entered on folio 15v), and it is possible, too that this material may have been contained in this first quire. Beyond the royal material the cartulary is organised by subject matter. The manuscript contains just 117 individual entries and is likely the first volume in a multi-volume series of which the subsequent volumes have been lost.

Another series of cartularies from the fourteenth century survives in manuscripts held by the John Rylands Library, and York Minster Library.¹²² These volumes contain some of the charters which once formed books B, C and G of this volume. Liber B, now York Minster Library, xvi. A. 1, measures 310 x 210mm and contains material from the North Riding organised by wapentake.¹²³ By some distance it is the most intact of the three books, but this volume of the cartulary has

¹²⁰ British Library, Harley MS 236, f. 55v

¹²¹ Harley 236, ff. 1r-13v. Edward II, Cal. Cha. Roll, iii, p. 111; Harley 236, f. 4v Edward III, Cal. Cha Roll, iv, p. 197; Harley 236, ff. 6v-10v.

¹²² Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS Lat 220 and 221; York, York Minster Library, XVI A 1.

¹²³ *Medieval Cartularies* (1101), p. 224.

nevertheless lost leaves throughout and been substantially re-ordered. There is also significant semi-circular damage to the right-hand side of almost all folios. The first 110 folios of the manuscript are an elaborate fifteenth-century index/contents page describing in some detail the fourteenth-century core which follows it. Why such an endeavour was felt necessary is difficult to say, since the order of the index is the same as that of the cartulary that follows it, and the length and detail of the entries mean that it can hardly have been significantly quicker to consult the itself than the cartulary.¹²⁴

The York Minster Library volume has fared rather better than either of the John Rylands Library codices. John Ryland Lat MS 220 and 221 are what remains of Liber C and G, and contain material relating to the East and West Ridings organised, as in Liber B, by wapentake.¹²⁵ Unfortunately, however, the modern division into two codices is an arbitrary one and in no way reflects the original division between books C and G as the contents of both books have subsequently been shuffled, combined, and bound back together in a great deal of disorder. The manuscripts' foliation, therefore, continues across this divide. MS Lat 220 contains folios 1 to 198, with MS Lat 221 containing folios 199-427. In addition to this re-ordering, Liber C and G have, like Liber B, lost whole gatherings throughout. It is impossible to know quite how much material has been lost from this series of cartularies, but we can be certain that it included a separate place from the royal charters, for a note on folio 221r indicates that these were once kept in a separate volume to the rest of the charters which is otherwise unrecorded.¹²⁶ Like the York Minster 'Liber B' cartulary, Liber C and G were provided with a ludicrously inflated index in the fifteenth century. Of final interest is a fifteenth century roll of royal charters surviving in the York Minster Library as Hailstone Collection BB. 15, which preserves early royal charters in favour of the abbey relating

¹²⁴ There is some evidence to suggest in some instances 'indexes' like these may have been aborted attempts to create a new cartulary which was ultimately abandoned with the result that the planned new quires were bound to the old cartulary. See Tucker, *Reading and Shaping Medieval Cartularies*, pp. 92-97.

¹²⁵ *Medieval Cartularies* (1102), p. 224.

¹²⁶ John Rylands Library, MS Lat 221, f. 221r. 'Ista licencia registratur previus in libro Regni'.

to the abbey's privileges.¹²⁷ On the dorse of the roll is a short summary of the deeds of the abbots of St Mary's York.

Liturgical Manuscripts

A rich source for the commemoration and memorialisation of the foundation is provided by the abbey's liturgy, and in the case of both St Mary's York and Whitby we have a significant survival of service books from the abbies. From St Mary's York survives an ordinal and a customary which are now Cambridge, St John's College, MS D 27 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 39. MS D 27 is, strictly speaking, both an ordinal and a customary. These complimentary service books set out the blueprint for the daily function of a monastery's liturgical life. The ordinal records the services to be performed on any given day and the books required to perform them, whereas the customary (also known as a consuetudinary) records the duties, responsibilities and timetable of the community and the officers within it; it records who should sing or read within each service and who should respond. MS D 27 was most likely produced during the abbacy of Thomas Pygot (1396-1405), and has been published by the Henry Bradshaw Society as the *Ordinale of St Mary's Abbey, York*.¹²⁸ MS D 27 is set out according to the liturgical calendar, but the glimpse it provides into the abbey's life is not complete. A number of leaves have been removed from the rear of the codex which, it would seem, contained much of the abbey's arrangements for the Sanctorale, that is the Proper of Saints, or that part of the liturgical year which has a fixed date. Nevertheless, MS D 27 provides one of the best glimpses in to life at a fifteenth-century abbey from England and gives us an incredibly detailed insight into the liturgical arrangements made by the community and the people involved with performing those arrangements.¹²⁹ A number of general peculiarities are

¹²⁷ *Medieval Cartularies* (1104.2), p. 225. York, York Minster Library, Hailstone Collection BB. 15.

¹²⁸ There is, in the original hand, an obit for the seventeenth abbot, Thomas Stayngave (d. 1398), on f. 138v, but not for Pygot his successor. *Ordinale* p. vii.

¹²⁹ John Harper, *Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy*, p. 227.

worthy of mention here. The liturgical observance at St Mary's is a hotchpotch of various influences from across the country and mixes both secular and monastic Uses (that is the local variants to the whole pattern of liturgical observation known as the 'rite'), as well as some seemingly unique liturgical details.¹³⁰ The most interesting of these influences, however, is the relationship between the Use of St Mary's York and that of Muchelney Abbey in Somerset. A comparison of the Muchelney Breviary and the *Ordinale* shows a greater deal of similarity between the performance of the Divine Office at both institutions than between St Mary's and any other monastery from which liturgical manuscripts survive.¹³¹ This relationship is curious because a breviary does survive from Evesham, the house from which Reinfrid, Aldwin and Aelfwig set out, but it does not share the same similarities to the St Mary's *Ordinale* as the Muchelney book.¹³² A fragment of a pre-conquest breviary survives with Muchelney's cartulary and provides some indication that (at least some of) these unique features of the Muchelney Breviary date from before the conquest.¹³³ In this instance an explanation may lie in the fact that the Muchelney Breviary preserves an early version of an Anglo-Saxon Use replaced at Evesham and Glastonbury by the time of their surviving breviaries by Norman *ordines*, but transported to the northeast shortly after the conquest by Reinfrid, Aldwin and Aelfwig.¹³⁴ As much, as I will argue in later chapters, that St Mary's thought of themselves as a Norman foundation, the liturgy of the abbey echoes the pre-conquest past and the events which led to its foundation.

MS Bodley 39, which (as we have already seen) contains a copy of Stephen's narrative, is of interest for folios 67v-91v. These contain an incomplete copy of a customary of St Mary's abbey and describe the duties of various members of the community beginning with the abbot, and working

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ *Ordinale*, iii, p. i.

¹³² *Ordinale*, iii, p. iii-iv.

¹³³ Jesse Billet, 'The 'old books of Glastonbury' and the Muchelney breviary fragment: London, British Library, Additional 56488, fols. i, 1-5', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 47 (2018), 307-350, pp. 327-328. Jesse Billet, *The Divine Office in Anglo-Saxon England, 597-c.1000* (London: Henry Bradshaw Society Subsidia, 2014) p. 350.

¹³⁴ Billet, 'The 'old books of Glastonbury', pp. 327-328.

its way through the prior, subprior, circulator, precantor, secretary, chamberlain, cellarer, hospitaller, granary-keeper, almoner and infirmarer, before turning to how sick brothers should be cared for and the arrangements made for special anniversaries. The customary was printed alongside the chronicle which follows it in Bodley MS 39 as *The Chronicle of St Mary's Abbey, York, from Bodley MS. 39*.¹³⁵ In comparison to the *Ordinale* it is a significantly less rich source, but its much earlier date (the MS Bodley 39 codex dates from the mid-thirteenth century) allows some cross-referencing of liturgical practice. In both cases these are tricky sources, for they are both practical books designed for internal consumption by monks familiar both with the liturgy itself and with much of the day-to-day life of the abbey. As a result, the references of both are often elusive. But despite their challenges we can glimpse through them the practicalities of the liturgical commemoration of founders.

Two other service books from St Mary's York survive, and are roughly contemporaneous to one another. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson C 553, is an early fifteenth-century octavo codex of 148 leaves measuring 180x130mm containing a Book of Hours produced at St Mary's. Several folios have been lost at various points, including those containing the months of the kalendar between March and August, and a substantial number of folios after folio 71. In addition to the liturgical material the manuscript also preserves a list of the earls of Richmond and the kings of England on folio 147v. Of roughly the same date is Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms Latin Liturg G1, a small psalter of 130x90mm. According to H. M. Bannister, the psalter may have been copied at St Mary's, but there is some suggestion that it was for the use of their cell at St Bee's.¹³⁶ Van Dijk, however, suggested that the manuscript was probably not intended for use at the cell as the

¹³⁵ *The Chronicle of St Mary's Abbey*, pp. 80-109.

¹³⁶ Bodleian Library, Summary Catalogue 6 *corrigenda*, p. xiv HM Bannister, however, gives no evidence to support this claim which has been repeated in subsequent scholarship.

manuscript displays a relative lack of interest in St Bega, who is in last place in the litany in the manuscript, and whose feast lacks an octave in the kalendar.¹³⁷

The final surviving service book from these three abbeys is a fourteenth-century missal from Whitby Abbey, now Oxford, MS Rawlinson Liturg. B 1. In comparison to the two liturgical books from St Mary's York just discussed, this is a large codex of 281 folios measuring 375x255 mm. The manuscript features numerous illuminated initials and an interlaced red, blue and gold border with floral motifs surrounding the most important mass sets. The basis for the identification of this manuscript with Whitby rests on two important points. In the first instance, the evidence of the kalendar points towards Whitby and, secondly, a mass set dedicated to the relics of the abbey mentions St Peter, St Paul, St Hilda, and St Bega by name.

Historical Writing and Other Sources

In addition to these categories of source, several others also give us significant insight into the development of these monasteries' conceptions of who they were. The earliest of these is evidence of the mortuary roll of Matilda of Caen. This roll travelled around England and Normandy following the death of Abbess Matilda.¹³⁸ The roll passed through Selby where the monks entered a verse in memory of Matilda and requested prayers for Benedict 'first founder' of the church.¹³⁹ It then evidently arrived at St Mary's York shortly after the death of Stephen in 1112 where the monks composed three verses and then listed the dead of their monastery beginning with Stephen, first abbot and founder of the monastery, followed by Prior Reinfrid.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ S. J. P. van Dijk, *Handlist of Latin Liturgical Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library Oxford*, 8 vols (Oxford: Unpublished catalogue, 1957-60), ii, p. 27.

¹³⁸ Monique Goullet, 'Poésie et mémoire des morts. Le rouleau funèbre de Mathilde, abesse de la Sainte-Trinité de Caen (m.1113)' *Ad libros! Mélanges d'Etudes médiévales offert à Denise Angers et Joseph-Claude Poulin*, ed. Jean-François Cottier et Sébastien Rossignol (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montreal, 2010), pp. 163-98.

¹³⁹ Léopold Deslisle, *Rouleaux des morts du IXe au XVe siècle* (Paris, 1866), p. 195.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 198.

There is a surviving fragment of Easter tables from Selby which was produced c. 1200 and record some basic details of the abbey's history in the margins alongside the dates of emperors and popes and significant dates in English history.¹⁴¹ Perhaps the most famous example of historical writing from any of these three abbeys, however, is the *Anonimalle Chronicle* which is now Leeds, Leeds University Library Special Collections, Brotherton Collection MS 29.¹⁴² This manuscript was clearly copied at St Mary's and a large part of it was compiled there, too. It began life as an Anglo-Norman French version of the extraordinarily popular Brut tradition with entries to 1307. That is followed by an example of what is known as the 'short continuation' of the French Brut down to 1333, a longer continuation from 1333 to 1369, and a third and final continuation from 1369 to 1381. These final two continuations (from 1333 to 1381) were edited by Vivian Galbraith in 1927 and the first continuation (from 1307 to 1333) by Wendy Childs and John Taylor in 1991, but the core of the chronicle has never been published.¹⁴³ There has, however, been an increased interest in the 271 folios of the manuscript which have yet to be published, and the chronicle has featured relatively prominently in discussions of the Brut chronicle tradition in recent years.¹⁴⁴ In addition, the first 35 folios of the manuscript which contain a collection of miscellanea, have attracted scholarly attention for they preserve a number of valuable Anglo-Norman texts and information relating to St Mary's.¹⁴⁵ The Brut Chronicle which forms the core of the manuscript was not itself a product of St Mary's, and survives in another copy as British Library, Royal MS 20 A XVIII with a longer continuation. As John Taylor has shown, however, both the longer continuation to Royal MS 20 A XVIII and the short continuation to Brotherton MS 29 show traces of northern interest

¹⁴¹ British Library, Additional MS 36652, ff. 3r-5v.

¹⁴² *The Anonimalle Chronicle*, ed. by Wendy Childs and John Taylor (York: Yorkshire Archaeological Society 147, 1991), p. 2.

¹⁴³ *The Anonimalle Chronicle: 1333-1381: From a MS Written at St Marys Abbey York*, ed. by V. H/ Galbraith (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1921).

¹⁴⁴ For example, John Taylor, 'The Origins of the Anonimalle Chronicle', *Northern History*, 31 (1995), 45-64; John Spence, *Reimagining History in Anglo-Norman Prose Chronicles* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2013).

¹⁴⁵ Diana B. Tyson, 'Three Short Anglo-Norman Texts in Leeds University Library Brotherton Collection MS 29', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 52 (2008), 81-112.

from their creation and share similarities to Peter Langtoft's popular verse chronicle written, in its final form, by 1297 at Bridlington Priory.¹⁴⁶ Up to the conquest, the manuscript is heavily reliant on Geoffrey of Monmouth, but in comparison to other versions of the Brut, the Anonimalle is far lengthier.¹⁴⁷ The post-conquest material is largely drawn from a range of well-known sources such as Roger of Howden, William of Newburgh, Henry of Huntingdon, and John of Worcester, and there is a good deal of northern material scattered throughout.¹⁴⁸ In addition its more northern focus, the Anonimalle Brut places a greater emphasis on ecclesiastical events compared to the other versions of the Brut which may go some way to explaining the interest of this version of Brut history to the St Mary's monks.¹⁴⁹ There is, however, no direct information in the chronicle relating to the foundation of St Mary's, nor any mention that either of the kings that St Mary's could claim as their founders had indeed founded their abbey. In fact, it would appear certain that the chronicler who compiled the Brut 'core' of the manuscript was not a monk of St Mary's at all but, more likely, a member of the community of Byland Abbey, for there is an interest in the Cistercian order throughout. A description of a property dispute involving the Byland's monks would appear to put the matter beyond reasonable doubt.¹⁵⁰ In the Anonimalle Chronicle, then, we have a source which tells us little about the monks' own recollection of their past, but plenty about the ideas, understanding and interpretation of the northern past in the fourteenth century.

Both Whitby and St Mary's York were visited by the antiquary John Leland who made notes from both of their libraries and recorded unique details about both institutions shortly before the dissolution.¹⁵¹ Certain other unique details were picked up by chroniclers from outside the abbey such as William of Malmesbury, Hugh Candidus, and Matthew Paris, throughout the course of the

¹⁴⁶ Taylor, 'Origins of the Anonimalle', pp. 47-49.

¹⁴⁷ Leeds, University Library Special Collections, Brotherton Collection MS 29, ff. 36-138v.

¹⁴⁸ Taylor, 'Origins of the Anonimalle', pp. 51-52. The descriptions of kings' reigns are uneven in length owing to the fact that there was a dearth of thirteenth century material that the scribe could rely upon.

¹⁴⁹ Taylor, 'Origins of the Anonimalle', p. 54.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 58-59.

¹⁵¹ Leland, *Collectanea*, iii, p. 39; iv p. 36.

middle ages. Through the combination of all of these various sources it is possible to piece together the various, multi-faceted and complex ways in which the monks of Whitby, St Mary's, and Selby understood who they were. Undoubtedly much has been lost, and this loss has occurred in ways which leave us with a non-representative sample of the original state of these institutions' records. But, as this chapter has laid out, much has survived. It is through those sources, that we can begin to understand how successive generations of monks remembered the foundation process of their own communities. Often, these pieces of information are little more than fragments needing to be teased out, but such work is, as we shall see, vital in trying to piece together some of the layers of memory at play in these abbeys.

Chapter 2: The Context of the Twelfth-Century Narratives

The first group of sources I turn to are the twelfth-century narrative accounts produced by Selby, Whitby, and St Mary's York. These narratives have dominated discussion to date, have been much studied in the secondary literature and have been recognised as sources of great importance for the revival of Benedictine monasticism in the north-east.¹⁵² Nevertheless, this scholarship has largely neglected these texts as *narrationes fundationis* in their own right and has treated these texts' peculiarities, inconsistencies, and omissions as problems to be recognised and overcome in the pursuit of uncovering the kernel of truth which, it is supposed, underlies them.¹⁵³ This historiographical phenomenon is particularly pronounced with St Mary's York and Whitby, for their shared origins ensures that the two institutions' foundation stories touch on many of the same events as each other. The two accounts differ markedly, however, and it is clear that Stephen of Whitby's version of St Mary's foundation fits poorly with the Whitby version as both abbeys attempted to explain their divergent development from shared origins on the Whitby headland. The survival of a first person account of the foundation of a monastery is a rare thing, and Stephen's own motivations and intentions behind authoring the work have been called into question. In the opinion of J. C. Atkinson, Stephen's account was 'doubtful...in its truthfulness', and Knowles agreed, suggesting the narrative was 'quite untrustworthy'.¹⁵⁴ For all three, Stephen's

¹⁵² David Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England: A History of its Development from the Times of St Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council 940–1216*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), pp. 165–171; 'The Monastic Revival in Yorkshire: Whitby and St Mary's York' in *Anglo-Norman Durham: 1093–1193* ed. by David Rollason, Margaret Harvey and Michael Prestwich (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1994) 41–51; *The Monastic Order in Yorkshire 1069–1215* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 23–44; Anne Dawtry, 'Benedictine Revival in the North: The Last Bulwark of Anglo-Saxon Monasticism?', *Studies in Church History Vol 18: Religion and National Identity*, (1982), 87–98.

¹⁵³ Janet Burton considers this question in passing in the introduction to Selby's *Historia*, but her focus is on the text as a whole, *HSM*, pp. xciv–xcv. This balance is however beginning to be redressed. A forthcoming article by myself, based on material below, considers the Whitby *Memorial* as a foundation narrative, Daniel Talbot, 'Conflicting Memories, Confused Identities, and Constructed Pasts: St Hilda and the Refoundation of Whitby Abbey' in *Northern Lights: Late Medieval Devotion to Saints from the North of England*, ed. by Denis Renevey, Christiania Whitehead and Hazel Blair (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming 2020). In another forthcoming article, Thomas Pickles considers the Whitby *Memorial*, alongside the Whitby *Memorial* story alongside the other material in the twelfth-century pamphlet, to argue that it is an exercise in moral list making; Thomas Pickles, 'Were Early Medieval Lists Moral or Bureaucratic? The Whitby 'Abbot's Book', Folios 138–141' [forthcoming in the *Austrian Journal of Historical Studies* I am very grateful to Tom for sharing this article with me in advance of publication].

¹⁵⁴ Whitby Cartulary, p. lxxvii; Knowles, *Monastic Order in England*, p. 168.

narrative was an *apologia* and, in authoring it, he had protested too much. His narrative was thus discounted in favour of the more perfunctory Whitby *Memorial*, the differences chalked up to Stephen's shortcomings as a source, and his account dismissed as the unreliable testimony of a mendacious self-aggrandiser. Stephen, and his narrative therefore, lost out in critical reconstructions of St Mary's foundation. In no small part, the *Monasticon anglicanum*'s baffling reference to the text contributed to that judgment identifying the author of the narrative as Simon of Warwick, the thirteenth-century abbot of the community.¹⁵⁵ The mistake seems to be based on the fact that Simon's profession as a monk is described in the manuscript version consulted by Dodsworth and Dugdale, but it is still remarkable: Stephen's narrative occurs over ninety folios later in the manuscript, and Stephen explicitly refers to himself as author throughout. That mistake created an uncertain manuscript tradition which, coupled with the pre-existing uneasiness surrounding Stephen, himself coloured Knowles and Atkinson's judgement. Their criticism was not, however, universally shared. William Farrer had argued that Stephen's texts bore the 'impress of truth', but it was not until Denis Bethell's discovery of the twelfth-century version of the text in Add MS 38816, which showed definitively that the St Mary's monks believed that Stephen was the author, that the pendulum swung firmly towards Stephen's account.¹⁵⁶

Modern critical assessment has been much more inclined to accept Stephen's narrative even in preference to the Whitby text. Janet Burton has argued it is 'authentic', Christopher Norton that it is a 'genuine account of the foundation of St Mary's', and Nicholas Karn's assessment of the two texts leaves him only willing to accept those details of the Whitby *Memorial* which are corroborated by Stephen's narrative.¹⁵⁷ The preoccupation with the historical veracity of Stephen's narrative has, however, had the side effect of moving the debate away from Stephen's

¹⁵⁵ *MA*, i, p. 383-386.

¹⁵⁶ Bethell, 'Fountains Abbey and the State of St Mary's', p. 19.

¹⁵⁷ Burton, *The Monastic Order in Yorkshire*, p. 36. Christopher Norton, 'The Buildings of St Mary's Abbey, York And Their Destruction', *The Antiquaries Journal*, 74 (1994), 256-288, p. 282. Nicholas Karn's comments will appear in a forthcoming new edition of the work. I am grateful to him for sharing it with me in advance of publication.

motivations and the reception of his text by the St Mary's monks. For even if Stephen's account is accepted as generally reliable, there can be no doubt that it is partial, or that he is uninterested in any event which did not directly concern himself. Selby's *Historia*, has been treated likewise. Barrie Dobson wished to strip back the 'more dubious elements' of the story, but accept its outline to explain Selby's origins, and Janet Burton's introduction to the *Oxford Medieval Texts* edition of the work is largely occupied with unravelling the facts from the fabulous fiction that the Selby historian wove.¹⁵⁸ Towards the end of the introduction she does, however, turn briefly to questions of the text's audience and function.¹⁵⁹

In this chapter, I argue that the three monasteries' foundation accounts are better understood when placed in a wider national and continental context which highlights their adherence to, and departures from, established topoi. Once I have established these narratives in their contexts, I will turn to the question of their function and role as texts which craft and construct monastic identity. I do not wish to imply, however, that these narratives should be divorced from the charter, hagiographical and liturgical material produced at these monasteries but rather that in order to properly understand that interplay we must understand the texts themselves. In the subsequent chapters I will turn to that other evidence.

Contexts

The first challenge in placing the Yorkshire foundation narratives into their proper context is how precisely to define them. Two of these texts, the Whitby *Memorial* and the St Mary's narrative, are concerned with the foundation of their monastery — beginning at the start of that process and finishing once the monastery had been founded. The Selby *Historia*, however, is a more wide-

¹⁵⁸ Barrie Dobson, 'The First Norman Abbey in Northern England: The Origins of Selby', in *Church and Society in the Medieval North of England*, ed. by Barrie Dobson (London: The Hambledon Press, 1994) 29–46, p. 35.

¹⁵⁹ *HSM*, pp. lxxxvii–xcv. See also Janet Burton, 'Selby Abbey and its twelfth-century Historian', in *Learning and Literacy in England and Abroad*, ed. by Sarah Rees-Jones (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), pp. 49–68.

ranging text; it moves from the foundation to a collection of *Gesta Abbatum*, up to Abbot German (1153-1160) and a collection of miracles performed by Selby's patron saint, Germanus. This difference in form necessarily matters, but it would be a mistake to reify the differences as a difference in genre. All three were written by authors who were in some sense interested in a story of foundation and recorded (at least elements of) it in the way they thought most suitable.

In general, foundation stories have received increasing attention in the secondary literature since Amy Remensnyder's seminal English language study of foundation accounts from the south of France.¹⁶⁰ Remensnyder persuasively argued that these foundation 'legends' (as Remensnyder herself refers to them), regardless of how outlandish they may occasionally appear, represent an imaginatively remembered past which reflects how the monks believed, or wished, their community to have been founded.¹⁶¹ The breadth of her study is truly impressive. It draws together the legends from a mixture of sources — including chronicles, charters and hagiography — from 40 abbeys located between the Loire and the Pyrenees.¹⁶² The strength of the study lies in the identification and classification of the wide variety of topoi which are deployed in these foundation legends. This organisation, however, results in the foundation legends too often being pulled out of the contexts in which they were produced and the contexts they survive in and precludes systematic study of the identity and memory of the communities which produced them. A lengthy chapter that attempts to show the pressures which led some of the abbeys to craft their legends does not fully redress the balance, for it seeks to define the creation of these abbeys' identity in terms of conflicts. Whilst, no doubt, those instances led to the crystallisation of an abbey's identity, or at least the recording of it, the pressures to which such conflict gave rise can provide a distorting lens and an over emphasising of aspects of the identity which best served the present needs of the

¹⁶⁰ Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, pp. 1-3.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, pp. 7-8. These are bolstered by further examples from outside the geographical expanse she is focused on.

community.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, despite these drawbacks, Remensnyder's work has enabled scholars to recognise common features and themes of foundational accounts, and some of the ways in which they interacted with communities' memories of the past.

At the heart of the narratives explored by Remensnyder is a desire to show how the monasteries' foundations were directly influenced by the divine. Each moment of theophany could, and indeed did, take many forms. It is most prevalent in Remensnyder's corpus at the moment where it is revealed to the readers of the story that the site of the location of the prospective monastery was suitable because God had made it so.¹⁶⁴ The agents of this theophanic revelation were varied, but visions were one way in which revelation could be explained. For example, the foundation story of Figeac, in the modern day département of Lot, explains how their monastery was founded because of angelic visions received by Pepin the Short.¹⁶⁵ Chance meetings between founders and holy strangers could likewise designate the spot on which they met as one suitable for a monastic foundation. Charroux, in Poitou, claimed that their foundation occurred because Charlemagne met a pilgrim named Fredelandus returning from Jerusalem with a portion of the Holy Cross. This meeting led Charlemagne to promise to build an abbey nearby and the next day a forest had miraculously been cleared to show which spot should be chosen.¹⁶⁶ Hermits could also be the vehicle through whom this divine revelation functioned. Their liminality and outsider status designated the site of their hermitage as sacred and, therefore, fit for the foundation of a monastery.¹⁶⁷ The abbey of Conques took this trope to its most extreme form, replacing their foundation story as an abbey founded by Louis the Pious on a site where a hermit named Dado resided, with a more fantastical account which claimed the site had been settled by a band of desert

¹⁶³ Notes on the dating of a text are largely relegated to a series of brief comments in an alphabetical list in the appendix. Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*, pp. 309-327.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, pp. 43-44.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 52.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 53.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 54.

fathers in CE 371.¹⁶⁸ Likewise, animals could be the agents of the divine and draw mans' attention towards sacred locations. One version of Moissac's foundation story recorded how Clovis had a vision in which he saw griffins carrying stones into a valley and deigned to found a monastery as a result.¹⁶⁹ At La Sauve-Majeure the monastery's foundation story claimed that it had been founded on a site where a miraculously metamorphosing pair of oxen eventually, via an intermediary step as a pair of horses, turned into a cross.¹⁷⁰ Remensnyder's work contains many more examples of these motifs from the south of France, but what emerges clearly is that whether the agents of the divine were animals — real or mythical — or people, the essential point was that God was working through them.

When we turn to England, we see this same pattern appear at Benedictine monasteries.¹⁷¹ The best known of these are the legends of Britain's supposed oldest abbey, Glastonbury. These are too numerous to cover succinctly, but at their most extreme they are recorded in a series of additions and interpolations to William of Malmesbury's *De antiquitate Glastoniensis ecclesiae*. They tell a story of how Joseph of Arimathea led a group of twelve disciples to England and, after receiving a vision from the Archangel Gabriel, constructed a chapel to St Mary which, over time, became the abbey church.¹⁷² At Abingdon one version of the foundation story told how Aben, the son of a consul killed at Stonehenge by the pagan Hengistus, narrowly escaped the same fate as his father and

¹⁶⁸ Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*, pp. 56-57.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, pp. 58-59.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, pp. 59-60.

¹⁷¹ To my knowledge there has never been a complete study of the various foundation legends which appear in England, although some comparative work has attempted to shine light on certain individual legends. Many of them do, however, appear in Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England I: c.550 - 1307* (London: Routledge, 1974), pp. 269-273. Monika Otter considers some of these narratives when they are concerned with the finding of relics, and the narratives of Battle, Selby and the Cistercians as an example of what she terms the 'gainable terre' motif. Monika Otter, *Inventiones: Fiction and Referentiality in Twelfth-Century English Historical Writing* (Chapel Hill: Chapel Hill University Press, 1996), pp. 21-42, 60-69. What follows is, therefore, necessarily a brief start and the comments which follow are pithy and do not treat them in the depth which they deserve. Many of these legends have, of course, been compiled in the *Monasticon Anglicanum* thanks to the work of Roger Dodsworth and Wiliam Dugdale.

¹⁷² William of Malmesbury's version also casts the foundation of the community back as far as the second century. *The Early History of Glastonbury: An Edition, Translation and Study of William of Malmesbury's De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie*, ed. by John Scott (Cambridge: The Boydell Press, 1981), pp. 42-47. For a discussion of these tropes see also Antonia Gransden, 'The Growth of the Glastonbury Traditions and Legends in the Twelfth Century' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 27 (1976), 337-358.

sought refuge in a wood in south Oxfordshire. He had nothing to drink, however, and prayed to God who gave him a spring. Men heard of Aben's holiness, came to join him, and together they established a chapel dedicated to St Mary, before Aben departed to Ireland, where he died. Some years later Hæhe, remembered as the first abbot of Abingdon, shunned secular life, and proposed to rebuild the monastery of Aben, but whatever he built was destroyed by the time he returned the next day. A hermit came to Hæhe and informed him that he had received a vision that Hæhe should move the monastery to the vill of Seuekesham. Hæhe then went to Cadwalla, king of Wessex, for confirmation. Cadwalla agreed and renamed Seuekesham, the new location of Hæhe's monastery, to Abingdon to reflect its origins.¹⁷³ The foundation story of Evesham explains how Bishop Ecgwine of Worcester, having been expelled from his see, fettered himself and cast the keys into the River Avon, before setting off to Rome to plead his case to the Pope. When he arrived in Rome his servants miraculously recovered the key from a fish that had been caught in the River Tiber. Ecgwine then acquired the English site associated with the miracle and installed swineherds there to provide food to Worcester. One of these swineherds, Eof, working on the land, began to see visions of three virgins and went to report them to the Bishop who received a similar vision from the virgin Mary instructing him to build a church on that same patch of land. Eof's *ham* duly became the location of Evesham Abbey.¹⁷⁴ St Albans remembered how Offa II (d. 796), king of Mercia, received a vision from an angel instructing him to raise the body of Alban

¹⁷³ This story appears in full in the Abingdon work known as *De Abbatibus Abbendoniae* where it is interwoven with the legend of a black cross formed from the nails with which Christ was fixed upon the cross. *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon* ed. by Joseph Stevenson (London: Rolls Series, 1858) vol II, pp. 268-271. A discussion on the development and adoption of this legend, the dating of *De Abbatibus* and its relationship to the various versions of the Abingdon Chronicle can be found in *Historia Ecclesie Abbeniensis*, ed. by John Hudson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) vol I, pp. xl, lvi-lvii, lxxxi-lxxxii.

¹⁷⁴ Thomas of Marlborough, *History of the Abbey of Evesham*, ed. and trans. Jane Sayers and Leslie Watkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 9-19. The Evesham 'pious legend' is discussed in Howard H. B. Clarke, 'Uses and Abuses of Foundation Legends: The Case of Evesham Abbey', in *The Medieval Imagination: Mirabile Dictu: Essays in Honour of Yolande de Pontfarcy Sexton*, ed. by Phylliss Gaffney and Jean-Michel Picard (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012) 123-145

and move it to a more suitable location. Guided by a divine light, Offa found the saint's body, and the relics of other saints, and founded the monastery.¹⁷⁵

At Ramsey, the foundation story told how a fisherman named Wulfget received a vision of St Benedict. The saint instructed Wulfget to travel to his lord Athelwine, ealdorman of East Anglia, who was ill at that time. Benedict miraculously provided Wulfget with a great multitude of fish and promised to cure Athelwine's illness. In thanks, Athelwine was to construct a monastery on a site that would be revealed to him by the presence of a bull.¹⁷⁶ A similar intertwining of visions and animals occurred in Waltham's foundation story. Here the narrative explained how a cross buried under a hill near Montacute in Somerset, was discovered thanks to the visions received by a local smith.¹⁷⁷ Once it was found, the local thegn Tovi wished to move it to one of the leading monasteries of the time, and duly loaded the cross onto a cart led by oxen. The oxen, however, refused to move until Tovi mentioned the name of Waltham, at which point they lurched forward and began to make their way across the country to Essex.¹⁷⁸ The site of the monastery was thus ordained by God.

These origin stories — structured around the miraculous revelation of the location in which new communities were to be set — were not, however, limited to monasteries with a pre-conquest history. At Battle Abbey, a similar attempt to explain the providential location of the abbey can be

¹⁷⁵ *The Lives of Two Offas: Vitae Offarum Duorum*, ed. and trans. by Michael Swanton (Crediton: The Medieval Press, 2010), pp. 104-124; Roger of Wendover, *Chronica sive Flores Historiarum*, ed. by Henry Coxe (London: English Historical Society, 1841) i, pp. 251-254; Matthew Paris, *Chronica Maiora*, ed. by Henry Richards Luard (London: Rolls Series, 1872), i, pp. 356-358. *The Deeds of the Abbots of St Albans*, ed. by James Clark and trans. by James Preet (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer 2019), pp. 43-43 n 6.

¹⁷⁶ This story as told appears in a supposed charter of King Edgar (d.974) in favour of the abbey; Sawyer 798, <https://esawyer.lib.cam.ac.uk/charter/798.html>; *Chronicon Abbatiae Ramesiensis, A Saec. X. Usque Ad An. Circiter 1200: In Quatuor Partibus*, ed. by W Dunn Macray (London: Rolls Series, 1886), vol i, pp. 184-185. An abridged version of the story also appears in the Ramsey Chronicle where the author states that the charter was his source. *Chronicon Abbatiae Ramesiensis*, pp. 35-36.

¹⁷⁷ *The Waltham Chronicle*, ed. and trans. by Leslie Watkins and Majorie Chibnall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) pp. 2-10.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 16-18.

found. Here, the monks claimed that their monastery had been founded thanks to a battlefield vow of William the Conqueror. By making their abbey's history dependent on a pre-battle vow, rather than a post-conquest act of contrition and penance, the monks could tie their foundation to the legitimisation God granted William through victory.¹⁷⁹ It was the battlefield location which provided the theophany of the revelation. Similarly, at Colchester, the monks recorded that the abbey was founded by Eudo *Dapifer* on a spot where divine lights and voices were seen and heard, and a convict was miraculously freed from his fetters during mass on the feast day of St John.¹⁸⁰

More pertinent to the study of these Yorkshire narratives, however, is the story of Durham. There, the clerks and then monks of the cathedral community were tasked with explaining how Cuthbert's body had come to rest at Durham. The translation of Cuthbert's body from Lindisfarne to Chester-Le-Street and then to Durham was justified because the saint himself had only allowed his body to be moved when he, and God willed it. The author of the pre-conquest *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto* relates how when Bishop Eardulf and Abbot Eadred desired to move Cuthbert's body to Ireland a great storm was whipped up and the sea turned to blood.¹⁸¹ Symeon makes this theme explicit in his prologue to the *Libellus de exordio*, arguing that 'although for various reasons the church no longer stands in the place where Oswald founded it' it was in fact the 'very same church founded

¹⁷⁹ The development of the idea of the battlefield oath is complex. For a recent discussion of it see Elisabeth Van Houts, 'Cnut and William: A Comparison' in *Conquests in Eleventh Century England: 1016, 1066*, ed. by Laura Ashe and Emily J Ward (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2020), pp. 65-84. I am grateful to Elisabeth for kindly sharing a pre-publication version of this article with me. The vow motif is discussed in more detail with a comparison to Selby below.

¹⁸⁰ London, British Library, Nero D VIII, ff. 345r-347; 'Original Documents: Marianus Libro Tertio De Monasterio Colecestretsi' in 'VI Medieval Colchester – Town, Castle, and Abbey from MSS in British Museum', ed. and trans. by H. J. D. Astley *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, 8 (1903), 117-139, p. 131. The dating of this narrative is very knotty and not satisfactorily resolved. Antonina Harbus, *Helena of Britain in Medieval Legend* (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 2002), p. 68; Phillip Crummy and David Stephenson, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon and Norman Colchester* CBA Research Report No. 39 (London: Council for British Archaeology, 1981), pp. 27-32; David Stephenson, '13th-Century Marginal Entries Relating to Colchester in Trinity College, Cambridge, MS. 0.7.41', *Essex Archaeology and History*, 11 (1979), 113-14.

¹⁸¹ *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto: A History of St Cuthbert and a Record of his Patrimony*, ed. by Ted Johnson South (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 2002), p. 58. The *Historia* also records another translation of Cuthbert's body to Norham not remarked upon by other Durham sources *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, pp. 48-49.

by God's command'.¹⁸² Faced with the imminent destruction of Lindisfarne by Vikings, Symeon recounted, Eardulf and Eadred recalled the words of Cuthbert himself who had instructed on his death bed that he should prefer that his community 'raise up [his] bones from the grave, take them away, and dwell as inhabitants of whatever place God may provide'.¹⁸³ That departure led to seven years of wandering and, after repeating Cuthbert's refusal to leave Northumbria for Ireland, Symeon related how Cuthbert performed a series of miracles to keep up the spirits of his entourage before settling at Chester-Le-Street.¹⁸⁴ In 995, however, Cuthbert's body was once again threatened by Viking raiders, but when the time came to return his body the cart which contained it could not be moved. The community took this as a sign that Cuthbert did not wish to return and, after three days fasting and praying, it was revealed to Eadmer, a member of their group, that the body should be taken to Durham. As soon as this revelation had been made the cart began to move again.¹⁸⁵

These examples are illustrative not exhaustive, and I cannot begin to chart the development and first appearances of such legends across the range of abbeys that produced them. I also do not wish to imply that these were the only ways in which an abbey could write about their origins, but simply, highlight that such themes and motifs which gave an institution a divine providence were commonplace and continued to be so throughout the middle ages.¹⁸⁶ Monasteries were equally likely to cast their foundation further back in time to create a history which could provide the

¹⁸² Symeon, *Libellus*, p. 16. Symeon's statement should also be read as a justification for the replacement of the cathedral clerks with monks in 1083; this 'very same church' was the cathedral priory and not the clerks they had replaced. For that dispute more generally see William Aird, *St Cuthbert and the Normans: The Church of Durham 1071-1153* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1998); Sally Crumplin, 'Rewriting History in the Cult of St Cuthbert from The Ninth to the Twelfth Centuries' (St Andrews: Unpublished PhD Thesis, 2004), pp. 74-123.

¹⁸³ Symeon, *Libellus*, p. 100. This story also appears in other Durham sources. I refer to Symeon's version simply for clarity and to avoid the ongoing discussion about their relationships to one another.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, pp. 116-123. The wandering is a hagiographical topos see DW Rollason, 'The Wanderings of St Cuthbert', in *Cuthbert: Saint and Patron*, ed. by David Rollason (Durham: Dean and Chapter of Durham, 1987), 45-59.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, pp. 144-17.

¹⁸⁶ Karine Ugé suggests that the desire to create a legendary past for an abbey receded with the advent of charters as records of property grants because 'Scholastic thought cast doubt on the miraculous'. This suggestion is impossible to reconcile with the English sources which clearly demonstrate that, despite the growing necessity of recording grants in charter format, the twelfth century saw a great interest in the patron saints, abbots and founders of the past. Karine Ugé, *Creating the Monastic Past in Medieval Flanders* (York: York Medieval Press, 2015), p. 15. Moreover, charters should not be removed from a liturgical context.

institution with authority in the present. For example, the monasteries founded in lands which comprised Charlemagne's old empire desired links to that imperial past; those monasteries which could claim a legitimate link to that 'golden age' were joined by a multitude of institutions which simply forged one instead.¹⁸⁷ For some, this process saw the monastery displace their real founder with Charlemagne, but, equally plausibly, it could see them draw him in to the version of the past they chose to remember and make him an important patron instead.¹⁸⁸ In so turning to Charlemagne, the monasteries sought to collapse the time which had elapsed between them and him and claim the authority and legitimacy which came with him; his name carried weight and resonated with those that heard it.¹⁸⁹ England lacked a Charlemagne, and the legendary characters and supposed founders a monastery could claim necessarily were more varied as a result. But this pattern is nevertheless largely the same. The post-conquest claims to liberties from various institutions were bolstered by appeals to the authority of long dead kings or bishops¹⁹⁰. Ely claimed theirs had been given by King Edgar, Bury St Edmunds by Edward the Confessor, and Evesham by Bishop Ecgwine. This quite literal taking of liberties neatly emphasises the way in which past authority could be used as a political tool in the present; the liberty had no pre-conquest antecedence and therefore cannot have been granted to any of these institutions by any of these figures, but in trying to claim them, these monasteries stepped further back in to the past.¹⁹¹

In England, one of the easiest shortcuts for a monastery to claim a lengthy history for itself was through the work of Bede. It is undoubtedly odd to describe Bede as an English Charlemagne, but his reputation (both national and international) as an authority *par excellence* meant that he could be

¹⁸⁷ Matthew Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 23-24.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, pp. 25-26

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, pp. 25, 30.

¹⁹⁰ Paul Haywood, 'Translation-Narratives in Post-Conquest Hagiography and English Resistance to the Norman Conquest', *ANS* 21, pp. 67-94.

¹⁹¹ Julia Crick, 'Pristina Libertas: Liberty and the Anglo-Saxons Revisited', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 14 (2004), 47-74, p. 51.

adopted in rather similar ways by monastic institutions who wished to turn back to the past.¹⁹² A mention by Bede was as close to a cast iron guarantee of a long monastic tradition as one could get. His work was extraordinarily popular, and the twelfth century was a period of great interest in Bede. 31% of manuscripts of the *Historia ecclesiastica* date to the twelfth century, and that number rises to 37% when only manuscripts copied in England are included.¹⁹³ Bede's influence was not, however, simply confined to the *Historia ecclesiastica*. As Richard Gameson has shown, Bede's works were the second most popularly copied after Augustine's in the early post-conquest period.¹⁹⁴

That influence was profound. It could, as Robert Bartlett has pointed out, birth new saints' cults (such as the cult of Ebba), and it could provide the building blocks for *vitae* of existing saints.¹⁹⁵ It could, too, provide the justification and the impetus for a refoundation. At Ely, the monks could rely on the detailed description of Etheldreda which Bede supplied to trace their monastery back into the ancient past. Etheldreda's marriage to Ecgfrith of Northumbria, son of King Oswiu, brought her into Bede's work. He preceded thereafter to chart her entrance into the monastic life at Coldingham, her foundation of Ely, her life, death, and the translation of her body, which led to the miraculous discovery of a coffin, before concluding with a description of Ely, and a hymn in her honour.¹⁹⁶ In the twelfth century, Bede's description formed the basis for the first of the three books of the *Liber Eliensis*.¹⁹⁷ Peterborough too, traced its origins back to the monastery of Medeshamstede which, Bede reported, had been founded by Seaxwulf c. 673.¹⁹⁸ In the twelfth-century, the monks thus made the new foundation of the abbey in the tenth century a story of re-foundation. The Peterborough monks began to insert this material into the version of the Anglo-

¹⁹² Davis, 'Bede after Bede', pp. 103-104.

¹⁹³ Ibid, p. 104; Antonia Gransden, 'Bede's Reputation as an Historian in Medieval England', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 32 (1981), 397-425, p. 397.

¹⁹⁴ Richard Gameson, *The Manuscripts of Early Norman England (c. 1066-1130)* (London: British Academy, 1999), p. 32.

¹⁹⁵ Robert Bartlett, 'The Viking Hiatus in the Cult of Saints as Seen in the Twelfth Century', in *The Long Twelfth-Century View of the Anglo-Saxon Past*, ed. by Martin Brett and David Woodman (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 13-25. We will see an example of Bede being used in this way when we turn to the cult of St Hilda.

¹⁹⁶ *HE*, 5, 19-20, pp. 390-401.

¹⁹⁷ *Liber Eliensis*, ed. by E. O. Blake (London: Royal Historical Society, 1962), pp. 1-63.

¹⁹⁸ *HE*, 4.6, pp. 354-355.

Saxon Chronicle kept there in circa 1120, and the same story was fleshed out by Hugh Candidus in 1170. He attributed the need to refound the monastery to Viking invaders, but, aware that destruction and death could be interpreted as a sign of divine judgment (as indeed many authors had argued that the Norman Conquest itself was) he instead argued that, as with the example of Job, the destruction was a test from God. The necessity of a refoundation was not a punishment or a sign of God's displeasure, therefore, but a sign of the strength of worship of those who had come through the ordeal.¹⁹⁹ Indeed, re-foundation was part of the fabric of Benedictine monasticism and, as Hugh points out, even St Benedict's monastery at Monte Cassino had similarly been destroyed and re-founded.²⁰⁰ As Julia Barrow and Robert Bartlett have both shown, the trope of Viking invaders became a common way for monks of the twelfth century to smooth over lacunae and pauses in monastic observance at a location and cast themselves back into the past.²⁰¹

Bede's appeal to the writers of the twelfth century and the events which led to the creation or refoundation of the monasteries they were writing from were, of course, related. Both Ely and Peterborough were refounded by Æthelwold, bishop of Winchester during the tenth-century reform that saw the wholesale replacement of clerks with Benedictine monks in those parts of England controlled by King Edgar. The lax standard of monastic observance that Æthelwold found was explicitly contrasted with the heights of monastic observance that England had achieved under Bede. Æthelwold was a prolific propagandist for the reform and much of his work survives.²⁰² The Old English, 'King Edgar's Establishment of Monasteries', produced by Æthelwold between 966 x 970, explicitly addresses these themes.²⁰³ It begins with an account of

¹⁹⁹ Hugh Candidus, *Chronicle*, p. 24-26. Julia Barrow, 'Danish Ferocity and Abandoned Monasteries', pp. 77-94.

²⁰⁰ Hugh Candidus, *Chronicle* p. 26.

²⁰¹ Bartlett, 'The Viking Hiatus in the Cult of Saints', pp. 13-25; Barrow, 'Danish Ferocity and Abandoned Monasteries', pp. 77-94.

²⁰² As, indeed, Julia Barrow has argued that he needed to be for his actions were, strictly speaking, illegal. Julia Barrow, 'The Ideology of the Tenth-Century English Benedictine Reform', in *Challenging the Boundaries of Medieval History: The Legacy of Timothy Reuter*, ed. by Patricia Skinner (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 141-154, p. 147.

²⁰³ *Councils & Synods with other Documents relating to the English Church, I: A.D. 871-1204*, eds. by D. Whitelock, M. Brett and C. N. L. Brooke, vol I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pt I: 871-1066, pp. 143-54.

the conversion of the English followed by a description of the monasteries founded during the time of Bede. At least one, and perhaps several, of the folios which succeeded that description have been lost, but the final word 'ac (but)' before the lacuna would indicate, as Patrick Wormald has suggested, that Æthelwold was about to turn his attention to the ways in which England had slipped from the heights.²⁰⁴ Both Peterborough and Ely possessed charters which were either created by Æthelwold, or linked to him, that tied their communities to that Bedan past.²⁰⁵ When the monks of the twelfth century came to record their past, then, they were able to call on documents written by their (re)founders who tied their monasteries to Bede. The renewed interest in Bede in the twelfth century intermingled with that tradition, but it was an expression and continuation of ideas and a tradition with a much longer heritage.

Yet there is a cautionary note in all of this discussion. We know full well that many of the products of the reform movement had no Bedan antecedence, and we similarly know that the history of the reform was written by the reformers themselves. The monasteries of Glastonbury, Abingdon, Thorney, New Minster, Old Minster, Ramsey, Winchcombe, and Pershore were all reformed, revived or restored during the tenth-century reform movement, but none were mentioned by Bede and we have precious little to suggest the state of their pre-reformation communities. More to the point, we know that this reform owed a great deal to the royal initiative of King Edgar, which is demonstrated clearly in the elaborate and famous refoundation charter of New Minster produced within years of the expulsion of the secular clerks there. Presented as a codex, this begins with an illuminated frontispiece depicting Edgar, flanked by St Mary and St Peter, holding up the charter to God.²⁰⁶ The charter which follows, written throughout in gold leaf, explains and justifies the

204 Patrick Wormald, 'Æthelwold and His Continental Counterparts: Contact, Comparison, Contrast', in *The Times of Bede: Studies in Early English Christian Society and its Historian*, ed. by Stephen Baxter (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 169-206, pp. 187-188.

205 Wormald, 'Æthelwold', p. 187. S 779 <https://esawyer.lib.cam.ac.uk/charter/779> S 782. <https://esawyer.lib.cam.ac.uk/charter/782>.

206 The charter codex is now British Library, Cotton MS Vespasian A VIII, ff. 2-33. For the edition see S745 <https://esawyer.lib.cam.ac.uk/charter/745.html>.

expulsions of the clerks, likens the state of monasticism in England to the fall of man, and casts Edgar as the protector of the reformed community. He would support and protect the monks in worldly affairs just as the monks would support him in spiritual.

The ideological basis for reform was set out in the *Regularis Concordia*: an equally elaborate document produced by Æthelwold to regulate the monastic customs of the reformed institutions. But there was also strong political element.²⁰⁷ For, in reforming, founding, and regulating monasteries Edgar offered a vision of unity and centralisation in the still nascent kingdom, creating wealthy, powerful institutions dependent upon his control, and expanded his own power.²⁰⁸ Indeed, as David Pratt has shown, the tenth-century reform was a result of the new political landscape which brought the kingdom of the English into alignment with the English church at a time when ideas of kingship suggested that a good relationship between the church and king was a necessary requirement for the good health and prosperity of the kingdom.²⁰⁹ For the reformers, invoking Bede's 'golden age' of a monastic past allowed them to push further and harder than they might otherwise have done. Its general invocation as a standard to be aspired to allowed for reform or revival to be pushed through in institutions in good health with no Bedan history. In the case of the nunneries of Nunnaminster, Shaftesbury, and Wilton, for example, this pretext allowed for the refoundation of three communities which had been founded as recently as the reign of Alfred.²¹⁰ Bede was therefore somewhat of a blunt instrument, used to drive through ideological and political processes much wider ranging than a slavish recreation of Bedan sites, and which had

²⁰⁷ *Regularis Concordia Anglicae Nationis Monachorum Sanctimonialiumque* (*The Monastic Agreement of the Monks and Nuns of the English Nation*), ed. by T. Symons (London: Nelson, 1955).

²⁰⁸ The political element does not rule out the possibility that Edgar's motivations were primarily religious, but that the relationship between the two was symbiotic. For the establishment of monasteries and their political function see Levi Roach, *Aethelred the Unready* (London: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 40. Tim Pestell points out however that the cluster of houses in the fens and absence of reformed monasteries in East Anglia likely points towards an inability of Edgar to exercise control in that part of his kingdom. Tim Pestell, *Landscapes of Monastic Foundation: The Establishment of Religious Houses in East Anglia, c. 650-1200* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2004), pp. 127-131.

²⁰⁹ David Pratt, 'The Voice of the King in 'King Edgar's Establishment of Monasteries'', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 41 (2012), 145-204, pp. 149-154.

²¹⁰ Pratt, 'The Voice of the King', pp. 186-187.

a greater national and international context. Æthelwold's choice of Bede, nevertheless, shows how the Bedan past's authority could be invoked for very real purposes in the present, and the utilisation of Bede by the communities which Æthelwold 'refounded' shows his continued relevance.

That continued relevance becomes apparent when we turn back to the north east of England. For the revival of monasticism in the north east had from its earliest years been associated with Bede. The version of the story told by Symeon of Durham is absolutely explicit that Aldwin, the indisputable leader of the gang, in Symeon's telling, desired to live in imitation of the institutions he had read about in the *Historia ecclesiastica*.²¹¹ Aldwin, the prior of Winchcombe, travelled to Evesham where he relayed his plan and recruited Aelfwig, a deacon of the church, and the illiterate Reinfrid to travel with him.²¹² They duly arrived at Monkchester, which was, however, not a monastery associated with Bede, where Bishop Walcher of Durham introduced himself and offered them Jarrow to reside at instead.²¹³ The three began to repair the roofless church and construct a dwelling at Jarrow, and they soon attracted followers who wished to renounce the secular world and live with them. All of which greatly moved Walcher, who gave thanks to God for the presence of these new religious in his diocese and furnished them with land in order for them to sustain themselves at Jarrow.²¹⁴ Aldwin soon desired to move on again and, leaving Aelfwig behind, went to Melrose. Reinfrid, too, left and made for Whitby.²¹⁵ By this point, Aldwin had become associated with Turgot a secular clerk who had been sent from Durham to Jarrow to live with the monks there, and he too travelled to Melrose.²¹⁶ They did not stay long there however, and, threatened with excommunication by Walcher, and with violence from the Scottish king unless they swear fealty to him, they returned to the land of the bishop and began to live at

²¹¹ *Libellus*, pp. 200-201.

²¹² *Libellus*, pp. 200-201.

²¹³ *Libellus*, pp. 202-203.

²¹⁴ *Libellus*, pp. 204-205.

²¹⁵ *Libellus*, pp. 204-207.

²¹⁶ *Libellus*, pp. 204-207.

Wearmouth.²¹⁷ Turgot took the monastic habit and the two went about roofing the ruined church, at the same time as attracting more followers from across the country. Walcher continued actively to support the monks at Wearmouth, visited regularly, and resolved that he would enter the monastic life should he live long enough. He also began to make plans for monks to be introduced at Durham to replace the clerks who attended to Cuthbert's body. All of this went unrealised, however, as Walcher was murdered by a mob in Gateshead.²¹⁸ He was replaced by William of St Calais, who despaired of the state of his new church. He deliberated and sought advice, and was told that Cuthbert's body had been attended to by monks and should be again. He travelled to Pope Gregory and explained the story of Cuthbert to him. The pope ordered that he should replace the community of clerks with the monks of Jarrow and Wearmouth because the bishopric was too small to sustain three monastic institutions.²¹⁹ William duly returned and, in 1083, the clerks were expelled and replaced by the monks; Aldwin became the first prior and, following his death, he was replaced by Turgot, who was still prior at the time Symeon was writing.²²⁰ Symeon was undoubtedly well placed to tell the story, for he knew Turgot and Aldwin and many of the details he provides do support the suggestion he was close to events. The monasteries of both Jarrow and Wearmouth bear witness to the work carried out by Aldwin and Turgot, and there is some suggestion that that work showed a deliberate attempt to convert the Anglo-Saxon ruins into a suitable habitation for a colony of monks, rather than to construct new buildings in a modern style.²²¹ But there is good reason to be sceptical of the motivations Symeon attributes to the actors. The events of the revival served as the final set piece to explain the replacement of the cathedral clerks, and Symeon's description cannot be divorced from that context. The motivations he attributes to Aldwin, Reinfrid and Aelfwig fit neatly with the arguments he had advanced earlier in

²¹⁷ *Libellus*, pp. 208-209.

²¹⁸ He died on 14 May 1080. *Libellus*, pp. 216-220.

²¹⁹ *Libellus*, pp. 228-229.

²²⁰ *Libellus*, pp. 228-233.

²²¹ Stuart Harrison and Christopher Norton, 'Lastingham and the Architecture of the Benedictine Revival in Northumbria', in *Anglo-Norman Studies 34: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 2011*, ed. by David Bates (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2012), pp. 63-104, pp. 70-71.

the *Libellus*, and his attempts to emphasise how the pattern and settlement had been shaped and fostered by Durham is clear. Several decisions the three made, not least the choice of Monkchester (Newcastle) as their first place of settlement, fit poorly with the supposed veneration of Bede. If the *Historia ecclesiastica* had inspired them, then it would seem they had not read it carefully.²²² Nevertheless, by the time the monks at Durham came to record the events, Bede's work had firmly become fixed in their minds as the inspiration of those three men. Whether it was the intention, or a retrospective explanation for what had happened — perhaps crafted as an attempt to buttress the authority of the cathedral priory which was being threatened by Ranulf Flambard — it was Bede who Durham remembered as the father of the revival.²²³ Whatever the reason, Durham's historical corpus emphasises the appeal and attraction of Bede's works to the revivers and historians of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries.

²²² Alexandra Luff, *The Place of Durham Cathedral Priory in the Post Conquest Spiritual Life of the North East* (Durham: Unpublished PhD Thesis, 2001), pp. 24-45.

²²³ Although the focus above has been on the story as told by Symeon it also appears in the *Historia Regum* (*Historia de Regibus Anglorum et Dacorum*) in roughly the same broad strokes. For Symeon's role in that work, and the *Historia Regum* as a product of a Durham historical workshop see David Rollason, 'Symeon of Durham's *Historia de Regibus*' For the suggestion regarding Ranulf Flambard see William Aird, 'The political context of the *Libellus de exordio*', in *Symeon of Durham: Historian of Durham and the North*, ed. by David Rollason (Stamford: Shaun Tyas, 1998), 32-45.

Chapter 3: The Twelfth Century Narratives

The foundation stories of the Yorkshire monasteries with which this thesis is concerned stepped into this tradition and, therefore, we might expect the communities of the revival to construct their narratives in the same ways as those institutions mentioned in the previous chapter. Unsurprisingly, Bede was popular in Yorkshire — the *Historia ecclesiastica* was listed in library catalogues from Whitby and St Marys York, and a copy of it also survives from Selby — and the history, figures and, locations he provided could rightly have been used by the monks of Selby, Whitby and St Mary's York as part of the identities they crafted through their foundation stories.²²⁴ Nevertheless, when we turn to the twelfth-century narratives it is striking that it is only at Selby — the monastery with by far the most tenuous Bedan link and one which claimed no pre-conquest past for itself — that we see Bede utilised in the construction of the narrative. It is also at Selby where we see the only explicit claims of theophany. In this chapter, I will briefly relay the narrative thrust of these three stories and highlight how they conform to the examples we have seen above. After this I shall turn to how they depart from those exemplars.

Selby

The Selby *Historia* begins at the Abbey of St Germain in Auxerre where the incorrupt corpse of Saint Germanus lay. One night, an unnamed subsacrist, motivated by love for the saint approached the body and cut from it the middle finger of Germanus's right hand in order to 'have some token of remembrance' with him at all times.²²⁵ As soon as he had done so, however, he was struck by great grief. He placed the finger back on the alter and begun to strike his chest, tearfully crying out

²²⁴ Anne Lawrence-Mathers, *Manuscripts in Northumbria in the Eleventh and Twelfth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2003), p. 112. St Mary's catalogue is admittedly late: Sharpe, *Benedictine Library Catalogues* B120 261, p. 710. For Whitby see below.

²²⁵ *HSM*, pp. 8-10.

'St Germanus, have pity on me'.²²⁶ The finger was placed in an ivory casket on the altar next to the body where, as 'irrefutable proof of the incorrupt body' of Germanus, it remained intact down to the hairs in the middle of the joint.²²⁷ The narrative then jumps to 'around the time that Duke William of Normandy invaded England' when Saint Germanus visited a monk of Auxerre by the name of Benedict.²²⁸ Germanus instructed Benedict to take his detached finger, sew it into his arm for safe keeping, and leave the abbey to found a monastery on the banks of the River Ouse at Selby.²²⁹ Benedict was initially reluctant to follow the saint's instruction but, after the third visit, he did what he was told and left Auxerre with Germanus's finger sewn inside his arm.²³⁰ The monks of Auxerre became aware of the theft of the finger and chased Benedict on horseback but, unable to find any trace of the finger—and failing to search *in* him—returned to Auxerre empty handed allowing Benedict to continue to England.²³¹

Benedict arrived in England, but he was unfamiliar with his new surroundings. In his confusion, he went to Salisbury instead of Selby where he made the acquaintance of an Edward, a local magnate. Edward showered Benedict with gifts and the promise of support, but Benedict could, of course, not find York nor the River Ouse and soon became despondent.²³² Having become frustrated with Benedict's incompetence, St Germanus appeared to him again, mocked him, and told Benedict that he 'did not say Salisbury' but that he 'should seek Selby' instead. To emphasise the point, Germanus sounded out 'Selby' syllable-by-syllable and showed Benedict a vision of the exact place he should seek.²³³ Benedict returned to Edward and admitted his mistake. Edward was sympathetic, however, and provided an interpreter to Benedict and sent him on his way. Benedict

²²⁶ *HSM*, pp. 10-11.

²²⁷ *HSM*, pp. 14-15.

²²⁸ *HSM*, p. 18.

²²⁹ *HSM*, p. 18.

²³⁰ *HSM*, p. 20.

²³¹ *HSM*, p. 22.

²³² *HSM*, pp. 24-28. Burton suggests this Edward may be Edward, sheriff of Wiltshire.

²³³ *HSM*, p. 28.

set out for Lynn where he took a boat up the coast and found the site that Germanus had picked out for him.²³⁴

After arriving, Benedict set up a rudimentary cell on the banks of the river. He was soon noticed by Hugh Fitz Baldric, the sheriff of Yorkshire, who was travelling along the river on patrol. Benedict explained who he was and Hugh arranged for carpenters to be sent to him to help construct an oratory.²³⁵ Hugh then remarked that Benedict had set up his dwelling on royal land and that he should seek out William the Conqueror to secure his favour.²³⁶ Benedict, therefore, travelled to the king, explained who he was, and what he had done and, hearing this, William gifted Benedict substantial lands in Yorkshire.²³⁷ Benedict attracted others to him and, from eremitic origins, a cenobitic community quickly formed. A healing miracle involving Germanus's finger and Erneis de Burun, the sheriff of Yorkshire from 1086-1088, follows, before the narrative returns to 1070 and records William the Conqueror's confirmation charter.²³⁸ Following William's confirmation charter the narrative briefly outlines the early, harmonious days of the abbey, and then a conflict that saw Benedict replaced by Hugh as abbot.²³⁹ Hugh is credited with being a great builder who moved the wooden buildings from alongside the river and rebuilt them a little further inland out of stone, and the author dedicates to him a series of short chapters of verses, and an account of his tour of shrines after he resigned the abbacy.²⁴⁰ From this point, into the second book — which begins with its own preface — the author turns his attention to outlining the abbacies of Herbert (d. 1127) and Durund (d. 1137), to the abbacy of Abbot German (d. 1160). Throughout the second book the author's focus becomes increasingly occupied with the miracles

²³⁴ *HSM*, p. 32.

²³⁵ *HSM*, p. 40; p. 42.

²³⁶ *HSM*, p. 42.

²³⁷ *HSM*, p. 44. That meeting possibly took place when the York in 1069/70.

²³⁸ *HSM*, pp. 46-50. A forgery which survives in a mid-twelfth-century copy as St Petersburg, St Petersburg Institute of History, Russian Academy of Sciences, collection 18, cart 381 1b.

²³⁹ *HSM*, pp. 54-62.

²⁴⁰ *HSM*, pp. 62-76.

performed by Germanus's finger around Selby and, by the time he draws his work to a close, the work resembles a miracle collection.

As a foundation narrative, the Selby *Historia* conforms remarkably well to some of the expectations of the genre we have already seen. Above all else it clearly sets out how and why the monastery was founded, how its foundation was divinely ordained, how it acquired its principal relic, and how that relic's presence and authority was felt at Selby. In the description of St Germanus's miracles, we also see the author's debt to Bede, for two of the miracles are borrowed from the description of Germanus in the *Historia ecclesiastica*.²⁴¹ The Selby *Historia* also neatly emphasises that *narrationes fundationis* and *translatio* can often be so intertwined that it is difficult to ascertain where one form of narrative stops and the other starts.²⁴² As at Durham and at Waltham, the story of the origins of Selby Abbey explained both how the abbey was founded, and the principal relics and patron saint of its community came to be. For an abbey whose foundational story was a *furta sacra*, explaining how that holy theft was legitimate, authorised, and encouraged by the saint himself was of utmost importance.²⁴³ In fact, so keen is the author to attribute the foundation to Germanus, acting through Benedict as his agent, that the author marginalises Selby's royal links — links that the Battle monks were busy emphasising at the same time — and gives William the Conqueror little more than a bit-part role. The founders, lay patrons, and supporters of the abbey became incidental to the story here told.

Nevertheless, Selby's historian does struggle to fit his story to the expectations of the *narratio fundationis* which he was writing. An example occurs in his description of Selby upon Benedict's arrival there. His initial aim is to describe the site as a paradise on earth suitable for the construction of a Benedictine abbey surrounded on all sides by woods and groves which 'endowed this pleasant

²⁴¹ For a discussion of the miracles see *HSM*, lxiv-lxxii; lxxxiv-lxxxv.

²⁴² Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*, p. 76.

²⁴³ Patrick Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

spot with great beauty, though they bestow even more usefulness', which demarcated the abbey's estates and provided everything needed for the abbey's life.²⁴⁴ Yet, this depiction of Selby as an idyllic place, unspoiled by man, fits awkwardly with other facts the author gives. Selby, he claims, was visible from the public highway from every direction and all boats bound for York passed by the abbey's gates.²⁴⁵ The name 'Selby' itself also raises suspicion. The impression the author gives is that the land was untouched when Benedict arrived, and that the town subsequently sprung up around the abbey. But there is some indication from the place name that a vill pre-existed the foundation of the abbey. The '-by' suffix would indicate a Scandinavian settlement, and 'Upper Seleby' appears in a pre-conquest list of possessions of the Archbishop of York.²⁴⁶ '-by' could also be a Scandinavian form of the Old English '-tun' and, therefore, 'Seletun', mentioned in the annal for 779 in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, may also be the same place.²⁴⁷ Selby does not appear in *Domesday* because it seems to have been part of the royal estate of Snaith, but there is enough evidence to suggest that the author's presentation of the site that Benedict encountered at Selby did not match reality.

There is one final facet of the Selby *Historia* to consider: that is that it is intentionally funny. The story of the finger sewn into the arm, Benedict's aimless wandering around Salisbury and the slapstick spelling out of Selby syllable-by-syllable by the abbey's patron saint suggest that author had his tongue firmly in his cheek at times during his narrative. He was also undeniably aware of the rules of the work he was writing and had a sophisticated grasp of the topoi and tropes of the genre. Historians have recognised that the work is amusing, or 'charming' in the words of Otter, but they have largely eschewed discussion of what that humour means for the work itself.²⁴⁸ It is undoubtedly a knotty problem, and it is one not helped by the fact that the work survives only in

²⁴⁴ *HSM*, pp. 34-35.

²⁴⁵ *HSM*, pp. 34-35.

²⁴⁶ EYC i, p. 21.

²⁴⁷ Eilert Ekwall, *Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 411.

²⁴⁸ *HSM*, p. xviii. Otter, *Inventiones*, p. 64.

one manuscript. There is absolutely no evidence that the Selby historian's version of events continued to be copied in the way that Stephen of Whitby's narrative did, or that the version of events which the Selby historian constructed actually formed a long lived part of Selby's reconstruction of the past. Although there is evidence of informal links between Auxerre and Selby in the late middle ages.²⁴⁹ Nor was the Selby *Historia's* version of events picked up by some of the earlier commentators on it, even when other aspects were. John Leland seems to have visited the monastery, but his title heading of Selby is followed by a blank space.²⁵⁰ No version of the narrative makes it into Dodsworth's notes, nor into either version of the published editions of the *Monasticon*. Most interesting, though, is perhaps John Burton's account (d. 1771). In his *Monasticon Eboracense*, he records the tradition that Henry I had been born in Selby, as reported to him by the residents of the town. He had visited the former abbey, by then the parish church, and found the chamber where this birth had supposedly happened had actually been constructed by Abbot Robert Deeping (d. 1518).²⁵¹ Despite his doubts he included the story, but the *Historia* and the tradition it preserved is absent, and he was seemingly unaware that Phillip Labbé had discovered the manuscript in France and published a transcription of it.²⁵² There is good reason not to be over-reliant on this evidence: the miraculous arrival of Benedict and the power of the holy relic seem to be the exact sort of material that would seem irredeemably Catholic in the years following the dissolution, and manuscripts containing it may well have been discarded. Nevertheless, we must be aware of being too quick to accept what the author presents, even in its broader strokes, as representative of how the Selby monks were thinking about the past. Where was the Selby historian trying to be funny, and where was he trying to impart (what he thought was) factual information? In a monastic context, the provisions of the Rule of St Benedict against laughter have perhaps served to impart an image of po-faced monks studiously and emotionlessly writing dry, humourless

²⁴⁹ *HSM*, p. xv.

²⁵⁰ Leland, *Collectanea*, IV, p. 45.

²⁵¹ John Burton, *Monasticon Eboracense and the Ecclesiastical History of Yorkshire*, (York, 1768) p. 387.

²⁵² Philippe Labbé, 'De Gestis abbatum Sancti Germani Autissiodorensis', in *Novae bibliothecae manuscriptorum librorum*, vol i, (Paris, 1657), pp. 570-93.

history.²⁵³ There is, however, a surviving corpus of evidence to suggest that works which display parody, vulgarity, and wit were immensely popular in monastic communities and spread widely.²⁵⁴ In the *Cena Cypriani*, an imagined account of a meal attended by well-known biblical figures, the author lightly jabs at the attendees using their well-known biblical characteristics in different circumstances. Noah, for example, is said to have constructed an ark before the dinner to build up an appetite.²⁵⁵ The *Cena* was written c. 400 and survives in over fifty manuscript copies. Its distribution suggests parody was a popular medium, even (or especially) when it was aping some of the most important figures in the Christian world. Selby's *Historia* is more subtle, and its author states that he wishes to be taken seriously, but it at least urges pause for thought. If the evidence of the Selby *Historia* suggests the text was designed to be read at meal times, it might suggest the humour served as a subversive joke: intended to provoke laughter from various of his more literate brothers in the monastery to earn them correction in a text otherwise meant to be taken seriously.²⁵⁶ The Selby text has no discernible after life; it survives solely in this manuscript and it is very difficult to detect how it influenced future versions of the past. It is worthwhile to consider whether the Selby historian ever intended his text to do that.

Whitby

The Whitby *Memorial* initially leads us to believe that it will address the same themes of divine revelation as the Selby text. It begins with an address to all those serving God and the Abbess St Hilda in the place which once was called 'Streoneshalh', then Prestby, and now Whitby. It goes on to state that William de Percy founded a monastery dedicated to St Peter and St Hilda and gave it

²⁵³ Chapter 7 of the Rule of St Benedict speaks of the degrees of humility. The tenth degree of humility is not to prompt to laughter, and the eleventh that a monk should speak without laughter in few words. *The Rule of St Benedict*, ed. and trans. by Justin McCann (London: Burns and Oates, 1952), p. 46.

²⁵⁴ Liam Ethan Felsen, 'Medieval Monks: Funnier than you Thought', in *Misconceptions about the Middle Ages*, ed. by Stephen Harris and Bryon Grigsby (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 70-75; Martha Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages: The Latin Tradition* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), pp. 19-38.

²⁵⁵ Ethan Felsen, 'Medieval Monks', p. 72.

²⁵⁶ *HSM*, pp. xciv-xcv.

to Reinfrid, a monk of Evesham.²⁵⁷ The very next piece of information however tells us not who Hilda is, nor what Streoneshalh was, but what that gift was: two carucates of land in Prestby. The *Memorial* then goes on to state that, as the number of monks grew, so too did William's generosity. When his brother, Serlo, became prior of the abbey, he gave the abbey vills, lands, churches, and tithes which were approved by his wife, Emma de Port, and his son, Alan. The *Memorial* then moves on to describe how Reinfrid had arrived at Whitby. He is introduced as the strongest soldier in William the Conqueror's army, who was travelling with William though Northumbria — almost certainly the campaign of the Harrying of the North, although this is left unsaid. Whilst in Yorkshire, Reinfrid turned aside to Whitby and happened across the ruins of Hilda's abbey, which had been destroyed by Ingwar and Hubba, identified as the dukes of the Alans and the Danes, and as the beheaders of Edmund, king of East Anglia. He was moved by the ruins, and he resolved there and then to become a monk. He went to Evesham and then, having become a monk, returned to Northumbria with Aldwin, the prior of Winchcombe, and Aelfwig, simply named as a monk. He came to William de Percy and received the gift of the church of St Peter's (and it is notable that the memorialist does not include Hilda's name here) and the gift of two carucates of land which the memorial account had begun with. The *Memorial* then expands on its brief statement at the beginning that the number of monks grew; Reinfrid diligently rebuilt the ruined buildings and attracted followers to the monastery until, one day, when travelling near the river Derwent he came across people building a bridge. He dismounted to assist them but, whilst he was helping out, he was hit on the head by a piece of wood. The wood fractured his skull and Reinfrid died. His body was taken to the nearby church of Hackness where he was buried, and he was succeeded as prior by Serlo, William's brother. Serlo remained prior for several years until

²⁵⁷ 'Notum sit omnibus Deo et Sanctae Hildae Abbatissae servientibus in loco qui olim Streoneshalc vocabatur, deinde Prestebi appellabatur, nunc vero Witebi vocatur, quod Willielmus de Perci, cognomento Asgernus, tempore Willielmi Bastard (nothi), Regis Anglorum, ibi fundaverit monasterium in honore Sancti Petre Apostoli et Sanctae Hildae Abbatissae, atque Reinfrido, monacho de Evesham, cum sociis suis quos sibi adquisiverat, ipsum locum commendaverit', *Whitby Cartulary*, p. 1.

another William de Percy, nephew to William, became the first abbot.²⁵⁸ The memorialist ends the narrative portion of the *Memorial* by stating that William de Percy, the founder, had gone on crusade and died at 'Mountjoy' near Jerusalem.

The narrative is then followed by a list of the abbey's benefactors and a specification of their benefactions beginning with the statement that the Memorial:

'will briefly record here as a memorial all the lands, possessions, forests, churches, tithes and liberties which the same oft-named William de Percy, with his son Alan de Percy, gave to the monastery of Whitby in the first times, and also in the last of his days before he set out for Jerusalem, and also what other men of faith have given or granted to our monastery of Whitby in perpetual alms for its security.'²⁵⁹

It begins by listing the abbey's closest possessions: the vill and port of 'Whitby; Overbi, and Nedhrebi,²⁶⁰ that is Stainsacre; Thingwala,²⁶¹ Larpool; Helredale; Gnip, that is Hawsker; Normanby, Fyling, and the other Fyling;²⁶² Bertwait, Setwait, Sneaton, Ugglebarnby, Sowerby,²⁶³ Ruswarp, Newholm, Stakesby, Baldebi, Breck, Flowergate, Dunsley' and continues, broadly speaking, to chart all the lands, churches, possessions, forests and tithes given to them by William de Percy, the founder and other members of the extended Percy clan. On two occasions this list is separated by a red line which breaks the list of possessions into three sections; the first includes properties acquired up to 1140 with the second two including the acquisitions from 1140-1170.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁸ The identity of William de Percy, the first abbot, is a little difficult. He must have been the son of an otherwise unrecorded brother of William the first and Serlo, but another sibling does not appear in charter witness lists in the cartulary.

²⁵⁹ Itaque omnes terras, possessiones, forestas, ecclesias, decimas et libertates, quas saepe nominatus idem Willielmus de Perci, cum Alano de Perci, filio suo, monasterio de Witebi dederat in primis, necnon in ultimis temporibus suis antequam Ierosolimam peteret, vel quique fideles monasterio nostro de Witebi dederunt vel concesserunt in elemosinam perpetuam, ad monimentum, hic breviter annotabimus: *Whitby Cartulary*, p. 2.

²⁶⁰ Both lost, presumably close to Whitby and consumed by the town.

²⁶¹ Now lost, presumably local to Whitby.

²⁶² Robin Hood's Bay area.

²⁶³ Not Sowerby, Thirsk, but seemingly a lost vill of the same name in Langbargh hundred.

²⁶⁴ Pickles 'Were Early Medieval Lists Moral or Bureaucratic?'

Implicitly, the author of the *Memorial* addresses many of the themes we have seen before and shows awareness of the legacy the Whitby monks had inherited. The *Memorial* begins with a clear insight — albeit concise, short and underdeveloped — into how the community of Whitby Abbey understood where they were, who they were, and who they had been in the past. They were monks who were there at Whitby, which in the past had once been called Streoneshalh and then Prestby, to serve God and St Hilda. They were in the church of St Peter and St Hilda, they were there because William de Percy had founded their community, and that community had once been headed by Reinfrid, who had been a monk of Evesham. The allusions to the past, for they are no more fleshed out than that, also conform to the *topoi* of Benedictine refoundation. The ruins of Streoneshalh marked the site out as eternally sacred and, in moving Reinfrid to enter the monastic life, they supplied something approaching a miraculous explanation to link the new Norman community to the old Anglian one. Indeed, the *topos* of the monastery destroyed by Vikings, and the description of Ingwar and Hubba specifically as the agents of that destruction, deploys a commonplace *topos* of destruction.²⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the *Memorial's* author makes no further attempt to explain who Hilda is, why the abbey is dedicated to her, or why it is significant that the place that is now called Whitby had once been called Streoneshalh. Instead, our author assumes that his reader would intuitively know the history of Anglian Whitby and would be able to fill in the blanks themselves.

St Mary's York.

Stephen of Whitby's account of the foundation of St Mary's York begins with a fairly standard apology for his lack of skill. He claims that he was of course unworthy, but felt the events that had occurred were so important they must be written down.²⁶⁶ Those events began in 1078, when he, like many others, had heard of a man named Reinfrid living an eremitic life on the Whitby headland

²⁶⁵ Bartlett, 'The Viking Hiatus in the Cult of Saints', pp. 3-25; Julia Barrow, 'Danish Ferocity', pp.77-94.

²⁶⁶ MA, iii, pp. 544-545. Add MS 38816, f. 29v.

and, impressed by the reports, resolved to join him. Reinfrid, Stephen states, had originally gone to Jarrow because of his desire to worship God at sites associated with the Northumbrian golden age, but had moved on to Whitby.²⁶⁷ Within a few days, Stephen states, he was elected leader of the community, and they began work on improving the land that had been given to them by William de Percy.²⁶⁸ Seeing what the monks had achieved, William wished to reclaim his gift and became hostile to the community, at the same time as the monks were being attacked by pirates.²⁶⁹ Stephen therefore petitioned the king and, with his permission, moved to Lastingham. Once there, Stephen received his formal blessing as abbot, and he and the monks began work on a new abbey church.²⁷⁰ God, however, Stephen says, had deemed Lastingham to be unsuitable and was putting in place plans to move the community again. At the same time, His judgement tested the monks and they continued to be bothered by brigands and the ongoing hostility of William de Percy who, in Stephen's narrative, finally deprived them of Whitby.²⁷¹ Shortly afterwards, Stephen became acquainted with Alan Rufus, William the Conqueror's second cousin and the son of Count Eudo who was regent of Brittany 1040-1047.²⁷² Alan granted the church of St Olaf, near York, to Stephen with four acres of land. The community moved there because, as Stephen explains, of the security of the place and because of the support that would be provided to the monks by the people of York. William I gave his assent to the move:

because in that same city iniquities greatly abounded, and much more blood had been shed in the city than in the other cities of England, and the light of divine religion should begin to shine in that place in eternity so that men of barbarity, becoming accustomed to the humble way of life and the example of the religious men who were going to be in that place in our time and afterwards, and should learn to preserve the true faith for the heavenly lord and earthly

²⁶⁷ A similar point is made by Symeon.

²⁶⁸ Stephen's use of 'within a few days' has attracted suspicion because it seems implausible that he could have become leader so quickly. Nicholas Karn has convincingly argued, however, that it should be treated as a turn of phrase to imply a passage of time rather than taken literally.

²⁶⁹ MA, iii, p. 545. Add MS 38816, ff. 30v-31r.

²⁷⁰ MA, iii, p. 545. Add MS 38816, ff. 31r-31v.

²⁷¹ Stephen's evidence here is contradictory with that of *Domesday*.

²⁷² MA, iii, p. 545; and K. S. B. Keats-Rohan, 'Alan Rufus (*d.* 1093)', *ODNB*.

king, and in order that they might stand strong to watch over their souls with constant observation and consolation of the monks.²⁷³

The monks duly moved to St Olaf's, but immediately ran into problems with Thomas, archbishop of York, who — inflamed, in Stephen's opinion, by the devil — argued that the land which had been given to them by Alan belonged to the archbishopric. Stephen went to Alan and then the king where, in the presence of bishops, abbots, and other nobles, Alan swore that the land was his to give and, in order to secure peace, William gave the archbishop other land.

Shortly afterwards, William I died. Fortunately for the monks, William Rufus shared his father's passion for the abbey and continued to provide the fledgling community with support. Shortly after his coronation he came to York and visited the monks at St Olaf's. Upon arriving, he saw that the church that they occupied was too small, so he granted the monks the land next to St Olaf's and gave the monks other land further away to supplement their income, which he confirmed in a charter to which he affixed his seal. Alan, too, made additional gifts and handed over advocacy and patronage to the king. Shortly afterwards, Alan died and William gave the villis of Clifton and Overton, which had both been held by Alan, to the abbey for the deceased count's soul. That gift, Stephen says, was seen by Thomas, archbishop of York, Odo of Bayeux, Geoffrey of Coutances, William, bishop of Durham, Count Alan, Odo of Champagne, William of Warenne and Henry de Beaumont, and many others.

Unfortunately, the monks' problems did not stop there, for the understanding that they had reached with Thomas, archbishop of York, had broken down and he once again attempted to lay claim to the four acres of land the monks had been given. After some deliberation, the matter was

²⁷³ quia in hac eadem civitate iniquitas superhabundaverat, multusque sanguis plusquam in ceteris Anglorum civitatibus effusus erat, divine lumen religionis in ea in eternum splenderet atque ut homines barbari, religiosorum virorum qui in ea nostris et multis post nos temporibus futuri erant, humillima conversatione et exemplis assueti, fidem veram celesti domino ac terrestri regi servare discerent, et ut bonis operibus insistentes animas suas crebra visione eorum et allocutione servare valerent. Add MS 38816, f. 32v.

settled by William Rufus, who gave the church of St Stephen's in York to the archbishop in compensation in a ceremony held at Gloucester and witnessed by many of the leading nobles of the land.²⁷⁴ To further secure peace, Stephen granted the archbishop two carucates of land, one in Clifton and one in Heslington. That gift ends Stephen's narrative and he concludes by restating his reasons for writing.

Stephen's narrative is unconcerned with the miraculous, but he does, nevertheless, satisfy some of the expectations we have seen above. He does remark upon the three sites' association with religion and their suitability for monastic settlement, but those statements are pithy. Whitby, he explains, in 'ancient time was worthy of honour because of the way of life of religious men and women and the ample possession of estates'.²⁷⁵ Lastingham was 'at that time indeed empty, but once distinguished by the number and sanctity of the monks living in it'.²⁷⁶ Jarrow, which is mentioned as the place Reinfrid arrived at, was a place once full of servants of God, amongst whom was 'the venerable priest Bede who expounded in many ways the sacred teaching of the Scriptures through the Holy Spirit'.²⁷⁷ The final move to St Olaf's church in York could similarly be made to fit this pattern, but Stephen makes little of it. He remarks that a church pre-dated their arrival at York, and the decision to leave Lastingham was God's judgement because the site was not suitable, but there is no depth to either statement and little indication that Stephen's usage of 'God's judgement' goes much beyond the idiomatic.²⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the foundation of the abbey at an already consecrated, functioning church, satisfied the requirements of a sacredly revealed site; it was a suitable location for a monastery because the consecration ceremony of that previous church had made it so. Strictly speaking, no more was required, even if we might expect more to have been provided.

²⁷⁴ Add MS 38816, ff. 33r-33v.

²⁷⁵ Ibid, f. 30r.

²⁷⁶ Ibid, f. 31r.

²⁷⁷ Ibid, f. 30r.

²⁷⁸ Ibid, f. 32r.

Purposes

So far, this chapter has been concerned with demonstrating where these texts deploy the topoi of foundation, and we have seen how all three attempt to supply divine justification for why their monastery came to occupy the site which it did. Yet, with the notable exception of Selby, these features are not as pronounced as we might expect and there are some notable omissions and divergences from the models we have seen. The Selby historian finds a key role for his patron saint's relic, but utterly marginalises its royal link — a royal link which we will see the same abbey emphasising in due course in other sources. At Whitby, the author's focus is on the arrival of Reinfrid and the establishment of a community endowed by William de Percy, but he ignores the chance firmly to tie his community back to a pre-conquest monastery on the very location of his abbey. At St Mary's York, Stephen's focus is on justifying a schism with the Whitby community which led them to York and a dispute with the archbishop. In none of these cases have we seen a pronounced interest in Bede: a stark contrast to how Symeon of Durham utilised the pre-conquest past. More generally, we have seen little interest in events which pre-dated the Norman conquest. Only in the instance of the background to Selby's *furta sacra* story, Stephen of Whitby's passing mention of pre-conquest monastic sites and Whitby's mention of ruins levelled by Inguar and Hubba, are we transported before the events of 1066.

When we turn to the purpose of these works, these omissions begin to make sense. The most obvious place to begin is with the authors' own explanations, and two of these works were indeed given lengthy explanatory statements by their authors. Stephens of Whitby's prefatory statement informs us that he is writing because:

I, brother Stephen, a son of this holy mother church, having been elected abbot not because of my superior merit but solely by the grace of God and by the common consent of my brothers, I have undertaken to commit to letters for the memory of future

generations in what way I came to this position and in what way the church of St Mary of York, of which I was made the first abbot by God's authority, was founded, so that those present and coming after us in the future should know who and of what sort were the founders of this church and how great were the disturbances having been driven at it by the whirlwinds of the envious.²⁷⁹

His concluding statement again emphasises this theme:

Wanting to make known to those following us the many tribulations the omnipotent lord freed us from, I desired to arrange this writing for the memory of all, in order that those present and future of this place should prevail upon God with indefatigable prayers for me, and so that they should know how our church had been founded and by how many whirlwinds it had been struck, but, with the grace of God protecting us, it increased and multiplied more and more through Christ our Lord. Amen²⁸⁰

Stephen is explicit about the role of memory in his piece. He twice states that he is writing 'ad memoriam' and his general addresses to the present and future generations of monks suggest a recognition that memory is a communal activity engaged in by the collective. Stephen, writing about events in which he was involved, envisaged his task as being one of creation, arrangement, and clarification. His memory of events was to be *the* memory of events for his monastery. He twice tells his readers what that memory should be, as well as informing them he was writing to record how the church had been founded. Likewise, he twice tells his audience that future generations should know the whirlwinds the church had been struck by before, telling the reader he wanted them to know what sort of people the founders were and that he wished to be prayed for. Superficially at least, his purposes were didactic and commemorative. He wished to provide the exemplars through which the monks of the abbey could learn, be they from the events Stephen described or the people who were involved with them. He wished, too, to ensure those people

²⁷⁹ Unde ego frater Stephanus huius sancte matris ecclesie filius nullis meis precedentibus meritis sed sola dei gratia fratrumque meorum unanimi mihi facientium electione abbas constitutus qualiter ad hunc gradum pervenerim vel qualiter ecclesia sancte Marie Eboracensis cui deo auctore primus abbas datus sum fundata sit ad posterorum memoriam litteris mandare curavi ut sciant presentes et futuri posteri nostri qui vel quales huius nostre ecclesie fuerint fundatores vel quantas invidorum turbinibus impulsa sustinuerit perturbationes. Add MS 38816, f. 21r.

²⁸⁰ Volens vero posteris nostris notum facere, de quantis tribulationibus nos liberauit omnipotens dominus, scripturam hanc ad omnium memoriam componere studui, quatinus presentes et futuri huius loci nostri habitatores pro me precibus indefessis deum nostrum exorent, et ut sciant qualiter ecclesia nostra fundata sit vel quantis turbinibus impulsa dei nos protegente gratia, magis ac magis aucta et multiplicata sit per Cristum dominum nostrum. Amen. Add MS 38816, ff. 34r-34v.

and, more than anyone else he himself, would be remembered in the monks' commemorative prayers.

The Selby historian, similarly, picks up these themes. The only detail he gives about himself is his age, 22, but despite his professed unworthiness, unwillingness, and claimed unsuitability for the task, he liberally deploys biblical allusions and writes in an accomplished style.²⁸¹ Burton's suggestion that he was a child oblate is persuasive.²⁸² The author provides a preface to each of the two books of the *Historia* addressed to an unnamed patron who had encouraged, compelled and even forced him to write. In the preface to Book I, he states his purpose was 'to commit to writing in what way the church of Selby was founded, what were the causes and the method of its foundation and who the founders were' and that he would do so by relying on the oral testimony of the prior and other elderly men.²⁸³ In his preface to Book II the Selby historian embarks on a sophisticated discussion of sources and the power of testimony, history, and authority in defence of his work. Aware of the various ways in which 'history' could be understood by medieval audiences the Selby historian sought to counter criticism, perceived or actual, which he had encountered.²⁸⁴ Some people, he stated, reckoned that only those who have seen an event should put it in writing.²⁸⁵ But, he argued, how much 'have we heard and known, because our fathers have told us about the works of God and his virtues, so that they should not be hidden away from their children from generation to generation'.²⁸⁶ At any rate, he had judged that he had seen the events he described because, for the periods up from Abbot Hugh to the end, he had 'spoken by the mouths of those that saw' and 'had not related anything other than what I have heard from these

²⁸¹ *HSM*, pp. xvii-xix, 4-5.

²⁸² *Ibid*, p. xviii.

²⁸³ '...qualiterque ecclesia Selebiensis fundata sit que causa quis modus foundationis extiterit qui etiam fundatores ... litteris insinuare curabo', *HSM*, pp. 3-5.

²⁸⁴ On this point see Kempshall, *Rhetoric and the Writing of History*.

²⁸⁵ '...nemine debere rem scribi nisi a quo potuit et uideri nec aliquem debere credere tamen ex auditu, quo probare non potuit ex uisu' *HSM*, pp. 84-87.

²⁸⁶ 'Et tamen maiorem historiae partem ab Abbate scilicet Hugone usque ad calcem uidisse potius quam audisse me iudico, quia illorum ore locutus sum, qui uiderunt'. *HSM* pp. 86-87.

men'.²⁸⁷ This defence was combined with another protestation about his own unwillingness and unsuitability to continue with the work. The two prefaces are utterly conventional and suggest an author well versed in matters of rhetoric, grammar and the liberal arts.²⁸⁸ The impression the historian gives are that the opponents he speaks of are his contemporaries. Indeed, he states that they are people 'in our times', but he would have been aware, too, that that view was well supported in patristic texts. He could probably point to Isidore of Seville's definition of history in the *Etymologiae*.²⁸⁹ There, Isidore explains, the word *historia* is so called because it comes from Greek and means 'to see' or 'to know' and therefore the ancients would not write down events unless they had seen them, for seeing was better than hearing.²⁹⁰ But he would also have been aware of the variety of *historia* which were firmly focused on events from before the authors' time from the historical books of the bible, Eusebius's *Historia ecclesiastica* to Isidore's own chronological tables in Book V of the *Etymologiae*.²⁹¹ More than anyone else, the Selby historian had the example of Bede: a historian who, following in the footsteps of Eusebius, had written an Ecclesiastical History of the English people drawn from documents, letters, historical writing, and the oral tradition of those people who had come before him. The parallels to the Selby historian's own discussion of his use of oral tradition are pronounced and Bede's work may have been in the historian's mind as he composed his. Bede's own preface is full of accounts of the oral testimony he had relied upon and, towards the end, he turned his attention to the much-studied discussion of what he termed the 'true law of history' (*vera lex historiae*). There he beseeched his reader not to criticise him for errors because, in accordance with the 'true law of history', he had 'simply sought to commit to writing what [he had] collected from common report for the instruction of posterity'.²⁹² The

²⁸⁷ 'Testem inuoco conscius secretorum me non aliud narrasse quam ab illis audiui, qui etiam tales sunt ut eorum maturitati discredere infidelitati signum sit et nota perfide'. *HSM* pp. 86-87.

²⁸⁸ Gransden, 'Historical Prolouges' in *Legends, Traditions and History in Medieval England*, pp. 125-151.

²⁸⁹ *HSM*, pp. 86-87.

²⁹⁰ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* trans. S. A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach and O. Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) I, XLI, p. 67.

²⁹¹ Isidore, *Etymologiae*, v, xxxix, pp. 130-133. Kempshall, *Rhetoric*, pp. 83-84.

²⁹² *HE*, pp. 6-7. Colgrave, whose translation I have otherwise followed, translates as 'principles of true history'. For a discussion of the phrase see Roger Ray, 'Bede's Vera Lex Historiae', *Speculum*, 55 (1980), 1-21 and Walter Goffet, 'Bede's "uera lex historiae" Explained', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 34 (2005), 111-116. Kempshall, *Rhetoric*, p. 289.

phrase, borrowed from Jerome, indicated that Bede believed that common reports (*fama vulgens*), that is the oral traditions passed down to him, were an acceptable source for history and, although they were unverifiable, and therefore had the potential to introduce error into his work, were nevertheless legitimate. As Kempshall points out, the historians of the twelfth century, including William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon and Gerald of Wales, wrestled with and worked around the problem, but nevertheless saw fit to include common report when it was deemed appropriate or necessary.²⁹³

Through the Selby historian's discussion of the acceptability of oral testimony and the defence of his role in writing a history at all we begin to approach his attitude to the working of memory and his reasons for writing. As Isidore had said, history was a form of grammar because 'whatever is worthy of remembrance is committed to writing. And for this reason, histories are called 'a monument' (*monumentum*), because they grant a remembrance (*memoria*) of deeds that have been done.'²⁹⁴ None of this Isidorian verbiage makes it into the *Historia*, and the Selby historian eschews an overt discussion of memory itself. In fact, whilst the Selby historian provides a lengthy discussion of why he was compelled to write, he provides no discussion of how he envisioned his work to be read, why he was committing the events to writing, or what future readers should take from it; his direct addresses to the reader requests instead that they do not judge him too harshly. In both prefaces he does, however, refer to the testimony of the elders of the community as an acceptable source for the events he was describing. In the first preface he specifically names the prior specifically as a source along with other senior men. In the second, which we have already encountered in his defence of his work, he cites the eyewitness testimony of men who had seen the events themselves and whose rank made them trustworthy witnesses.²⁹⁵ One other event causes the Selby historian to turn to a discussion of testimony: whilst in Lynn waiting for a boat to take

²⁹³ Kempshall, *Rhetoric*, pp. 289-295.

²⁹⁴ Isidore, *Etymologiae* I, xli, p. 67.

²⁹⁵ *HSM*, pp. 2-3.

him north to Selby, Benedict went to the baths and was seen holding his arm above the water. Having originally claimed that he had injured it in some way, he admitted to his host that he was in fact protecting it because he had the finger of St Germanus sewn into it. This story, the historian tells us, was relayed to the prior by a very old lady who, when she a very young girl had seen Benedict when she was staying at her father's guesthouse in Lynn.²⁹⁶ In both instances, the historian deploys well understood explanations of the veracity of eyewitness testimony. In the first instance, as van Houts has shown, the rank of a person could validate the information provided by a source.²⁹⁷ In the second, memory was accurate and could be passed down from generation to generation in a chain, as long as the chain was verifiable, for roughly one hundred years. It is at this point that both Walter Map and the Waltham Chronicler distinguish the present from the past, and the surge of writing about the Norman Conquest through the back end of the twelfth century, might similarly suggest a growing recognition that events which were once common knowledge needed to be recorded as they were falling out of common knowledge.²⁹⁸ This explanation might seem ludicrous to a modern ear. After all, we are well aware of the limits of even eye-witness testimony — let alone third hand testimony. Indeed, it led to various improbable chains of transmission such as Abbo of Fleury's claim that he had written the *Passio Sancti Edmundi* from the testimony of Dunstan who had stored up in his memory the tale as told by the martyred king's armour-bearer, who had reported it to Athelstan some years earlier.²⁹⁹ The Selby historian's explanation nevertheless fits well in the mnemonic tradition that the middle ages had inherited. In all respects then, the Selby historian shows himself to be well aware of how to construct *historia*, how memory should function and how testimony should be authenticated. The only significant

²⁹⁶ *HSM*, pp. 30-31.

²⁹⁷ van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe 900-1200*, pp. 22-23.

²⁹⁸ Elisabeth van Houts, 'The Memory of 1066 in Written and Oral Traditions', *Anglo Norman Studies 19: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1997*, ed. by Christopher Harper-Bill (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1998), pp. 167-180. p. 178. Elisabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, pp. 27-28; 126-127.

²⁹⁹ Abbo of Fleury, *Passio Sancti Edmundi*, in *Corolla Sancti Eadmundi: The Garland of Saint Edmund, King and Martyr*, ed. and trans by Frans Hervey (London: J Murray; 1907), pp. 8-9.

deviation from standard monastic prefaces is that the Selby historian never ties these themes together to make an explicit statement of his own work's role in the memorial process.³⁰⁰

The most elusive of the three works is that of the Whitby *Memorial*. Its brevity, and indeed its form (as we will see again in due course) makes a lengthy explanation of the author's purpose an unsurprising omission. The statements as to his purpose are confined to two sentences, both of which we have seen above at the beginning of the work and proceeding the list of lands. The language of both sentences indicates the attention of the memorialist is turned towards memory. The things he records are things that 'should be known by all those (*Notum sit omnibus*)' serving God and St Hilda at Whitby' and the list he records was compiled 'as a memorial (*ad monimentum*)' of the grants given.³⁰¹ He provides no suggestion as to from where from his information may have been derived or by whom the story might have been told, but there is a hint of literary flourish in the work which suggests he may have had access to Abbo of Fleury's *Passio Sancti Edmundi*, or at least a work which did. We have already seen the ways in which Danish destruction, particularly Ingwar and Hubba as agents of it, became a topos to explain the loss of the past. But the *Memorial's* description of the two Viking leaders as 'Dukes of the Alans and of the Danes' bears a striking similarity to the *Passio's* description. Abbo had described the Viking raiders as members of the Hyperborean race and went on to say that Ingwar's tendency never to leave his ships without a strong guard was a specific practice of the 'Danish and Alanic nations'.³⁰² The overlap is slight, but points towards the utilisation of literary works in the composition of the *Memorial*, or at least the text which underlay it. Moreover, as Thomas Pickles has shown, the entire twelfth century

³⁰⁰ To provide but one example, Herman, archdeacon of Bury, makes eleven uses of the word memory (as a noun and a verb) in his preface to the miracles of Edmund. Tom Licence, 'History and Hagiography in the Late Eleventh Century: The Life and Work of Herman the Archdeacon, Monk of Bury St Edmunds', *English Historical Review*, 124 (2009), 516-544, p. 540.

³⁰¹ The familiar phrase 'notum sit omnibus' is a jussive subjunctive usually translated in charter diplomatic as an imperative 'Know all'. Here I wish to emphasise its usage to indicate facts which 'should be known'. I translate 'ad' as 'as' here as.

³⁰² *Passio Sancti Edmundi*, vi, pp. 22-23.

pamphlet containing the *Memorial* can be read as an *apologia*, perhaps written by Prior Thomas, which emphasises the good governance of the abbey.³⁰³ Read in this way, Thomas, if indeed he was the memorialist, showcased his ability to make moral arguments through list making and demonstrated his knowledge of classical rhetoric.

On the whole, these purposes and prefatory statements are rather standard fare.³⁰⁴ They echo the classical traditions the middle ages inherited and, channelled through the example of Bede in England, reveal a great deal about what an author believed (or at least thought they believed) their purpose to be in writing history. Whilst they demand caution and should not be accepted in their minutiae as the thoughts, expectations, and aims of their writers, they nevertheless provide an insight into the rules, or perhaps the grammar, of how they approached their task as a whole. Yet, in spite of such caveats as raised by Burton that the Selby historian's purposes were 'undoubtedly more complex' than his stated desire to record how the church had been founded and who the founders were, the texts have nevertheless been approached largely along the lines which the authors themselves set out. To give but one example, again from the scholarship on Selby, Burton argued that there was 'no reason to believe that the author's purpose was anything other than stated'.³⁰⁵ Even in the instances of the St Mary's and Whitby Abbey texts, where their divergent descriptions of the same events makes their partiality and textual agendas more obvious, both texts have been seen as representative of attempts to record a communal memory of the foundation, and the themes which surrounded it, as the monks of the community at the time understood it.³⁰⁶ Problematic though the narratives are (especially in the case of Stephen's first-hand account of St Mary's foundation), they are nevertheless records of *their* memory of the past, or attempts to shape

³⁰³ Pickles, 'Were medieval lists Moral or Bureaucratic'. One drawback to this neat argument is the evidence of the hands which do not appear to support the thesis that the pamphlet was all written by one author.

³⁰⁴ For a survey of the topoi deployed see Antonia Gransden, 'Prologues in the Historiography', in *Legends, Tradition and History*, pp. 125-151.

³⁰⁵ *HSM*, p. xviii; Burton, 'Selby Abbey and its Historian', p. 53.

³⁰⁶ Burton, *Monastic Order in Yorkshire*, p. 289.

what their memory of the past should be which, with some jiggling, teasing and cross referencing, could therefore be disentangled to reveal the truth of the events that they described.

Nevertheless, a closer reading of the texts and a more thorough examination of the departures from the established tropes and topoi we have seen in the genre of foundation narratives offers significant scope for re-assessment. In every instance, we can be sure that the author knows the 'rules of the game' and, implicitly or explicitly, appears to wish to abide by them. It is, therefore, when they knowingly or unknowingly depart from those topoi and tropes, that they most clearly reveal their purposes. In what follows, I present a series of case studies which show how these three authors deviated from the norms in the construction of their narratives and offer reasons for why they may have done so. In none of these instances will we see authors strictly concerned with recording or shaping a memory of the foundation in its totality. Instead, all three texts served more immediate purposes which form a complex and heterogeneous relationship with the collective identity of the abbey, both at the time they were written, and in the texts' afterlives.

Chapter 4: The (absence of) the Pre-Conquest Past

One notable absence from the twelfth-century foundation stories of Whitby and St Mary's York is the importance of the pre-conquest past. As we have seen, Bede was a universal touchstone for twelfth-century monks and to the north. The monks at Durham, for example, were in the process of writing a past which drew a direct line between themselves and the earliest community surrounding St Cuthbert, and various of the key players in the final year of that story were the so-called revivers of the monastic past who travelled north from Evesham. In the Yorkshire narratives however, the importance of that past is muted. That past undoubtedly appears, as we have seen, but unlike at Durham, and unlike at the other institutions we have seen south of the River Humber, it does not appear that either the St Mary's or the Whitby narrative is particularly interested in explaining or strengthening those ties.

These two accounts are obviously related as the two monasteries were founded by and grew out of the same events. Much has been written about the differences between them, but in their presentation of the pre-conquest past, and in how it slots in to the community's memory, we can begin to approach a better understanding of why the narratives present the information they do in the way they do. These two different accounts differ markedly, and this difference has largely been explained by a conflict between the two communities which saw both sides of the dispute attempt to write the other out of their history in order to establish their status as independent institutions.³⁰⁷ That explanation is plausible, and, certainly, neither twelfth-century narrative mentions the existence of the other community. Indeed, the evidence of *Domesday Book* would suggest that the land of Prestby, later described by the Whitby monks as the land which formed the site of their monastery, was in 1086 in the hands of the monks of St Mary's York.³⁰⁸ Somehow, by agreement

³⁰⁷ For example, Burton, *Monastic Order in Yorkshire*, pp. 288–289.

³⁰⁸ British Library, Add MS 38816, ff 37–39r; edited in Janet Burton, 'A Confraternity List from St. Mary's Abbey, York', *Revue Bénédictine*, 89 (1979), 325–333.

or coercion, the Whitby monks, resident at Hackness at the time of *Domesday*, had secured that land. The surviving twelfth-century sources do not however suggest any bitter falling out over the issue, and it seems implausible that, of the three large Benedictine monasteries in Yorkshire, two could so quickly write out of their history a shared heritage. Nor do we have any record of a dispute. In fact, there are three pieces of evidence which put beyond any doubt the idea that there was a systematic removal of either monastery from the other's records. First is the evidence of the confraternity agreements mentioned briefly at the outset of this chapter. By the late twelfth century, both Whitby and St Mary's York were recorded as being in confraternity with each other in a list from St Mary's York.³⁰⁹ Fountains Abbey, which split from St Mary's York in the 1130s in acrimonious circumstances, is absent, as are the Cistercians more generally, but the list is not confined to Benedictine communities, nor is the basis of its composition geographical. At some point between the establishment of the monastery (the earliest dateable agreement was made between St Mary's York and Aldwin, abbot of Ramsey (1090x1112) and by the time of the copying of the list the two abbeys had made the active decision that they were friends and, for spiritual purposes, that the monks of each abbey should be treated as if they were members of the same community.³¹⁰ Secondly, we have the evidence of the mortuary roll of Matilda of Caen. This roll, which circulated around England and Normandy following the death of Abbess Matilda, the daughter of William the Conqueror, arrived at St Mary's shortly after the death of Stephen in 1112. The monks composed three verses and then listed the dead of their monastery beginning with Stephen, first abbot and founder of the monastery, followed by Prior Reinfrid.³¹¹ Even though the mortuary roll clearly indicates that it was Stephen who was believed to be founder of the monastery, the chapter at Whitby was not glossed over or skipped past and, just as Stephen's

³⁰⁹ British Library, Add MS 38816, f. 37r.

³¹⁰ Burton, 'A Confraternity List', p. 325.

³¹¹ Léopold Deslisle, *Rouleaux des morts du IX^e au XV^e siècle* (Paris, 1866), p. 198. A newer version of this text has been edited as Jean Dufour, *Recueil des Rouleaux des Morts (VIII^e siècle- 1536)*, 5 vols (Paris: Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, 2007) but I have been unable to consult this edition owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

narrative had done, the Whitby past was included within it. Thirdly, at Whitby too, we have recognition of the monastery's shared heritage with St Mary's. In the Whitby poem concerning the foundation of the community Stephen is one of only three men (along with Reinfrid and Serlo) who are remembered as monks of Whitby.³¹² Any suggestion, then, that either community had written out of history the shared period of the monasteries' past seems wide of the mark. The continued existence of the other community was simply not in either author's mind when they penned their accounts of their communities' foundations

Stephen of Whitby and the Anglo-Saxon Past

Stephen's treatment of the Anglo-Saxon past supplies some indication as to just what purpose he believed his narrative served. We have already seen how Stephen does make perfunctory statements relating to the Anglo-Saxon past, but they are worthy of a brief recap. During his description of Reinfrid's arrival at Jarrow, Stephen writes that Jarrow was a place once full of servants of God, 'amongst whom the venerable priest, Bede, flourished, who, for the edification of the faithful, expounded the many sacraments of the scriptures through the Holy Spirit'.³¹³ He then states that Whitby had been a place associated with ancient honour, and that Lastingham was once a site of great renown.³¹⁴ After that, his interest in the Bedan past almost entirely disappears. Beyond those perfunctory descriptions, Stephen shows no awareness, interest, or knowledge of Northumbrian monasticism or its Bedan golden age. At Lastingham, as at Whitby and at Hackness, we have a good survival of Anglo-Saxon stone which would very likely have been visible in the eleventh century.³¹⁵ Nothing Stephen says reveals any especial knowledge of Bedan sources;

³¹² See below, p. 128.

³¹³ '...inter quos etiam venerabilis presbiter Beda floruit, qui multa scripturarum sacramenta per Spiritum Sanctum edisserens ad edificationem fidelium...' Add MS 38816, f. 30r; *MA*, p. 545.

³¹⁴ Add MS 38816, f. 30r; *MA*, p. 545.

³¹⁵ *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Volume III: York and East Yorkshire*.

Stephen could simply be filling in the blanks by making the safe assumption that Anglo-Saxon stone likely indicated an Anglo-Saxon monastery.

If we follow the impression that Stephen gives, then the foundation of St Mary's York would be little more than the culmination of a series of pragmatic decisions and a relentless desire to seize the opportunities presented to him and his community; the pre-conquest monastic nature of Lastingham little more than the coincidence that Stephen's narrative, written after the move to York with the monks firmly settled there, presents it as. The difference between the motivations of Stephen and the motivations of Aldwin, Reinfrid, and Aelfwig (judged both by Symeon of Durham's telling and the archaeological survival at Jarrow) would be stark. Nor is this the only departure from the motivations of those three men. As Tom Licence has argued, in the difference between Stephen's descriptions of Whitby's early days and the *Whitby Memorial's* description of it, we can detect some conflict between contrasting eremitic and coenobitic ideals.³¹⁶ In Stephen's opinion Reinfrid was a holy man whose example bought honour to God, but Stephen is clear: Reinfrid had left Jarrow to go to Whitby because he desired to live as a hermit. It was this eremitic desire which then saw him happy to recommend Stephen as the new leader of the community because Reinfrid was reluctant to oversee a formal monastic community.³¹⁷ Stephen's subsequent explanation of how he was elected leader is therefore couched as an implicit rejection of the eremitic ideal: it was precisely because he did not share Reinfrid's desires that he rose to become abbot. In neither of the two Whitby versions of events, nor in Symeon's account of these foundations, is Reinfrid described as desiring to live as a hermit, but Stephen focuses on this information as a post-hoc rationalisation for his elevation to leadership of the community.³¹⁸

³¹⁶ Tom Licence, *Hermits and Recluses in English Society 950-1200* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) pp 58-59.

³¹⁷ Add MS 38816, f. 30v; *MA*, p. 545.

³¹⁸ If Reinfrid did indeed aspire to live as a hermit that would not be particularly surprising. Stories of eremitic types who begun religious life at a location before they were replaced with a more formal coenobitic worship are common. The key point here, however, is the different emphasis placed on Reinfrid's eremitism by Stephen whilst trying to justify his election, and the lack of focus given to it in the Whitby sources written, of course, by Whitby's own coenobitic community some years later.

Reinfrid's eremitism and his desire to live amongst Anglo-Saxon ruins were a black mark against him and a barrier to the long-term success of the Whitby community.

Of the three abbeys at the heart of this study, St Mary's York was by far the richest. At the time of the dissolution it was valued at £2,085 1s. 5³/₄d. making it the richest monastery in the north of England. The building blocks of that accumulation of wealth were in place by the time of Stephen's death.³¹⁹ He would, his narrative suggests, likely have been very happy with how rich and powerful his abbey became and throughout judges the success of monasteries by their wealth, lands, and ability to attract patronage and support. Cynically, one might think this proved every accusation that would come to be levelled against Stephen and Benedictine abbots of his ilk by Bernard of Clairvaux and the Cistercian reformers in the coming decades. More forgivingly, one might think of it as a pragmatic understanding that the *opus dei* and the monastery's pastoral function could be better carried out with more money. With either explanation, Stephen's primary concern was not the imitation of a monastic golden age, but cold hard cash and where to find it. What is interesting is that this debate was to play out so quickly in the abbey's history. In Archbishop Thurstan's letter to William of Corbeil, archbishop of Canterbury, concerning the exodus of monks from St Mary's to Fountains led by Prior Richard, he explains how the brothers had become dissatisfied with life at the new foundation fearing that the rapid accumulation of wealth prevented them from living as strict a life as they desired.³²⁰ As Christopher Norton has pointed out, anti-reformists are recorded by Thurstan to have objected to the claims made by Richard by comparing their abbey to Cluny, Marmoutier, Canterbury, Winchester, and St Albans; this is an expectational constellation of abbeys to place St Mary's alongside — it had after all only been founded 50 years prior to these

³¹⁹ 'Houses of Benedictine monks: Abbey of St Mary, York', in *A History of the County of York: Volume 3*, ed. William Page (London, 1974), pp. 107-112.

³²⁰ *Memorials of the Abbey of St. Mary of Fountains*, ed. by John Richard Walbran Surtees Society 42 (1863), pp. 11-29.

events.³²¹ Thurstan himself objects to the comparison, but it is a remarkable example of the self-fashioning of St Mary's identity which had begun under Stephen of Whitby. The impression of him as a coenobitically minded, ambitious founder who was steeped in a Benedictine understanding of monasticism is buttressed by the evidence that the generation of monks which followed him (or more accurately some of them) also shared the same understanding of the point of St Mary's York: this was to be a wealthy, powerful institution and, in truth, neither Whitby nor Lastingham could possibly provide the conditions to achieve that aim.

It is, nevertheless, worth bearing in mind that Stephen's narrative would have looked rather different had the community remained at Lastingham, which for the majority of the rather substantial time they were present there it looked as if they were set to do. If we are to take Stephen's own chronology literally, then the monks would have spent about eight years at Lastingham, from the point when Stephen became their leader 'a few days' after he arrived at Whitby in 1078, to 1086 when *Domesday Book* records Stephen as the Abbot of York. The reality, though, is that the stay was likely a few years shorter than that. As Nicholas Karn has argued, Stephen's use of the phrase 'after a few days' should not be taken literally and likely conceals the passing of a few years. It is probable, therefore, that Stephen left Whitby with his followers for Lastingham not much earlier than 1080, making their stay at Lastingham one of roughly five years. Every indication is that the monks believed those five years to be the first five years of a long history of their new abbey. Whilst there, Stephen states, it was agreed that his position as head of the community should be formalised and that he should be made abbot. Concurrently, the monks began work on the construction of an abbey church, the unfinished remains of which would later be used for the foundation of the parish church at Lastingham, and the monks entered into

³²¹ Christopher Norton, 'Richard of Fountains and the Letter of Thurstan: History and Historiography of a Monastic Controversy, St Mary's Abbey, York, 1132', in *Perspectives for an Architecture of Solitude: Essays on Cistercians, Art and Architecture in Honour of Peter Fergusson*, ed. by Terryl Kinder (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), pp. 9–33, p. 28.

confraternity with the Durham monks.³²² Stephen compresses the time that the monks spent there to make it appear as if Alan Rufus offered St Olaf's church very shortly after the monks arrived at Lastingham, but the extent of the archaeological remains there belies the skimming treatment with which Stephen deals with it.³²³ By the time the monks moved on work had been finished on the crypt, and significant progress had been made on the apse, parts of the nave, presbytery aisles and transepts before the work was abandoned.³²⁴ The Lastingham chapter of St Mary's history was largely forgotten — even though it would appear that construction work continued at the site after the community had left for York and the monks continued to hold the site as a cell.³²⁵ Had Stephen written a narrative of the foundation with the monks at Lastingham, perhaps at a monastery dedicated in honour of St Cedd — although the parish church at Lastingham shares the dedication to Mary of York Abbey — our picture of the permanence of that settlement and Stephen's attitude towards the pre-conquest past might indeed look very different.³²⁶

This explanation might go some way to explaining the thoughts of Stephen of Whitby, but it does not fully satisfy. There is a more tantalising explanation, however, for Stephen's lack of interest in the Anglo-Saxon past at York; an explanation which may also draw in and explain the Lastingham chapter in the abbey's history. As R. H. C. Davis has argued, regardless of how Stephen describes it, the way his community moved from Whitby, then to Lastingham, and then on to York looks like an attempt to restore pre-conquest monastic sites.³²⁷ Stephen's presentation of the events,

³²² *Durham Liber Vitae*, London British Library MS Cotton Domitian A VII: Edition and Digital Facsimile with Introduction, Codicological, Prosopographical and Linguistic Commentary and Indexes, eds. by David Rollason and Lynda Rollason (London: The British Library, 2007), f. 52r2.

³²³ Richard Gem and Malcolm Thurlby, 'The Early Monastic Church of Lastingham', in *Yorkshire Monasticism, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*, ed. L. R. Hoey, British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions 16, (1995), 31–9.

³²⁴ Harrison and Norton, 'Lastingham and the Architecture'.

³²⁵ Ibid, p. 87. As Harrison and Norton point out the claim that Lastingham was not a parish church until the 1220s rests upon its appearance again in historic record.

³²⁶ The appearance of the monks in the Durham Liber Vitae would indicate that the monastery at Lastingham shared the Whitby community's designation to St Peter. Bede reports that the Anglo-Saxon monastery had been constructed in honour of St Mary. *HE* iii. 23, pp. 288–289.

³²⁷ RHC Davis, 'Bede after Bede', p. 109. Davis's argument that the York move is an obvious step to revive an Anglo-Saxon monastery appears rather weak, however.

though, was one constructed with the benefit of the hindsight of the final move to York; his interests in recording why the monks had ended up there extended only as far as what he needed to explain why they should stay there.

It is often said that precisely what was to be found on the land that became the seat of St Mary's York is an open question. According to the 'D' recension of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, in 1055 Earl Siward died in York and was buried in a church at Galmahoe he had built and consecrated in the name of God and St Olaf. That church was the church which Alan Rufus gave to Stephen of Whitby which saw the abbey relocate from Lastingham to York, before they moved on again to the land next door given to them by William Rufus. Some five hundred years following the foundation, John Leland was to record that it had been a place marked out for use as a cesspit and where criminals were punished.³²⁸ But in *Eboracum*, Francis Drake instead showed that, by the mid-fourteenth century at least, Galmahoe was recognised as being the ancient name of the gate to the city now, and indeed then, known as Bootham Bar.³²⁹ In fact, Drake was aware of a rather earlier piece of evidence for this claim through Leland's notes, but was seemingly unaware of the source. For a chronicle of St Mary's York, now MS Bodley 39, mentioned above for its inclusion of a copy of Stephen's narrative, records in an entry for 1266 how on 'the day before the kalends of June in the same year [i.e. 31 May 1266] it was undertaken to build stone walls surrounding the abbey of St Mary of York, beginning from the church of St Olaf's and stretching to the gate of the city of that same place which is called Galmanlith'³³⁰ There is evidence here that the Roman gate which stood on the site of Bootham Bar opened out into an intermural area with a very large second set of walls running along what became the abbey precinct to at least as far as the old Roman road

³²⁸ Ubi nunc est cenobium Sancti Mariae tempore Gulielmi Nothi locus ejiciendis sordibus destinatus et in quo solebant de fontibus supplicium sumere. Leland, *Collectanea* 4 p. 36.

³²⁹ Francis Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 257.

³³⁰ inceptus est murus petrinus circuiens Abbatiam sancte Marie eboracensis, incipiens ab ecclesia sancti olavi et tendens verus portam civitatis eiusdem loci quae vocabatur Galmanlith', *Chronicle of St Mary's York*, p. 8. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 39, f. 122v.

which is now Bootham, and possibly beyond it to the north-east.³³¹ That section of land may have served as the precursor to the land which Drake pointed out had once been called Earlsburgh which was, potentially, but not certainly, the residence of Earl Siward and his predecessors at York.³³² At any rate, the evidence is of an intra-mural complex which, in time, became the location of St Olave's church.

There is however some evidence of ecclesiastical settlement pre-dating the foundation of St Olave's and interest of the Minster community in that part of York. According to the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, St Cuthbert was given 'all the land which lies from the wall of the church of St Peter's all the way up to the great gate towards the west and from the wall of the church of St Peter's up to the walls of the city towards the South' by King Ecgfrith and Archbishop Theodore.³³³ That gift of land has previously been identified with the churches of All Saint's Pavement and St Mary Castlegate which Domesday evidence suggests was held by Durham, but both those churches lie South East of the Minster not, as the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto* states, to the South West.³³⁴ If we take the *Historia* literally, and if we accept that 'Earlsburgh' was intra- rather than extra- mural then we are looking at the Minster community having an interest in the area prior to the conquest.³³⁵ To that conjecture we can add a rather more certain fact; a 1914 excavation outside what is now the Yorkshire Museum found fragments of Anglo-Saxon cross stone dating from the ninth or tenth century. This cross stone must pre-date the foundation of St Olave's and is identical

³³¹ *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in City of York, Volume 1, Eboracum, Roman York*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1962), 5-47. *British History Online* [accessed May 18, 2020, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/york/vol1/pp.5-47> (13)].

³³² Francis Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 257. R. A. Hall, 'The Making of Domesday York', in *Anglo-Saxon Settlements*, ed. by D. Hooke (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), pp. 233-47, pp. 235-236.

³³³ 'Et rex Ecgfrith et Theodorus archiepiscopus dederunt sancto Cuthberto in Ebeoraca civitate totam terram quae iacet a muro aeclesiae sancti Petri usque ad magnam portam uersus occidentem, et a muro aeclesiae sancti petri usque ad muram civitatis versus austrum. *HSC* 5.

³³⁴ David Hall, 'The Community of St Cuthbert' (Oxford: Unpublished PhD Thesis, 1984), p. 54.

³³⁵ It is also possible that the interior set of walls lay in ruin at this point which could make the external set of walls the outer limits of the city. As pointed out in the RHCME report, the early-medieval records for York's walls paint a confused picture and may deploy literary flourish. *Inventory of the Historical Monuments in City of York, Volume 2, the Defences* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1972), pp. 7-34. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/york/vol2/pp7-34> [accessed 18 May 2020].

in style to several surviving examples from York Minster, St Denys, and St Mary Bishophill Junior.³³⁶ Whilst neither of these two pieces of evidence put the matter beyond doubt, there is at least some evidence to point towards an Anglo-Saxon church that pre-dated the foundation of St Olave's on land that may have had a relation to the Minster.

The bitter dispute with the cathedral community regarding the ownership of the land which was to become the seat of the abbey became the central focus of Stephen's narrative. As Christopher Norton has argued, it is notable that despite the many troubles faced by Stephen and his followers in the years moving from Whitby to York it is Archbishop Thomas for whom he reserves the most hostility; the archbishop's claims were a grave and existential threat to the future of the abbey at York.³³⁷ The resolution of that dispute at the Christmas court of 1093 saw Stephen explicitly name the number of archbishops, bishops, abbots, barons and archdeacons who attended; by comparison he mentioned just eight people by name at the foundation ceremony of 1088 and remarked that many others had also attended.³³⁸ Norton argues that Archbishop Thomas contested Stephen's claims so vigorously because he feared that the monks of St Mary's may have intended to make one final move in to the city to displace the cathedral clerks with a monastic community in the image of Durham's newly founded cathedral priory.³³⁹ By Norton's own admission that possibility is conjecture and it must be reckoned unlikely that a change of that kind could have occurred without the approval of the bishop himself. The lack of any supporting evidence that Stephen, King William, or Lanfranc made any move towards that end also perhaps goes against the theory. At any rate, however, the dispute was acrimonious. For such an early eleventh-century gift, we have a surprisingly large number of early charters which support the claim to the land and substantiate the rights conferred to the monks by Alan Rufus and confirmed by William Rufus

³³⁶ 'St Mary's Abbey 01, York' Corpus of Anglo Saxon-Sculpture vol III, p. 111.

³³⁷ Christopher Norton, *Archbishop Thomas of Bayeux* (York: Borthwick Papers 100, 2001), p. 7.

³³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 7.

³³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 8.

and from them we can begin to speculate on the battle lines the two sides drew up. There is also the rare survival, in an *inspeximus* of Henry VI, of the writ charter issued by William the Conqueror granting the church of St Olave's and the manor of Clifton to Alan Rufus.³⁴⁰ Shortly after, Alan Rufus then passed this land on to the abbey, but died in 1093 with the abbey's future still uncertain.³⁴¹ The same *inspeximus* also therefore recorded a copy of Alan Niger's confirmation of Alan Rufus's grant and his own supplement to that gift.³⁴² In turn, these were subsequently confirmed by William Rufus in a series of charters of more questionable authenticity which will be discussed in due course.³⁴³ The essential point here is that the claim of St Mary's York to the land on which they were settled was entirely a Norman one, whereas York Minster's claim likely relied on a pre-conquest claim. It was in Stephen's interest to construct the identity of the abbey purely in the context of the Norman Conquest. The pre-conquest past was, if anything, a problem for him and weakened the claim he was advancing against the Minster. Stephen knew the topoi he could deploy, but eschewed them in his narrative because his immediate aims were not concerned with explaining the theophany which made St Mary's York suitable, tying his new foundation to the golden age of Bede, or in trying to write out the Whitby/Hackness monks, but — instead — protecting his community and his monastery from what would have been a very immediate, existential threat. Here was a crisis which led to the creation of an identity suitable to counteract it: the events that he described were therefore channelled through that lens. That identity, though, was one forged and crystallised through the dispute itself. Crisis and conflict have long been recognised as moments where identity can become fixed, and, of all these narrative accounts, Stephen's narrative of St Mary's York adheres most closely to this model. Moreover, as we saw in Chapter 1, it is Stephen's narrative, of all the narratives in this study, that we can see being copied, re-copied, and passed down through generations of monks at the abbey which he founded. Here,

³⁴⁰ This writ charter is one of only two authentic writ charters issued to lay persons by William the Conqueror which survives. Bates, *Regesta* No 8.

³⁴¹ Alan Rufus's death is often given as 1089, but Richard Sharpe has definitively proven that it occurred in 1093.

³⁴² Calendar of the Patent Rolls 1429-1436, p. 362.

³⁴³ See below.

more than at Selby or at Whitby, a narrative can be observed as forming a long-lived part of the abbey's commemoration of their foundation.

Nevertheless, when we turn to the abbey's service books, we can see that the events of the foundation process which Stephen did not dwell on also formed a part of the abbey's liturgy. St Olaf, to whom the original church the St Mary's monks settled in York was dedicated, evidently retained a cult at the abbey.³⁴⁴ No *vitae* from St Mary's York survive, and we are unfortunate that a surviving Book of Hours from the abbey is badly damaged, but between the *Ordinale* and two litanies, one certainly from St Mary's York and one possibly so — but at the very least from one of its dependencies — we can glimpse the abbey's interest in Olaf. At St Mary's York, as elsewhere, his feast was celebrated on 29 July; this is the date given in MS Latin Liturg G1, and — if there are some doubts about the relationship of that manuscript to liturgical observance at St Mary's itself — the same date can also be inferred from the placement of his feast in the chronological list of feasts in the *Ordinale* between the feast of the commemoration of St Paul on 30 June and the feast of St Peter in chains on 1 August.³⁴⁵ Both Rawlinson C 553 and Latin Liturg G1 contain a litany of saints with Olaf ranked second from last after St Edmund and St Oswald but before St Thomas.³⁴⁶ Besides St Mary's York, St Olaf appears rarely in monastic litanies in England. He also appears in a litany from Chertsey, Thetford, and in two unidentified Cluniac litanies.³⁴⁷ We have one further shred of evidence for St Olaf's cult at St Mary's preserved in a monk of Bury St Edmund's fourteenth-century description of the stained glass windows in St Mary's church which is now London, College of Arms MS Arundel XXX.³⁴⁸ His description reads 'Oswaldus rogitet et

³⁴⁴ The most extensive study of St Olaf's cult in recent years is Lenka Jiroušková, *Der heilige Wikingerkönig Olav Haraldsson und sein hagiographisches Dossier*, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 2014). 'Olaf' *English Monastic Litanies of the Saints after 1100*, 3 vols, ed. by Nigel J. Morgan (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2018).

³⁴⁵ *Ordinale*, i, p. 11.

³⁴⁶ Rawlinson C 553, f. 121v; Latin Liturg G1, f. 141r.

³⁴⁷ It is possible that one of these litanies is from Bermondsey. For all four See *English Monastic Litanies of the Saints after 1100*.

³⁴⁸ The list appears in full in George Benson 'The Ancient Painted Glass Windows in the Minster and the Churches of the City of York', *Yorkshire Philosophical Society Annual Report 1914*, (1915), pp. 182-184.

et [sic] Olavus nos ope ditet, chuticolas [sic] a ve salve rex martyr Olave [Oswald asks and Olaf enriches us with help, martyr king Olaf save Christians from woe].³⁴⁹ According to the *Ordinale*, St Olaf's feast was celebrated in albs, and his place in the litany also suggests that his cult was not especially important in the St Mary's liturgy, but it was present and its enduring interest at the abbey existed because of the events of the abbey's foundation and despite the dissemination of Stephen's text.

Whitby and St Hilda

The Bedan past is also conspicuously absent from the supposed *narratio fundationis* of Whitby Abbey. More than either St Mary's York or Selby, the Whitby monks had a good deal of pre-conquest, Bedan material with which to work. By the twelfth-century, Whitby had come to be recognised as the location of the monastery of Streoneshalh.³⁵⁰ Streoneshalh, Bede says, was one of twelve churches which owed its origins to a vow made by the Northumbrian king Oswiu before the battle of Winwæd in 655.³⁵¹ Two years later, the abbey had been founded and dedicated to St Peter, and Hilda, abbess of the nearby community of Hartlepool, became its first abbess.³⁵² The abbey flourished under the abbacy of Hilda, and it became one of the most famous of

³⁴⁹ I am grateful to Rosalind Love for the suggestion that 'chuticolas' may be a misreading by the Bury scribe for 'crucicolas'.

³⁵⁰ There is little doubt whatsoever that Streoneshalh was a monastic community of some repute, but despite the discovery of an extensive, important Anglo-Saxon monastic site at the location on the abbey headland in the 1920s, concerns have more recently been expressed about whether it was at Whitby. Charles Peers, Courtney Arthur Ralegh Radford, 'The Saxon Monastery of Whitby', *Archaeologia*, 89 (1943), 27–88. For the argument in favour of Strensall near York see Paul S. Barnwell, Christopher J. Dunn and Lawrence Butler, 'The Confusion of Conversion: Streanæshalch, Strensall and Whitby and the Northumbrian Church', in *The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD 300-1300*, ed. by Martin Carver (York: York Medieval Press, 2003), pp. 311–326. This argument is unconvincing on several grounds however, for a summary of some of the problems see James Campbell, 'The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD 300-1300 (Review)', *The English Historical Review*, 120 (2005), 106–108.

³⁵¹ *HE*, 4.25.

³⁵² For the life of Hilda a description of Streoneshalh and the poet Caedmon see *HE*, iv, 23–4, pp. 404–421. Bede's phrasing is frequently odd when discussing the early history of Streoneshalh and this has led to speculation about whether the information given above is quite as straightforward as this presentation allows. See Christine E Fell, 'Hild, abbess of Streonæshalch', in *Hagiography and Medieval Literature: a Symposium: Proceedings of the Fifth International Symposium organized by the Centre for the Study of Vernacular Literature in the Middle Ages held at Odense University on 17-18 November 1980*, ed. by Hans Bekker-Nielsen, Peter Foote, Jørgen Højgaard J.O. Srgensen and Tore Nyberg (Odense: Odense University Press, 1981), pp. 76–99.

Northumbria's monastic institutions and the location of the famous synod of 664. It went on to become a royal mausoleum, produced many bishops and was the home of Caedmon, who Bede singled out for praise, and who has gone down in history as the first English poet whose name is known.³⁵³

Nevertheless, no author connects Whitby to Streoneshalh until the eleventh century, and Hilda's reputation for sanctity was not solidly established. Bede had mentioned her praiseworthy and virtuous character, but he had also, strictly speaking, stopped short of calling her a saint. She was simply one of several quasi-saintly figures who appear in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*.³⁵⁴ Hilda's cult does not appear to have been especially popular, either. Prior to the conquest there is only the slightest hint of a *vita*. She has a feast day recorded in only one kalendar and is entirely absent from litanies.³⁵⁵ The kalendar Hilda does appear in, the so called kalendar of St Willibrord, also provides a problem. It clearly is a product of the Abbey of Echternach (modern day Luxembourg). On first glance, Echternach is an odd place from which the only evidence of the veneration of Hilda's cult should survive, but (as has long been recognised) the abbey was linked closely to Deira by virtue of the abbey's foundation by Saint Willibrord. Willibrord's monastic life began as a child oblate at the Yorkshire abbey of Ripon, but he is rather better known for his missionary career which led him, eventually, to become the archbishop of Frisia and abbot of Echternach.³⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the kalendar of St Willibrord contains many names related either to Deira or to Willibrord directly and suggests that Willibrord never forgot his origins.³⁵⁷ For example, the kalendar contains entries for people who had a personal relationship to Willibrord, such as his father Wilgislus, and other

³⁵³ E.G. Stanley, 'Caedmon (fl. c. 670)' ODNB; *HE* iv 24, pp. 414–421. A useful summary of what is known about seventh and eighth century Whitby is provided by Alban Gautier, 'Whitby monastère dynastique. Rois et abbesses dans la Northumbrie du vii^e siècle', *Le prince chrétien de Constantin aux royautés barbares (IV^e-VIII^e siècle): Travaux et mémoires*, 22 (2018), 357–377.

³⁵⁴ *HE*. 4.23.

³⁵⁵ J. E. Cross, 'A Lost Life of Hilda of Whitby: the Evidence of the Old English Martyrology', *Acta*, 6 (1979), 21–43.

³⁵⁶ Marios Costambeys, Willibrord [St Willibrord] (657/8–739) ODNB.

³⁵⁷ Rebecca Rushforth, *Saints in English Kalendars Before AD 1100* (Woodbridge: Boydell 2008), p. 18; Table XI November, p. x.

leading lights of the Northumbrian church, such as Hilda.³⁵⁸ Hilda is not identified as a virgin, as she frequently is in post-conquest manuscripts, or a saint of any sort: she is simply an abbess. That information should not be over-interpreted, for, as Catherine Cubitt has argued, the Willibrord kalendar is not systematic in its treatment of who is designated as 'sanctus' and the omission of the term does not always indicate that it is one of the kalendar's 'personal' entries, but strictly speaking the Willibrord kalendar may be little more than proof that Hilda was a notable figure in religious circles in the seventh century.³⁵⁹ If that was the case, then it is a fact Bede already adequately attests, and, at most, the evidence of the kalendar provides proof of a localised, Northumbrian cult of Hilda.

While the evidence of preconquest veneration of Hilda is limited, the evidence from postconquest manuscripts is more solid. She appears in kalendars from Chester, Durham, Evesham, Glastonbury, Peterborough, Westminster, and St Mary's, York.³⁶⁰ But Hilda's cult breaking out from Yorkshire created a different problem for the Whitby monks: Glastonbury Abbey. Glastonbury tradition suggested that — at some point long before the turn of the millennium — Hilda's relics had been brought to the abbey where they now were kept. Glastonbury's monks could not quite remember how the relics had got there, but they were certain that they had them. William of Malmesbury recorded in the *Gesta Pontificum* how Hilda's body was bought back by Edmund I (d. 946) alongside the body of Ceolfrith. But in the *De Antiquitate Glastoniensis Ecclesie* he stated that the abbey had acquired the relics in 754 because Tica, who would later go on to become an abbot of Glastonbury, had collected the relics and bought them to Glastonbury as he

³⁵⁸ *The Calendar of St Willibrord from MS Paris. Lat. 10837: Facsimile with Transcription, Introduction and Notes*, ed. by HA Wilson (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1998).

³⁵⁹ Catherine Cubitt, 'Universal and Local Saints in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, eds. by Richard Sharpe and Alan Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 423–53.

³⁶⁰ 'Hilda' in *English Monastic Litanies of the Saints after 1100*, vol iii, ed. by Nigel Morgan (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2018), p. 136.

feared that they would be destroyed by Viking raiders.³⁶¹ Some centuries later, John of Glastonbury recorded in his chronicle dating from around 1340 that Edmund gave Glastonbury Hilda's relics, and attributed to Tica donations of less important saints, and in a fourteenth-century relic list from the abbey, which survives as British Library, Cotton MS Titus D VII ff. 2r-13v, the relics and Hilda are also identified as having been gifted by Edmund.³⁶² A further relic list written in a fourteenth-century hand, but appearing to be based upon an inventory taken in the thirteenth century, does likewise.³⁶³ Throughout the course of the middle ages, the rough parts of the story were smoothed out and a cohesive narrative which favoured royal involvement in the translation over Tica's anachronistic intervention began to emerge, but the broad outlines of the story remained unchanged. They had Hilda's body, amongst almost every other Northumbrian saint or quasi-saint, and they acquired it a long time ago; Hilda appears amongst Glastonbury's relics in every source in which Glastonbury's relics are mentioned and continues to do so long after the re-foundation of Whitby Abbey. How, then, could the Whitby monks claim to be the spiritual successors of Hilda's community when she had centuries ago left the building? Beyond the brief notes discussed above we lack from Glastonbury a proper account of Hilda's translation, but in the Tica version of Glastonbury's tradition we can at least observe one of the typical justifications for the translation of relics: Hilda's body had to be moved because it was in danger.³⁶⁴ We know nothing about what the Glastonbury monks thought the exact circumstances of the translation were. It is doubtful that by the twelfth century even they knew, but it would not be surprising if they also justified keeping

³⁶¹ GP 91.8; Thomas, *Cult of Saints' Relics*, pp. 172-173. William of Malmesbury, *De antiquitate Glastonie ecclesie* ed and trans. by John Scott [The Early History of Glastonbury: An Edition, Translation and Study] (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1981).

³⁶² MS Titus D VII f. 5v; James Carley and Martin Howley, 'Relics at Glastonbury in the Fourteenth Century: An Annotated edition of British Library Cotton Titus D.vii fols 2r-13v', *Arthurian Literature*, 16 (1998), 83-129 (reprinted in *Glastonbury Abbey and the Arthurian Tradition*, ed. by James Carley (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2001) 569-616), p. 588, 598.

³⁶³ Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.5.33, ff. 104r-105v; James Carley, 'Relics at Glastonbury in the fourteenth century: an annotated edition of British Library, Cotton Titus D.vii, fols. 2r-13v.', in *Glastonbury Abbey and the Arthurian Tradition*, ed. by James Carley (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), 569-616, p. 571; Julia Crick, 'The Marshalling of Antiquity: Glastonbury's Historical Dossier', in *The Archaeology and History of Glastonbury Abbey* eds. by Lesley Abrams and James P Carley (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1991), pp. 217-43.

³⁶⁴ Geary, *Furta Sacra*, p. 114.

the relics at Glastonbury using the other common justification of relic translation: Hilda's relics had arrived at Glastonbury because she had consented to them being taken there, so why, then, should the monks give them back?³⁶⁵

Given these problems, we might expect the Whitby monks to tackle the issue head on in their *narratio foundationis*, and it might be expected, therefore, that the monks would attempt to establish links to the pre-conquest foundation, enhance Hilda's reputation as a saint, and seek to compress the time to the Bedan golden age of their monastery in their foundation narrative. These links were tenuous and needed to be solidified.

The acquisition of relics of the patron saint was a necessary step and evidently Whitby believed by the fourteenth century they had acquired Hilda's relics, when a missal — one of the few surviving books from Whitby — records their presence.³⁶⁶ When the monks of Whitby came to believe that they did so is unclear, but Hugh Candidus, who travelled from Peterborough to Whitby in 1149 on the election of Prior Richard as the new abbot of Peterborough, recorded that Hilda lay at Esce — presumably the river Esk at the mouth of which Whitby lay.³⁶⁷ The Whitby missal contains two entries in the kalendar for feasts of Hilda on 25 August and 17 November. Both are principal feasts but only the feast in November has an Octave.³⁶⁸ The observance of both feasts is common to several kalendars but by some margin the preference is given to the date in November; kalendars from Chester, Durham, Evesham, Glastonbury Peterborough, Westminster and St Mary's York record her feast as being on that day. Conversely, 25 August is given as the date of a feast for Hilda only in this kalendar, a kalendar from Guisborough and a kalendar from St Michael's Mount.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁵ Geary, *Furta Sacra*, pp. 124-128.

³⁶⁶ A mass set in the missal is directed to St Peter and St Paul the blessed virgins Hilda and Bega and the 'other saints' who rest at Whitby. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawl Liturg B. 1, ff. 274r-v.

³⁶⁷ Hugh Candidus, *Chronicle*, p. 63.

³⁶⁸ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawl Liturg B. 1, f. 7v, 9r.

³⁶⁹ *English Monastic Litanies of the Saints after 1100*, ed. by Nigel Morgan (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2018), iii, p. 136.

The suspicion is that one of these two dates must refer to a translation, and this suspicion is confirmed by a French charter issued by Henry de Percy, first duke of Northumberland, in favour of the abbey, dated to 25 August 1386 ‘en la feste del translacion Seint Hylde’. Whether this date was the translation of Hilda’s relics from Whitby initially or back to Whitby again is unclear, but it is more likely the latter.³⁷⁰ Several Whitby charters included amongst the thirteenth-century core of the Abbot’s Book record that benefactors gave gifts to the abbey by laying their hands on all of the relics of the abbey, but who the relics pertain to is never specified.³⁷¹ There is only one reference to how the abbey acquired Hilda’s relics. It appears in a genealogy of the Percy family recorded amongst Dodsworth’s notes on the abbey. It is not definitively a source with a Whitby origin, for the Percy family had, by the time of Dodsworth’s endeavours, taken an interest in their own history and been involved with the production of genealogies intended to glorify their family.³⁷² Dodsworth gives no source for the genealogy and appears not to have copied it in its entirety, for it breaks off mid-folio after a description of Henry de Percy (d. 1198) with an ‘et cetera’. Dodsworth’s genealogy begins with William de Percy, the founder of the abbey, coming to England, and goes on to state that William de Percy, the first abbot, had ‘miraculously acquired the head, an arm, and two ribs of Hilda from Glastonbury’.³⁷³ What that miracle was we cannot know, but the acquisition of Hilda’s relics by the first abbot would be a necessary step in the creation of the abbey proper.

We are frustrated in attempts to trace when and how the community believed that those relics had been acquired, and we are met with silence on the matter by the *Memorial*. As we saw in the previous chapter, Hilda’s community at Whitby does not feature heavily in the *Memorial*, and no attempt

³⁷⁰ Whitby Cartulary, DLXII p. 501.

³⁷¹ For example, Whitby Cartulary LXX, p. 64; Abbot’s Book, f. 17r.

³⁷² Dodsworth MS 159, f. 114r. For William Peeris, the verse chronicler of the Percy family, see Henry Summerson, ‘William Peeris (fl. 1520)’ *ODNB*. For a discussion of one of these Percy genealogies see A. S. G. Edwards, ‘A Verse Chronicle of the House of Percy’, *Studies in Philology*, 105.2 (2008), 226–44.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, f. 114v.

whatsoever is made to give the reader a history of Hilda herself, save in the terms of the dedication of the monastery. If we take the *Memorial* as the *narratio fundationis* of the monastery — as indeed most, if not all, studies of Whitby have — then we would be forced to conclude that Whitby's links to Hilda did not form an important enough strand of the monastery's memory of the past to merit mention in the story of how the current iteration of monks had arrived at Whitby.³⁷⁴ True, it may be argued, that the *Memorial* is simply a fragment of a longer text, but it survives in a clearly coherent form. We have the beginning, we have a smooth transition to a middle, and we have an end. If the *Memorial* is but a shorter version of a longer text it is one which has been selectively put together, and those decisions themselves might tell us something about what the community thought the most important bits of the story really were. Those important bits do not include Hilda.

At this point, it is worth considering exactly what the *Memorial* is because, as a closer examination of the text shows, the *Memorial* text is not a *narratio fundationis* and in fact bears a much closer resemblance to a *pancarte*. *Pancartes* are documents which preserve several original texts in one document. Strictly speaking a *pancarte* is a document which reproduces the texts of multiple original charters and includes the diplomatic of its originals, typically on a single, very large, piece of parchment.³⁷⁵ The Whitby text is not an example of this sort of *pancarte*. It neither attempts to copy documents out in full, nor is it contained on a single sheet. However, applied more loosely, a *pancarte* can simply be a synthesised record of multiple gifts recorded in a single text. That desire to organise, synthesise, and compile in one document the contents of multiple original charters is similar to the impetus which ultimately led to the creation of cartularies. In some sense then, some *pancartes* could be considered examples of a proto-cartulary. Indeed, francophone scholarship, which has led the way on the study of *pancartes*, has long seen this form of document thus. Michel

³⁷⁴ Burton, *Monastic Order in Yorkshire*, p. 13.

³⁷⁵ Bates, *Regesta*, pp. 22-23.

Parisse first dubbed various *pancartes* as types of '*pancarte- cartulaire*' or '*pré-cartulaire*', and his definition has subsequently been accepted by Bertrand, Bourlet, and Hélyar, and more recently, by Bouchard.³⁷⁶ It is, in this sense, that the Whitby *Memorial* is a *pancarte*.

It is the list which follows the narrative which is crucial to this identification. The list is extensive and rather tedious, but it is an integral part of the *Memorial* text and around two times the length of the narrative portion. Returning to the manuscript confirms this impression. Like the library catalogue which precedes the *Memorial*, the twelfth-century memorial text is written in a black ink in a compressed hand. It begins with a green 'N' in 'Notum' which descends some ten lines along the left hand margin and is decorated with red and brown strapwork which looks if not quite floral then something approaching it. The narrative discussed covers a folio and a half. A hand which is very similar, if not identical, to the hand of the main text, has glossed the text on two occasions with 'nothi' above the word 'Bastard' in the name of William the Bastard and, in the same coloured ink, added 'in provincia Merciorum' above Evesham. The name of William de Percy, the first abbot, has also been overwritten in red ink having initially been entered as part of the main text. The list begins with a capital 'V' in 'villam' in a green ink. The next coloured capital is a red 'V' (again in the word 'villam') and a blue 'E' in 'Ecclesiam'. The capitals then alternate red and blue and are usually for an 'E' in the word 'Ex Dono' — for example in the sentence 'Ex dono Roberti de Pichot filii Pichot de Perci ecclesiam de Sutton' — or an 'I' which identifies in which vill the abbey had been given land. Unlike the overwritten 'William' which occurs in the 'narrative section' of the *Memorial* the scribe has left space for these initials to be filled in. The eye of the reader is repeatedly drawn to the list and not to the narrative. It begins by listing the abbey's closest

³⁷⁶ Michel Parisse, 'Les pancartes. Etude d'un type d'acte diplomatique', in *Pancartes monastiques des XI^e et XII^e siècles: Table ronde organisée par l'ARTEM, 6-7 juillet 1994, Nancy* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1998), pp. 1-62; Paul Bertrand, Caroline Bourlet & Xavier Hélyar, 'Vers une typologie des cartulaires médiévaux', in *Les Cartulaires méridionaux*, ed. by Daniel Le Blévec (Paris: Publications de l'École nationale des chartes, 2006); Bouchard, *Rewriting Saints and Ancestors*, p. 20.

possessions: the vill and port of Whitby; Overbi, and Nedhrebi³⁷⁷, that is Stainsacre; Thingwala³⁷⁸, Larpool; Helredale; Gnip, that is Hawsker; Normanby, Fyling, and the other Fyling³⁷⁹; Bertwait, Setwait, Sneaton, Ugglebarnby, Sowerby³⁸⁰, Ruswarp, Newholm, Stakesby, Baldebi, Breck, Flowergate, Dunsley' and continues onwards. Following the list of villis is a list of churches, mills, and forests owned by the Whitby monks. It begins with the hermitage at Mulgrave and Eskdale, states that the monks owned the forest of Whitby, and the parish church of St Mary's (on the boundaries of the abbey land on the cliffs above Whitby). It states that Whitby owned six chapels and their appurtenances, various mills, and the churches of St Mary's and St Peter's in Hackness. Many of these can be traced back to William de Percy's charter, but others cannot. The *Memorial* list then records gifts by Emma de Port, wife of William de Percy the founder and is then followed by records of, amongst many others, gifts made by William Rufus (of the church of All Saints in Fishergate), Robert de Brus (of the Church of St Hilda's in Middlesbrough), and various gifts by the extended Percy family throughout Yorkshire.³⁸¹ The list is subdivided into three paragraphs, as Thomas Pickles has shown, which correspond to two distinct periods of gift giving to the abbey.³⁸² The first runs from the end of the narrative section to the gift of Fulk *Dapifer* (identified in one of the abbey's charters as the son of Reinfrid), the second runs from the gifts of land in Scarborough to the gifts of Reginald le Poer, and the third from Torfin de Alverstain to the end where the *Memorialist* concludes with the statement that he had 'listed all the donations which [their] aforesaid patrons had given to [them] in perpetual alms'.³⁸³ As well as this chronological divide between the first and second lists there is also a difference in the order of arrangement. In the first section these gifts are grouped by the relationship of the donors to William de Percy. He begins

³⁷⁷ Both lost, presumably close to Whitby and consumed by the town.

³⁷⁸ Now lost, presumably local to Whitby.

³⁷⁹ Robin Hood's Bay area.

³⁸⁰ Not Sowerby, Thirsk, but seemingly a lost vill of the same name in Langbargh hundred.

³⁸¹ Whitby Cartulary, pp. 2-8.

³⁸² Pickles, 'Were Medieval Lists Moral?'.

³⁸³ Jam numeravimus omnes donationes quas praefati advocati nostri nobis dederunt in elemosinam perpetuam. Whitby Cartulary, p. 7. The sense of 'advocati' being used as 'patron' is discussed in Burton, *Monastic Order in Yorkshire*, p. 183.

the list, followed by his son, and various nephews until Fulk who is remembered by his association as the *dapifer* of Alan de Percy, and not by his relationship to his father Reinfrid. The subsequent arrangement is topographical and begins with Scarborough before working its way clockwise around the monastery and then across to Cumbria.³⁸⁴ Where these gifts and grants can be cross referenced and checked, the three sections can be divided into two distinct periods of gift giving. The first section is comprised of gifts all given (with one exception) up to 1140, but mostly given in the two charters of William de Percy and Alan de Percy which will be discussed in due course. The second and third sections comprise gifts given circa 1150-1170.

There are several scribal reasons to think that the memorialist was copying an earlier exemplar. The list and narrative are both glossed in several places in a way that would make little sense were this scribe's own creation. Two of these glosses appear in the first portion of the list in his description of villis. Here the scribe clarifies the archaic version of place names which he refers to as in 'Nederby, that is Stainsacre' and 'Gnip, that is Hawkser'. One of these, Gnip/Hawkser, appears to be recorded as a part of the manor of Whitby in the possession of Hugh, earl of Chester, lord of William de Percy, in Domesday Book under the name of Gnipe.³⁸⁵ The narrative section, too, shows signs of copying. The scribe also provides interlineal glosses in the narrative to explain terms which he felt needed clarification. The description of William the Conqueror as 'bastardi' is glossed with the word 'nothi' and the mention of Evesham in the narrative is given the extra explanation that it is 'in provincia Merciorum'.

The list appears, with the exception of the omission of several villis, in a confirmation charter of Stephen, and then again in a papal bull issued by Eugenius III.³⁸⁶ None of these lists is identical to

³⁸⁴ Pickles, 'Were Medieval Lists Moral?'.
³⁸⁵ DB Yorkshire 4N1.

³⁸⁶ Stephen's charter survives only in an inspeximus of Edward II. Whitby Cartulary DLXXXI II, p. 531. Whitby Cartulary CXLIX, pp. 117-118 Abbot's Books, ff. 31r-32r.

the other, but the overall impression is of a shared lineage, with the majority of place names listed in the same order, with occasional haphazard inclusions or omissions. Both Eugenius's bull and Stephen's charter are accepted as genuine, and we therefore have a *Memorial*-like list being presented for confirmation to the king and pope. Stephen's confirmation is the earliest of the documents and provides a *terminus ante quem* for the existence of the *Memorial* list, for it occurred amongst a swathe of confirmations to Yorkshire monasteries shortly after his coronation in 1136.³⁸⁷ The exact nature of the relationship between the three is obscured by the late survival of the bull and the charter in, respectively, a cartulary copy and an *inspeximus* which obscure interpolations and alterations to the lists, but there can be no doubt that there is a relationship between the three.

For both parts, then, the memorialist was copying underlying texts. But did the narrative circulate with the lists, or was it the decision of the scribe of the *Memorial* scribe to combine them together? This is less certain, but a number of points would suggest that the two parts were integral from their inception. The inclusion of narrative in charters was a relatively common feature of eleventh- and early-twelfth-century England and Normandy, especially in foundation charters.³⁸⁸ Whilst the form in which the Whitby *Memorial* survives is rather strange, if not unique, there are parallels. The monks of St Werburgh's, Chester, also produced a document which served a similar purpose. Their charter, known by its first few words which read '*Sanctorum prisca auctoritate*', contains many of the same features as the Whitby *Memorial*. It begins with a lengthy preamble and a short narrative account of the foundation by Earl Hugh of Chester and Countess Ermantrud, which leads into a specification of the abbey's gift.³⁸⁹ *Sanctorum prisca* then concludes with a lengthy list of the abbey's early endowments by other benefactors. Despite doubts, *Sanctorum prisca* is now accepted as

³⁸⁷ For a discussion of the context of the grant see Edmund King, *King Stephen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010) p. 55. *Regesta pontificum Romanorum ab condita ecclesia ad annum post Christum natum MCXCVIII*, ed. by Philippe Jaffé et al, ii (Leipzig: Veit, 1888), 9645, p. 83.

³⁸⁸ Marjorie Chibnall, 'Forgery in Narrative Charters', in *Fälschungen Im Mittelalter* vol IV, 331-346, p. 331.

³⁸⁹ *A Cartulary or Register of The Abbey of St Werburgh Chester*, ed. by James Tait (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1920) pp. 15-37.

genuine, and it appears that the impetus for its creation was to secure a confirmation for the piecemeal grants Chester acquired between the foundation of the abbey in 1093 and the time of the confirmation.³⁹⁰ It is not difficult to see that the collation of grants into one document became useful far beyond the lifetime of Earl Hugh, and it was subsequently presented to his successors as a catch-all charter for their own confirmation.³⁹¹

As interesting as the *Sanctorum prisca* text is in its own right, it is of even greater interest here for its subsequent usage by the monks of Shrewsbury Abbey. They presented charters to Henry I and Stephen for confirmation which bear a striking resemblance to *Sanctorum prisca* (even beginning with the same words). Chibnall suggests that it was Earl Hugh of Chester's relationship with Earl Hugh of Shrewsbury, rather than a relationship between two houses themselves, which led to the transmission of the charter tradition. Whatever the reason, Shrewsbury became aware of how Chester dealt with its early benefactions.³⁹² Henry I's confirmation of the abbey's lands and liberties replicates the framework of *Sanctorum prisca* entirely. It begins with the same words and the same extensive preamble, to which Shrewsbury added its own narrative. Even this narrative bears striking similarities to Chester's version with little more than the proper names changed.³⁹³ Like the Chester version of *Sanctorum prisca*, the Shrewsbury charter then concludes with a list of grants by other people and, finally, a witness list for Henry I's confirmation. The Shrewsbury *Sanctorum prisca* is not the only narrative charter Shrewsbury produced. Narrative foundation charters abound, and most of the abbey's earliest charters are in this form.³⁹⁴ Yet even these narrative charters were evidentially being quickly reworked to suit the community's needs. A confirmation charter of King Stephen survives in the cartulary of the abbey clearly based on *Sanctorum prisca*, but

³⁹⁰ Chibnall, 'Forgery in Narrative Charters', p. 335.

³⁹¹ For example, Tait, *Chester Cartulary* No. 8, p. 53.

³⁹² Chibnall, 'Forgery in Narrative Charters', p. 337.

³⁹³ Rees, *The Shrewsbury Cartulary*, vol i (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1975) No. 35, pp. 31–40.

³⁹⁴ For example, the foundation charter (No. 2, pp. 5–7) and the confirmation of William Rufus (No. 34, pp. 29–31)

adapting some of the key provisions and grants to suit the political circumstances of the time.³⁹⁵

So great are the narrative sections of the Shrewsbury charters that Una Rees, the cartulary's editor, has argued that the monks there had access to a now lost chronicle from which they borrowed.³⁹⁶

The recognition that there are large chunks of narrative in early foundation charters is hardly novel. So similar are they, in fact, that Davis dismissed the Shrewsbury charters long ago as 'hardly more than a *historia foundationis*' to which it was claimed William had added his seal.³⁹⁷ Nevertheless, it is clear enough that the monks of Shrewsbury and Chester thought that these documents *were* charters, or at least could serve the same purpose as a charter, and the monks presented them, at various different points to various different people, for confirmation. The Whitby *Memorial* does not survive in this format and, if the narrative was presented with the list for confirmation it was shorn from it when the list was copied into Stephen's charter and Eugenius's bull. But the *Memorial* is nevertheless similar enough in form to surviving documents to suggest that it may have been used for this purpose.

One further clue might suggest that the *Memorial* list and narrative travelled together before they were copied into the pamphlet in which they survive. The aspect of the hand in the pamphlet noticeably changes for the *Memorial* from a compressed, cramped script with short descenders and vertical compression into something approaching a display script with a large, elaborate, decorated 'N' beginning *Notum*. These two hands were identified by Atkinson as products of the same scribe, with an intervening period of as much as twenty years between the composition of the *Memorial* and the writing of the abbatial election narrative which follows it.³⁹⁸ A more detailed study of the hands does not support this view, however. Certainly, there are diagnostic similarities between

³⁹⁵ Ibid, pp. 254–263

³⁹⁶ Ibid, p. xv.

³⁹⁷ Davis, *Regesta* 249, p. 65. Bates argues that it was not confirmed by William the Conqueror, so does not include it in his *Regesta*.

³⁹⁸ Whitby Cartulary, p. 10 n 4.

letter forms in the *Memorial* and the abbatial election narrative such as an identical inward flick on the 'W', but a closer examination reveals more differences in the individual composition of letter forms than Atkinson had realised. In particular, the feet on the *Memorial* scribe's 'p's slant in opposite directions to those of the scribe of the election narrative, suggesting two scribes who held their pens differently. The scribe of the election narrative frequently flicked the second minim of his 'n', and the two scribes constructed the lobe in their 'b' differently. The library catalogue which precedes the *Memorial*, again contrary to Atkinson's belief, is written in a third, distinct hand with stark differences to the other two. Most noticeably, the ascenders on the catalogue scribe's 'd' slant up to the left, as opposed to straight up in the examples of the *Memorial* and abbatial election narrative, the library catalogue exhibits a different shaped 'p', and the scribe employs a mixture of both a Caroline and insular 'a' unlike the *Memorial* scribe. Whilst this by no means proves beyond doubt that the *Memorial* parts were together before it was copied by the scribe, the manuscript does at least offer evidence of three distinct texts copied by three distinct scribes, with both parts of the *Memorial* showing signs that they were copied by the same scribe from the same exemplar.

In form, then, the *Memorial* text can be summarised as follows: a narrative section introducing the circumstances surrounding William de Percy's endowment of the abbey, followed by a list of donations made by William and his immediate family, and then a list of the donations made by others. The text is concerned not with telling a complete and full history of the abbey, nor relaying to its reader the entire history of the abbey as understood by the monks, but with providing only the portion of their foundation story that is relevant to the gifts described, and recording subsequent gifts for posterity. Rather than a distinct narrative compiled by the *Memorial* scribe, the 'narrative section' is therefore a narrative charter describing the circumstances which led to William de Percy's early endowments.

What, then, does the *Memorial* pancarte suggest about the Whitby monks' understanding of their foundation? As we have seen, previous study of the text has pointed towards its positive portrayal of William de Percy, in sharp contrast to the criticism that he attracts in Stephen of Whitby's narrative of the foundation of St Mary's, York, and the absence of Stephen from Whitby's version of the foundation. This points towards a sense of conflict in these accounts. Both Janet Burton and Tom Licence have argued, with their own respective nuances, that there was a conflict between the eremitically minded Reinfrid, and the realities of monastic observance in the late twelfth century, which spilled over into tension between the two communities.³⁹⁹ As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, Burton continued to argue that both Whitby and St Mary's claimed to be successors of Reinfrid's community and, thus, William de Percy's endowment, and they then actively wrote the schism between the two communities out of their own respective accounts of what had happened; Whitby failed to record both Stephen of Whitby's claim to have been elected prior of their community and his foundation of St Mary's York, and by contrast Stephen failed to mention that a group had remained at Whitby. Stephen is not, however, totally absent from Whitby's version of events, and it is worth stressing that Stephen of Whitby is not the only actor in the story that the *Memorial* pancarte fails to mention. The *Memorial* pancarte similarly fails to reference Reinfrid's eremitical desires, for which we have Stephen of Whitby and an implicit assumption in Symeon of Durham that Reinfrid and Aldwin shared the same motivations; has no reference to the fact Reinfrid had originally gone to Jarrow; contains no reference to the move to Hackness, save for a comment in the *Memorial* pancarte's list; has no reference to the community's association with St Hilda; does not reference any supposed hostility from William de Percy towards the community; and only makes a fleeting reference to the Anglo-Saxon importance of Whitby. Indeed, Reinfrid is presented almost as a secondary figure in the narrative to William de Percy himself as founder of the monastery. The contrast between William's depiction in the *Memorial*

³⁹⁹ Tom Licence, *Hermits and Recluses*, pp. 58-59, 92-93; Janet Burton, 'The monastic revival in Yorkshire' pp. 41-42.

pancarte and in Stephen's account of the foundation of St Mary's York, Burton argues, may owe something to a desire not to offend a current de Percy patron of the monastery. But this fails to explain many of the other omissions in the *Memorial* that are entirely incidental, if not outright irrelevant, to William de Percy's supposed antagonism to the monastery he endowed.⁴⁰⁰

A more coherent explanation, once the text is recognised as a pancarte, is not that the Whitby monks were actively censoring criticism of their founder, nor attempting to write out of history his antagonism towards the community, but that it was simply unrelated to their reasons for constructing their text. The purpose of the narrative section was to give a context for William de Percy's foundation of the monastery. It was not the story of the monastic revival, nor was it the story of Hilda's community, but was the story of William de Percy's gift. By implication that story conflicted with some of the claims made by Stephen of Whitby, but it does not follow that the Whitby monks attempted to whitewash their shared heritage and 'blanche' their memory of the foundation.⁴⁰¹

In fact, it is possible to see just how partial the *Memorial* pancarte is as a record of Whitby's foundation by looking at how an issue that the Whitby monks demonstrably did care about is presented. For other sources from the abbey do suggest that Hilda played an important part in the monks' commemoration and that they did have an interest in the Bedan past of their institution. There are two accounts of the foundation and early history of the abbey which survive in much later copies. These two accounts are closely related and probably share a common source which has not survived. Both accounts agree closely and supply information which is supported by fragmentary evidence from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but both fit poorly with the evidence supplied within the *Memorial* account. Both, too, only survive in later copies, and their

⁴⁰⁰ Burton, *Monastic Order in Yorkshire*, p. 36.

⁴⁰¹ On the idea of 'blanched memory' see Janet Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories: Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 169-191.

evidence has been met with hesitantly as a result. But both provide a fascinating insight into how the monks came to remember their past, and both suggest that that past was seen as malleable, changeable, and only as important as present concerns dictated.

In the first, the fragment of text which survives amongst Dodsworth's notes, it is recorded that the Whitby community faced many trials and tribulations under Reinfrid which had continued under his successor Serlo.⁴⁰² The monks were being harassed by piratical attacks and brigands and Serlo sought permission from his brother, William de Percy, to move their community to William's land at Hackness because they remembered that Hilda had also founded a community there. William granted their request, but, whilst the community was at Hackness, a dispute arose between William and Serlo about William's grant of Stakesby and Everley to his squire (*armiger*) Ralph of Everley. The dispute soured William's attitude towards his own foundation, and when the danger had passed, and the community wished to move back to Whitby, the monks found William hostile and inclined to give away all of the land he had granted to the priory. Serlo appealed to William II, whom he had known personally when younger and at the court of William I, and the king found in favour of the Whitby monks.⁴⁰³ Atkinson was suspicious of this short extract and raised three specific points against its reliability. Firstly, he argued that the description of gifts to Ralph of Everley was difficult to square with the abbey's records relating to Stakesby and Everley.⁴⁰⁴ Secondly, he argued that the extract failed accurately to specify the abbey's relationship to the English kings, and the circumstances by which the kings became involved at Whitby.⁴⁰⁵ And thirdly, he doubted that William de Percy would have wished to deprive his foundation of the endowment that he had given it.⁴⁰⁶ Most of these objections, however, appear to be entirely manufactured, and have arisen as a result that Atkinson — in the case of doubt — always preferred

⁴⁰² See above, p. 35.

⁴⁰³ Dodsworth MS 159, ff. 115v-116r; Whitby Cartulary, pp. xxxviii.

⁴⁰⁴ Whitby Cartulary, pp. lix-xi

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid, pp. lxi-lxxvi.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid, pp. lxxvi-lxxxiv.

charter records over narrative. Most of his objections, however, were put aside by Alexander Hamilton Thompson nearly a century ago, who created a plausible narrative explanation which fitted the Dodsworth extract into the stories told by the *Memorial* pancarte and Stephen of Whitby, and provided evidence unknown to Atkinson to support the extract's claims.⁴⁰⁷ In particular, he pointed towards evidence contained in Durham's *Liber Vitae* to suggest that the Durham monks were in confraternity with Serlo and his monks at Hackness.⁴⁰⁸ Thompson was reluctant to take his findings too far, and the *Liber Vitae* from Durham does not prove the authenticity of the Dodsworth extract on all counts, but it provides some support for the extract's authenticity (an extract which appears to have come from a now lost book of Whitby and refers to Reinfrid as 'prior noster') and which shows a clear knowledge of early events between the period when Reinfrid first settled there and when it became an abbey.⁴⁰⁹ That information is otherwise unrecorded in the *Memorial* pancarte. Whenever the Dodsworth fragment was written, its existence points towards the retention by the Whitby monks of an underlying memory of the foundation which was only partially recorded in the *Memorial* pancarte. That memory included the animosity of William de Percy to his fledgling foundation, fully explained the monks' move to Hackness, and fleshed the events which led to their return to Whitby. Whether those events happened as they were described in the Dodsworth extract is immaterial. What matters is that the monks took an event that demonstrably did happen and attached to it a plausible narrative which suited their current purpose. It did not concern them in the slightest that they had previously constructed a narrative of their early history which was directly contradictory to what was now being said.

Why, though, did the Whitby monks choose to express their early history in the Dodsworth extract in the way this extract describes? None of the contextual clues contained within the text point

⁴⁰⁷ Alexander Hamilton-Thompson, 'Monastic Settlement at Hackness', *Yorkshire Archeological Journal*, 27 (1924), 388-405.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 400-401.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 401.

towards an obvious answer. There is little evidence to suggest that after the monks returned from Hackness that it remained a particularly important location for them. Certainly, there was a parish church there and it maintained a relationship with Whitby: Thomas, a priest of Hackness witnessed Agnes de Percy's grant of Seamer Church to Whitby and Peter the chaplain of Hackness witnessed a gift and grant of land in North Fyling. But there never appears to have been a priory or cell at the location after the monks returned to Whitby.⁴¹⁰ The charter evidence for Everley and Stakesby fits poorly with the story told by the Dodsworth fragment, but there might perhaps be more reason than Atkinson allowed to suggest that the two villas were at the centre of a dispute in the twelfth century. That evidence, however, is not straightforward. Stakesby was evidently a small church which has since been lost, but the rubric to a charter of Robert of Aykton in favour of the abbey suggests that it was in South Fyling.⁴¹¹ This charter is an interesting one. Robert of Aykton granted the church of Stakesby to Whitby Abbey and quitclaimed his right to Fyling. It ends with an invocation threatening excommunication to anyone who sought to infringe on the abbey's rights. Yet Fyling also appears among the list of lands in Alan de Percy's charter mentioned above which Abbot William de Percy had purchased from Tancred the Fleming. In that charter, Ralph de Everley, who the Dodsworth extract had identified as the recipient of William de Percy's gift, appears as a witness.⁴¹² A further charter of Roger, archbishop of York (d. 1181), records that Robert formally renounced his claim to the land in the presence of the archbishop.⁴¹³ What the basis for Robert's original claim to the land was, and how it can be squared with Alan's confirmation charter, seems impossible to discern from the evidence that survives. Everley is about two miles from Hackness and was closely enough related to Hackness for it to be recorded, alongside Suffield, in the same *Domesday Book* entry.⁴¹⁴ This entry identifies six of the eight carucates

⁴¹⁰ Whitby Cartulary CLVIII, p. 127–8, Abbot's Book, f. 39v; Whitby Cartulary CCXVIII, p. 178; Abbot's Book, f. 57r; Thompson, 'Monastic Settlement', p. 404.

⁴¹¹ Whitby Cartulary XLIX, p. 51. Abbot's Book, f. 13v.

⁴¹² Whitby Cartulary XXVII (2), p. 33. Abbot's Book, f. 8v.

⁴¹³ Whitby Cartulary XLVI, p. 48. Abbot's Book, 12v–13r.

⁴¹⁴ Yorkshire Part 1, 13 N 13.

of the vill as 'the land of St Hilda', which was interpreted by Farrer as referring to an old honour attached to Hilda's ancient foundation of Hackness, but which more probably was Serlo's community — although the reference remains oblique even by Yorkshire *Domesday* standards.⁴¹⁵ Everley appears in Eugenius III's papal confirmations to the abbey, but was given back (*reddidi*) to William of Everley by Richard (II), abbot of Whitby (d. 1189).⁴¹⁶ Although there is some reason to suggest that Stakesby may have become an issue for the abbey, it seems unlikely that the monks would wish to reassert their claim to Everley after Richard's charter to William.

As Thompson noted it is striking just how similar the Dodsworth extract is to Stephen of Whitby's account of the foundation of St Mary's, York.⁴¹⁷ Stephen, too, blamed William de Percy's hostility for the events that unfolded. He justified the schism, although it is never presented as a schism, in the Whitby community as being the result of pirate attacks and William de Percy's hostility which forced him to petition the king. He then took his group to the royal estate at Lastingham, and when he realised that he was still not safe from William de Percy he moved again to York. Not only does the Dodsworth extract share Stephen's assertion that William de Percy was hostile, it similarly uses that hostility as a pretext in order to explain how the king came to be involved with Whitby. It concludes with the rhyming couplet 'Gliscens ultorem regi fert Serlo macrorem/In fundatorem sumens hunc posteriorem [Seeking an avenger, Serlo took his grief to the king, adopting him as a later founder]'.⁴¹⁸

The final two lines of the Dodsworth extract tie it to a late Whitby poem which survives in Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O.9.38. The poem is divided into two parts based on the metre. The first, lengthier, part runs for 551 lines and describes the foundation and history of the Anglo-

⁴¹⁵ Thompson, 'Monastic Settlement', p. 397. Farrer, EYC ii, p. 207.

⁴¹⁶ Whitby Cartulary CCLXIV, p. 209. Abbot's Book, f. 66r; Whitby Cartulary CXLIX, pp. 117–120. Abbot's Books, ff. 31r–32r.

⁴¹⁷ Thompson, 'Monastic Settlement' p. 399.

⁴¹⁸ I am grateful to Stephen O' Connor for discussing this couplet with me.

Saxon Abbey under Hilda. Most of the material comes from Bede, but it is supplemented by two miracle stories relating to Hilda turning the serpents around Whitby into stone and ridding the area of birds. Both of these stories survive in other miracle accounts of Hilda, such as in John of Tynemouth's fourteenth-century *Sanctilogium*. But the poem is different in some details and cannot have been reliant on the *Sanctilogium* as its source.⁴¹⁹ In fact, both John of Tynemouth and the poem probably rely on local tradition. The miracle of snakes turned into stone owes its existence to the multitude of ammonite fossils found on the coasts in and around Whitby, and, whilst there is little written evidence of the association between Hilda and the ammonite fossils much before the fifteenth century, a long tradition linking the two is hardly unlikely. How early that tradition dated is impossible to say, but neither the veneration of Hilda as a saint, nor the presence of ammonite fossils at Whitby, were a new development of the later middle ages and it is possible that the association was made shortly after Hilda's cult was established. Beyond these miracle accounts, however, there is little here that adds to our understanding of Hilda's cult and how the monks understood her relationship to the (re-) foundation of Whitby Abbey.

Part two is far shorter and runs to just fifty-seven lines. It begins on a new folio (76r) but appears to run on directly from the end of the first part of the poem.⁴²⁰ There is no indication that any intermediate material has been lost.⁴²¹ This second part of the poem begins with the sack of the abbey by Hubba and Ingwar, and the removal of Hilda's relics to Glastonbury by an abbot Titus.⁴²² The poem then jumps forward in time by several centuries to a story about a cruel woman who ate the limbs of children.⁴²³ We are then introduced to Reinfrid who seeks leave from the king to

⁴¹⁹ Ibid, p. 14; for John of Tynemouth see *Nova Legenda Anglie*, ed. C. Horstman (Oxford, 1901), vol ii, pp. 29–33; Richard Sharpe, *A Handlist of the Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland before 1540* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), pp. 333–334.

⁴²⁰ Cambridge, Trinity College MS O. 9.38, ff. 76v–77r.

⁴²¹ Rigg, 'Latin Poem of Hilda', p. 13.

⁴²² Rigg, 'Latin Poem of Hilda' line 552–561.

⁴²³ Rigg, 'Latin Poem of Hilda' line 562–565.

travel and slaughters the woman.⁴²⁴ The poem does not state why Reinfrid was with the king, nor why the cruel woman was eating children, but reports of cannibalism as a result of the harrying of the north survive and it is possible that the author had that event in mind.⁴²⁵ Reinfrid then laments that the area is uninhabited. The next line specifically refers to Hackness, and it is difficult to work out if the author meant to indicate that the woman resided at Hackness, or if it only refers to the information which followed it. At any rate, he certainly does not explicitly mention Whitby. The poem then describes how one night, whilst at Hackness, Reinfrid was visited by a maiden who called on him to become a monk. He awoke the next morning determined to do so and travelled to London in order to renounce his fealty to the king.⁴²⁶ The episode is unrecorded elsewhere and it is remarkable that the moment of Reinfrid's revelation, which is situated in the ruins of Whitby Abbey in the *Memorial*, is entirely removed from the locality in the poem. Nevertheless, if the 'maiden' of Hackness is assumed to be Bega, who appears in the final couplet of the poem to inflict her vengeance on those who sought to harm the abbey, and who is the obvious candidate for an unnamed apparition in the ruins of a church at Hackness, then there is a neat parallel between the events which led to the refoundation of the community at Whitby and the death of Hilda.⁴²⁷

Bega is an odd saint, who may never have actually existed.⁴²⁸ Her principal relic was a bracelet, which was claimed in the middle ages by the priory of St Bees in Cumbria (a dependency of St Mary's York), but, because of the similarity of the word 'Bega' to the Old English 'beag' meaning bracelet, suspicion has long abounded that 'Bega' was, herself, the bracelet.⁴²⁹ By the twelfth century, however, a relatively settled legend had been created, which survives most fully in a late-

⁴²⁴ Rigg, 'Latin Poem of Hilda' line 564–567.

⁴²⁵ Rigg, 'Latin Poem of Hilda' line 564–567.

⁴²⁶ Rigg, 'Latin Poem of Hilda' line, 568–575.

⁴²⁷ Rigg, 'Latin Poem of Hilda' line, 608–609.

⁴²⁸ Robert Bartlett, 'Bega [St Bega] (supp. fl. late 7th cent.), abbess of Hartlepool' *ODNB*

⁴²⁹ Ibid. There is some suggestion of a historical Bega, however, see: Clare Downham, 'St. Bega — myth, maiden, or bracelet? An insular cult and its origins', *Journal of Medieval History*, 33 (2007), 33–42.

twelfth- or early-thirteenth-century work known as the *Vita et miracula sancte Bege virginis*.⁴³⁰ That story conflates the history of two Bedan women — Heiu, who Bede describes as the first nun in Northumbria and the founder of Hartlepool, and Begu, who saw the death of Hilda in a vision at Hackness — and combines it with a story of an Irish princess who escaped from an unnamed powerful king.⁴³¹ If, as I have suggested, the author of the poem had Bega in mind, then having the woman who foresaw the death of Whitby's original founder, and protagonist of the first half of the poem, appear to Reinfrid to encourage him to re-create the abbey is a neat parallel and serves to create a degree of continuity between the two communities.

Bega, despite her association with a priory across the Pennines, appears to have been important to the community at Whitby, but the evidence for her is fairly weak and only hinted at in two other sources: one from Whitby itself, and the other from outside the abbey. The earliest of the two sources is the *Vita et miracula* of Bega. The *Vita et miracula* was almost certainly composed at St Bee's, and the majority of the second half of text is concerned with miracles worked by Bega's bracelet near the priory.⁴³² Nevertheless, the *Vita et miracula* is rather clear on a point that it might have been assumed that the community of St Bee's would wish to conceal: Bega's body was at Whitby.⁴³³ The *Vita* records that at some point in the twelfth century (the manuscript reads 'millesimo cent simo' followed by an erasure), the Whitby monks became aware that Bega's body was buried in the cemetery at Hackness, exhumed her, and translated her to Whitby.⁴³⁴ The author does not relate much more information, and concludes by stating that because the translation and miracles took place at that place (that is Whitby), they leave it to the monks who were involved

⁴³⁰ 'Vita et miracula sancte Bege virginis', *The Register of the Priory of St Bees*, ed. by J. Wilson Surtees Society 126 (York: Surtees Society, 1915), 497–520; *The Life and Miracles of Sancta Bega, Patroness of the Priory of St Bees in the County of Cumberland* ed. G. C. Tomlinson (Carlisle, 1842).

⁴³¹ *HE* 4.23; 'Vita et miracula'.

⁴³² Robert Bartlett, 'Cults of Irish, Scottish and Welsh Saints in Twelfth-Century England', in *Britain and Ireland, 900–1300: Insular Responses to Medieval European Change*, ed. by Brendan Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 67–86, p. 71. *The Life and Miracles of Sancta Bega*, pp. 61–77.

⁴³³ *Life and Miracles of Sancta Bega*, p. 60.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*

with the translation to write an account of it.⁴³⁵ If the Whitby monks ever composed such a work, it does not survive. Bega is, however, recorded in the Whitby Missal, where the kalendar lists a feast of St Bega's translation and of the relics on 20 June, a mass amongst the Proper of Saints, and a votive mass for the abbey's relics of 'St Peter and Paul, the blessed virgin Hilda, Bega and all the others'.⁴³⁶ Unlike the masses for Hilda, the mass for Bega does not feature an illuminated initial, but the elevation of her relics above the category of 'other relics', and the creation of a feast day to mark the date of her translation does suggest that she was third behind St Peter and St Hilda, the two saints to whom the abbey was of course dedicated, in the minds of the Whitby monks.⁴³⁷ The episode as told in the poem remains an oddity, but it is perhaps understandable why Bega became an important part of the poem's foundation story.

The author of the poem then continues onwards to tell a fairly conventional version of the story of the monastic revival and provides details which are all to be found elsewhere.⁴³⁸ It includes details from all three of Symeon of Durham, the *Memorial*, and Stephen of Whitby, but it does not correspond with any of the three texts exactly.⁴³⁹ Reinfrid settled at Whitby and received the endowment of William de Percy and worked to improve the church in exactly the same way the *Memorial* describes until he died.⁴⁴⁰ The poem then states that Serlo and Stephen were made monks.⁴⁴¹ Lines 600–607 in the poem cover the same material as the Dodsworth extract. The Dodsworth extract provides specifics not mentioned by the poem — such as the fact that the cause of the dispute was William de Percy's wish to give the land which he had seized from Whitby

⁴³⁵ Ibid. 'Ego vero quia de translatione et de miraculis in ibi factis non plenam Noticiam habeo, omnia illis illa qui viderunt, et rei interfuerunt, scribenda reliquo'.

⁴³⁶ Oxford, MS Rawlinson Liturg. B1, f. 6v, f. 216v, 274v.

⁴³⁷ Bega also appears in a kalendar from St Mary's, York, and St Bee's Priory was founded from the abbey in 1120. Potentially, the two abbeys' shared heritage led to a degree of conflict regarding Bega.

⁴³⁸ Rigg, 'Latin Poem of Hilda', line 576–590.

⁴³⁹ A detailed analysis of the similarities and differences is available in Rigg, 'Latin Poem of Hilda', pp. 16–17.

⁴⁴⁰ This endowment was in two parts, and similar to how it is described in the *Memorial*. Rigg, 'Latin Poem of Hilda', line 590–593.

⁴⁴¹ Rigg, 'Latin Poem of Hilda' line 596–597.

to Ralph de Everley — but concurs with the poem on the broad details.⁴⁴² When the two texts cover the same details they agree more closely than any other two Whitby sources, and very probably they shared a common origin. The last two lines of this section of the poem, the penultimate couplet, are the same two lines quoted at the end of the Dodsworth extract.

There is also limited further support for some of the details of the poem in the antiquarian notes of John Leland. Leland's notekeeping is frustratingly incomplete and it is often difficult to work out whether he is summarising what he has read or sharing an opinion or an observation that he made himself. It is, with those limitations in mind, that we must approach his evidence. He visited Whitby shortly before the dissolution of the monastery and made notes from two books which grabbed his attention: a life of St Bega and a life of St Hilda.⁴⁴³ Under the section entitled *Ex vita sancti Hildae* he records several pieces of information which agree closely with the Hilda poem. These include the information that Abbot Titus took Hilda's relics to Glastonbury in the time of Ingwar and Hubba, and her miracle of turning snakes into stones.⁴⁴⁴ He also reported on the presence of a stained-glass window at Whitby depicting a cannibalistic Scotsman which could provide limited support to the strange saga of the child-eating woman in the poem.⁴⁴⁵

Whenever the poem was authored, it supplies a full, detailed, explanation of how the monks who came to inhabit the Benedictine community at Whitby tied the foundation of their community in the eleventh century to Hilda's community. In doing so, it presents a version of the re-foundation of the community that contrasts markedly with the *Memorial* pancarte both in terms of themes and events. Nevertheless, it presents a story that contains verifiable information of the late–eleventh-century history of the abbey. Again, this does not suggest that this version is a better, more correct,

⁴⁴² Rigg, 'Latin Poem of Hilda' line 600–607.

⁴⁴³ Leland, *Collectanea*, iii, p. 39.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid, pp. 39–40.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 40. Rigg, 'Latin Poem of Hilda', p. 15.

or preferable version of events to the *Memorial* pancarte. Indeed, it may well be the case that it is the poem and the extract, rather than the *Memorial* pancarte, that is the 'alternative' version of Whitby's foundation. Yet its existence points towards the fact that there were alternatives. The story was not set in stone, and the monks were perfectly happy to adapt, change, and retell the events of how the community on the rocky headland had been founded depending on the needs and circumstances present concerns dictated. Presumably, the authors of the Dodsworth fragment and the poem had access to an underlying chronicle kept by the abbey from which they could take information, but — as has been demonstrated elsewhere — such a document is not a neutral repository either. In trying to unravel, reconcile and resolve these divergent strands of the foundational story in the pursuit of 'what happened' or a in search of an abbey's 'collective memory' of the past we, at all times, risk distorting our sources and ordering what is unordered.

Conclusion

In the treatment of the pre-conquest past at Whitby and St Mary's York, then, it is possible to observe how the two communities constructed narratives which downplayed their links to the pre-conquest past. They did so not because those links did not form a part of the community's memory of the past, but because the authors were writing texts which were constructed for reasons which went beyond neutral attempts to record the foundation of their communities. These were records of disputes and records of property claims which constructed the events of their communities' respective foundations in light of the narrative they were penning. They formed a part of the monasteries' memory of the past, but, despite their written professions, they were not interested in recording the events of the foundation for their own sakes, nor did they attempt to record all the elements of that past which mattered to their community, and nor did those texts which they produced exist in isolation. Even though elements of the pre-conquest past did not make it into

the narratives of foundations produced at Whitby and St Mary's York, we can still surmise that those elements did matter.

Chapter 5: The Norman Past I: Royal Founders

In the previous chapter, we explored the presentation of the pre-conquest past in the foundation narratives each community produced. As we have seen throughout, however, all three communities recognised Norman lay patrons and believed that either of William the Conqueror or William Rufus was their founders. In the following chapter, I examine how those founders were remembered in the abbeys' sources. This question is of particular interest, because of one of the more peculiar inheritances which occurred in 1066. Pre-conquest England had an active and ongoing tradition of royal sanctity.⁴⁴⁶ Even the last of the Cerdician kings of England, Edward, was canonised some one hundred years after his death, and it is by his status as a confessor of the church that he is best known. One of the impetuses for the creation of these royal saints could be the desire on the part of a community to designate their royal founder a saint, in order to strengthen connections to patrons and existing members of the royal dynasty.⁴⁴⁷ We have already seen some examples of this in Chapter 2, but, so, too, at Winchester, Wilton, and Ely can we see examples of royal cults being adopted by the communities which grew from that foundation. These cults survived the conquest, and we have already seen myriad examples of the commissioning, popularisation, and politicisation of the pre-Conquest past by the Norman churchmen who came to inhabit those communities. As Susan Ridyard has demonstrated, such an alliance between Norman churchmen and Anglo-Saxon saints was beneficial — no matter how unfamiliar the Normans monk was with the extent and spread of Anglo-Saxon royal saints' cults, they gained nothing from rejecting them.⁴⁴⁸ But what, instead, about those communities with which this thesis is interested? Communities for whom their royal founders were not Anglo-Saxon, but instead,

⁴⁴⁶ Susan Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: A Study of West Saxon and East Anglian Cults* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid, pp. 241-242. Admittedly, more often royal ladies than the male members of a house.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 252.

Norman? Did the monks of these communities attempt to venerate their founders as saints, and, if not, how did they deal with their association to this new dynasty?⁴⁴⁹

Before I turn to these though, it is worth considering how the Normans, and more specifically William the Conqueror, were remembered in the north east more generally. As we know, contemporary chroniclers believed that William had wrought indefensible bloodshed and murder upon the region and claimed that the destruction he had caused had left large areas uninhabitable for nearly a decade. Those accusations are serious, and they left a powerful, traceable degree of resentment in the north east of England.

Almost immediately negative accounts of William's rule began to be created and to circulate in the north east, and these continued to be produced for centuries after the conquest. In particular, it was the events of the Harrying which left the deepest scars in the collective psyche of the region. The D version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle provides the most immediate example of this phenomenon. This version of the chronicle was being kept in the north of England at the time of the Conquest and immediately incorporates passages hostile to William which, when compared to the other versions of the chronicle, serve to call in to question the legitimacy of William's claim. When turning to the events of the 'C' chronicle, the author describes William as 'Count William from Normandy, relative of King Edward', but 'D' opts, more simply, for 'William the Bastard'.⁴⁵⁰ Whether or not 'D' meant 'Bastard' as pejorative, the contrast between two otherwise almost identical sections of text serves, in 'C' to emphasise William's comital status and relationship to Edward the Confessor, whilst, in 'D', to emphasise William's illegitimacy.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁹ Typically, as Ridyard points out, the types of royals who were venerated as saints do not fit comfortably with the examples of the lives of the early-Norman kings, but – as the example of Battle shows – there was raw material in William the Conqueror's life that a monastery could creatively work with to cast him as a Christian king favoured by God.

⁴⁵⁰ ASC D, pp. 79.

⁴⁵¹ Pauline Stafford, *After Alfred: Anglo-Saxon Chronicles and Chroniclers, 900-1150* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 264-265.

The sole manuscript of 'C' is mutilated and no longer contains any information after the Battle of Stamford Bridge, but 'D' continues and the author of it quickly ran in to a familiar problem: William had won, and his victory had, therefore, to be understood. Moreover, William had been crowned as king by none other than Aeldred, archbishop of York, amongst whose entourage, it has been suggested, the 'D' chronicle was being kept. The first problem was dealt with in a familiar way for, the chronicler explains, 'God granted the Normans [victory] because of the people's sins'.⁴⁵² The problem of the coronation evidently required a more creative solution, and the chronicler is at pains to explain how and why Aeldred felt compelled to perform the coronation ceremony. Aeldred, had 'wanted to have Prince Edgar [the Ætheling] for king, just as was his natural right' but was forced to submit to William out of necessity because 'God would not remedy matters because of our sins'. Aeldred submitted, gave hostages, and William promised to be a 'loyal lord to them'. Yet 'in the middle of this [the Normans] raided all that they went across'.⁴⁵³ Fearing what William might do, Aeldred crowned William on midwinter's day, but 'before he would set the crown on [William's] head' insisted that he swear to 'hold the nation as well as the best of any kings before him did'. William duly swore he would, but 'nevertheless he charged men a very stiff tax...and they built castles widely throughout this nation and oppressed the wretched people; and afterwards it always grew very much worse'.⁴⁵⁴ By 'D's judgement, the conquest might have been God's will, but His agent William was duplicitous, evil, and not to be trusted. It was only through the archbishop of York's actions, forced into them though he may have been, that the people of England were protected from the worst of William's excesses.

⁴⁵² ASC D, p. 80. The translation is from *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* ed. and trans. by Michael Swanton (London: J.M. Dent, 1996), p. 200.

⁴⁵³ ASC D, p. 81. Swanton, p. 200.

⁴⁵⁴ ASC D, p. 81. Swanton, p. 200.

'D's attitude is unsurprising. It was written during the reign of William and the events were still new, but the same themes are detectable when we move in to the twelfth century and the judgement on William as a duplicitous murderer is apparent in two miracle stories recorded at Durham. Symeon's *Libellus* records many misfortunes which befell the church of Durham under the reign of King William. One story tells how King William passed through Durham on his return from Scotland in 1072. William doubted that St Cuthbert's body rested there and resolved to investigate the matter. If Cuthbert's body were not found then he would have had the 'most noble and most senior' of the community at Durham executed. Whilst he was celebrating mass on All Saints Day, he thought that he would put his plan into action, and suddenly he started burning up. He fled on horseback, leaving behind the feast that had been prepared for him and galloped until he reached the river Tees. 'By this sign', said Symeon 'he acknowledged that the greater confessor of God, Cuthbert, rests there and he was not permitted to harm the people because God prohibited him from doing so.'⁴⁵⁵ This had not, however, been the first time Cuthbert had protected Durham from William's anger. The *Libellus* uniquely records how, when a Norman army was camped at Allerton, en-route to Durham to avenge the murder of Earl Robert Cumin, a thick fog rolled in which the Normans recognised was sent by Cuthbert to protect the inhabitants of Durham from harm. They duly left and the inhabitants of Durham thus 'heard of their foes departure before their arrival'.⁴⁵⁶ A similar story of Cuthbertine protection centres around a man named Ranulf who William had sent to Durham in order to compel the Durham monks to pay tribute to him. The monks objected to the imposition of new customs and sought Cuthbert's aid. Cuthbert appeared to Ranulf in a dream, rebuked him, and told him to leave, warning that 'he would suffer still worse if he did not go away quickly'. When he awoke, Ranulf found himself confined to his bed and was only able to move again when he was carried out of Durham.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁵ Symeon, *Libellus de Exordio*, pp. 196-197.

⁴⁵⁶ *Libellus*, pp. 184-185. Some 900 years later, local legend would have it that St Cuthbert's fog again descended in 1945 to protect the Cathedral from a bombing raid carried out by the Luftwaffe.

⁴⁵⁷ Symeon, *Libellus*, pp. 198-199.

Because of these and other miracles of St Cuthbert 'King William himself held the holy confessor and his church always in great veneration, honoured it with royal gifts and also increased its landed possessions'.⁴⁵⁸ There are multiple readings to both these stories, but it is clear that in both these miracle stories the Durham community was attempting to highlight the power of Cuthbert, and by extension, the community which was centred around his body, but in both Cuthbert is cast as a protector against William's hostility and bloodlust, and perhaps, a guarantor for Durham's quasi-autonomy.⁴⁵⁹ Symeon is not without praise for William, and Durham quickly came to recognise the mutual benefits of working with the new kings, but the presentation of how William came to work with Durham is the presentation of a hostile actor cowed to undeniable power of the community's patron saint. William's hostility and capacity for violence were so great, however, that even Cuthbert was not a cast iron guarantee of safety.

Another story is recorded in the *Historia de Regibus Anglorum et Dacorum* [*Historia Regum*], now recognised as a work of Symeon of Durham. The *Historia de Regibus* is a composite Durham manuscript which covers the period from the end of Bede to 1129, and which is heavily based on a version of the chronicle of John of Worcester which ended in 1118.⁴⁶⁰ John's own chronicle bristles with criticism and judgments of the people and events which he describes, be they Norman or, often, Scottish, and plenty of anti-Norman material is included, such as for example, John's description of the Norman Garrison at York, slaughtered as an act of divine vengeance after a fire they had set got out of hand.⁴⁶¹ Yet these features are emphasised in the *Historia de Regibus Anglorum et Dacorum*. In it Symeon dwells at more length on the destruction caused by the Harrying. So great was the devastation caused by William that Æthelwin, the then bishop of Durham, fled with Cuthbert's body and unnamed 'chiefs of the people' to Lindisfarne leaving behind 'the poor, the

⁴⁵⁸ Symeon, *Libellus*, pp. 198-199.

⁴⁵⁹ Kapelle, *Norman Conquest of the North*, pp. 134-135.

⁴⁶⁰ John's chronicle was itself based on a now lost version of the Anglo-Saxon chronicle.

⁴⁶¹ John of Worcester, *Chronicle*, p. 10-11.

infirm, and the sick, who no longer being able to fly... lay perishing of hunger and disease'.⁴⁶² The same flight is recorded in the *Libellus* where Symeon records that the one ornament left behind by the community had been plundered by Norman soldiers. Here, however, Symeon adds that William was enraged by this news and donated gold and silver to the church to restore it. Clearly, the Durham monks came to recognise William as a supporter of their church, but it was a support which was hard won and involved William deferring to Cuthbert's obvious superiority.

The transmission of the *Historia de Regibus Anglorum et Dacorum* from Durham to elsewhere in the region is particularly illuminating. The text was evidently being actively worked on and maintained at Durham after Symeon's death, and a variety of versions of the text all with different end points form the basis of continuations and reworkings from across the region.⁴⁶³ At the collegiate church of Beverley the *Historia de Regibus Anglorum et Dacorum*, along with Henry of Huntingdon's Chronicle, and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie* formed the basis for a history from Brutus to 1129 written by Alfred of Beverley between 1148 and 1151.⁴⁶⁴ This work was dismissed by historians such as Thomas Duffus Hardy in the past as 'of no value', but Alfred's originality has recently been reassessed by John Patrick Slevin who noticed that Alfred was subtly manipulating his source material.⁴⁶⁵ Alfred stripped out most of the 'partisan' information and created a chronicle with a more neutral tone, but nevertheless, when he came to the *Historia de Regibus Anglorum et Dacorum*'s description of the Harrying he inserted a story describing how Beverley had fared.⁴⁶⁶ As in the *Historia de Regibus Anglorum et Dacorum*, Alfred was explicit about the devastation. He, however, shifted events from Durham to the East Riding. Between York and the sea all men and beasts lay dead, except for those who had sought sanctuary at Beverley, for

⁴⁶² For authorship see Rollason, *Libellus*, p. xlix. *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, ed. by Thomas Arnold, ii (London: Rolls Series, 1885) p. 188.

⁴⁶³ Rollason, 'Symeon of Durham's *Historia de Regibus Anglorum et Dacorum*'.

⁴⁶⁴ *Aluredi Beverlacensis Annales, Sive Historia de Gestis Regum Britanniae*, ed. by Thomas Hearne (Oxford, 1716).

⁴⁶⁵ John Patrick Slevin, *The Historical Work of Alfred of Beverley* (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 2013).

⁴⁶⁶ Slevin, *The Historical Work of Alfred of Beverley*, pp. 205-207.

they were protected by St John of Beverley the eighth century bishop of York to whom the church was dedicated.⁴⁶⁷ Those who had sought sanctuary at Beverley had carried their valuables with them and, when the Norman army became aware of this certain soldiers 'habituated to robbery, made armed for Beverley'. When they arrived, their leader, a man named Thurstan, spotted an elderly man wearing a gold bracelet. He chased after him on horseback, but the man made it to the safety of the church doors. Thurstan was not deterred, but suddenly his horse fell from under him and Thurstan contorted and twisted out of shape 'like an ugly monster'. His companions fled the scene and reported what had happened to William. When he heard the account of Thurstan's fate, he realised the immense power of St John, and immediately confirmed all the lands, customs and privileges owed to the church. A similar story, written contemporaneously to Alfred's *Historia*, was recorded by William Ketel in a collection of John's miracles.⁴⁶⁸ The true meaning of these miracle accounts could be much debated. Certainly, it seems hard to read the story as anything other than a subtle dig at the Durham monks who had fled with Cuthbert's body whilst John had protected the Beverley monks. It may not be a coincidence that the leader of the Norman robbers shared a name with the recently deceased archbishop of York. But, as at Durham, William and the Normans were cast as bringers of death and destruction and William himself as a king against whom a saint needed to be invoked for protection.

At York, William was remembered not for the physical destruction that he wrought, but for his institutional crimes. Hugh the Chanter begins his *History of the Church of York*, written around 1127, by stating that 'the man who would relate all the unhappy accidents and bitter misfortunes which befell the city and church of York after the conquest of England by William, duke of Normandy, would find his story both painful and long', but Hugh was not telling that story and his attitude towards William only comes across when it overlaps with the story he was telling about York's

⁴⁶⁷ Slevin, *The Historical Work of Alfred of Beverley*, pp. 205-207.

⁴⁶⁸ William Ketel, 'Miracula Sancti Johannis, Eboracensis Episcopi' in *The Historians of the Church of York and Its Archbishops* ed. by James Raine (London: Rolls Series, 1879), p. 266.

struggles against the Canterbury claims for primacy.⁴⁶⁹ What little he does say, however, is revealing. William is presented as an angry, easily persuaded, and badly advised king: 'The wills of kings' says Hugh quoting Sallust 'are generally both passionate and changeable, and often contradictory'.⁴⁷⁰ Most of Hugh's clear irritation with the events that had occurred during William's reign is, however, directed at Lanfranc, the stereotypical bad-advisor in the York version of events. Lanfranc, Hugh says, was famous for his learning and piety, but was 'more eager for honour and glory' than befitted a monk. He insisted that he would not consecrate Thomas as archbishop of York unless Thomas swore that York was subject to Canterbury. Thomas insisted that he could not 'as it was not canonically proper' and went to William with his grievance. William initially found in York's favour, but Lanfranc won him over with 'many gifts and promises' and, when Thomas again refused to swear that York was subject to Canterbury, William 'lost his temper and said that he should hate Thomas for ever'.⁴⁷¹

Moving towards the end of the twelfth century, it is clear that these judgments still held currency. In William of Newburgh's *Historia Rerum Anglicanum*, there are several stories which indicate that William the Conqueror's reputation had not yet recovered. William of Newburgh's history begins with the events of 1066 and, in a passage reminiscent of the 'D' chronicle, he records that William had wanted to be crowned by the archbishop of Canterbury, but Stigand had refused because he would not 'lay hands on a man who had been stained by blood'.⁴⁷² Aeldred however had recognised that William was still 'breathing threatenings and slaughters against the people' and recognised that he should bind him to an oath to protect the people. After this, William loved and respected the

⁴⁶⁹ Hugh the Chanter, *The History of the Church of York* ed. and trans. Charles Johnson rev. by Martin Brett, CNL Brooke, M Winterbottom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 2-3

⁴⁷⁰ Hugh the Chanter, *History of the Church of York*, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁷¹ Hugh the Chanter, *History of the Church of York*, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁷² William of Newburgh, 'Historia Rerum Anglicarum' in *Chronicles of the reigns of Stephen, Henry II., and Richard I* ed. by Richard Howlett, vol 1 (London: Rolls Series, 1884), p. 20. Translated in *The Church Historians of England*, volume IV, part II; translated by Joseph Stevenson (London: Seeley's, 1861), p. 402.

archbishop of York who was the only man who could bend William's will to his.⁴⁷³ Curiously, William of Newburgh skips over the Harrying of the North, so prominent in all other chronicle accounts, but he records two incidents on William's death which show clearly what he thought of the man he was describing. The first occurs during William's burial at Saint-Etienne in Caen. It is not original to William of Newburgh: a version of the story appears in Orderic Vitalis, the Hyde Chronicle and Wace, but it is interesting for what William of Newburgh adds to the story. As William the Conqueror was about to be lowered into the ground a man approached and 'invoking the name of the almighty... forbade [William's] burial in this place'. 'That ground' the man said 'is mine by ancestral right, which the king took from me by force when he was building the monastery and never afterwards compensated me for it'.⁴⁷⁴ All present, William of Newburgh says, were amazed at God's judgment deeming the event to show the emptiness of 'transitory domination'. This 'most potent prince, whose sway in life extended so far, could now not, when dead, obtain quiet possession for even his own body'. The monks first satisfied the demands of this 'human dog, the better of the two men, and then set about performing the solemnities for the dead lion'. William adds to this version of this story his own moral, not present, as far as I am aware, in any other version: 'Whatever degree of glory among men this Christian man obtained by attacking, in hostile manner, harmless Christians and gaining to himself a kingdom by Christian blood, the same was his degree of guilt in the sight of God'.⁴⁷⁵ To prove this point, William of Newburgh reports a story from Battle Abbey. There 'after every gentle shower' there exudes real blood as if 'the voice of much Christian gore still cries to the Lord from the ground'.⁴⁷⁶ In William of Newburgh's eyes it was clear God had made his feelings on the matter known. William the Conqueror had clearly and self-evidently gone to hell.

⁴⁷³ William of Newburgh, 'Historia Rerum Anglicarum', p. 20; *Church Historians of England*, p. 402.

⁴⁷⁴ William of Newburgh, 'Historia Rerum Anglicarum', p. 22; *Church Historians of England*, p. 403.

⁴⁷⁵ William of Newburgh, 'Historia Rerum Anglicarum', p. 22; *Church Historians of England*, p. 403.

⁴⁷⁶ William of Newburgh, 'Historia Rerum Anglicarum', p. 23. *Church Historians of England*, pp. 403-4.

Moving forwards again into the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, this pattern repeats itself with the addition of more bellicose anti-Scottish sentiment seeping in, as in the chronicles of Peter Langtoft and Walter of Guisborough, which — as a result — softens judgement against William.⁴⁷⁷ In Langtoft's chronicle, for example, William is recorded as bringing the destruction and devastation that is recorded elsewhere, but he repents for his sins and makes restitution for his actions.⁴⁷⁸ The Anonimale Chronicle is the most immediately illustrative, however. As John Spence has argued, Anglo-Norman Brut chronicles are traditionally more muted in criticism of William than earlier chronicles had been, but the Anonimale Chronicle is a notable departure from this trend and recorded in some detail the brutality of William's reign.⁴⁷⁹ In Spence's judgement, this owed much to the Anonimale's reliance on Henry of Huntingdon, but the Anonimale is not simply a translation of Henry's work into Anglo-Norman French, and in some instances amplifies criticism of the Normans. In particular, unnoticed by Spence, the chronicle incorporates both the story of the flight of Cuthbert's community from the Harrying, and the protection John of Beverley offered to his church and concludes by stating that, as both chroniclers from Beverley and Durham had stated, William was brought to recognise and pay deference to John and Cuthbert.⁴⁸⁰ As noted in Chapter 1, the Anonimale chronicle does not appear originally to have been a product of St Mary's York, but it was copied there, kept there and provided the basis for continuations. Even at St Mary's, where tradition had it that William the Conqueror was involved in their foundation, the monks were actively working with versions of the past that remembered him as a brutal, violent man, tamed by the power of the north east's saints.

There can be no doubt that, even in sources where one might expect criticism of William to be moderated (for, after all, monasteries recognised the benefits of royal patronage and would be

⁴⁷⁷ *The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*, ed. by Thomas Wright (London: Rerum Britannicarum medii aevii scriptores, 1859)

⁴⁷⁸ For the Harrying and the 'great sin' of plundered monasteries: *Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*, pp. 417–419. For William's repentance pp. 420–421.

⁴⁷⁹ John Spence, *Reimagining History in Anglo-Norman Prose Chronicles* (York: York Medieval Press, 2013), pp. 130–131

⁴⁸⁰ Leeds, University Library Special Collections, Brotherton Collection MS 29, ff. 140r–v.

loath to turn down the opportunities to access it), there are enough hints to suggest what legacy he left on the region. When we turn back to each community's respective memories of its foundation, it does also appear that the monasteries struggled with their association to him

William himself travelled north of the Humber three times during his reign, twice to suppress revolts and once to campaign against the king of Scots.⁴⁸¹ Paradoxically, the abbey with the weakest claim to be a royal foundation seems to show that this connection to kingship was still deemed to be a desirable characteristic. At Whitby, which as we have seen, made no twelfth-century claim to be a royal foundation, a tradition evidently developed later that the king was, in some sense the founder of the abbey. In both the related Dodsworth fragment and poem, as well as in the Percy genealogy — although the version of the story there is slightly different — it is explained how the king came to treat Whitby as his own abbey. As we have already seen, the Dodsworth fragment concludes with the rhyming couplet 'Seeking an avenger, Serlo took his grief to the king, adopting him as another founder' which is shared with the Latin poem on St Hilda.⁴⁸² A marginal annotation preceding the extract in Dodsworth 118 has added the note 'the king is founder of Whitby, York, copied by the Abbot Bensted out of the register and original afore Thomas Lord Darcy and many others'.⁴⁸³ If it is assumed that this statement is intended to refer to the content which immediately follows it, and there is no material which surrounds it to which it could otherwise refer, then it identifies both the source and the perceived purpose of the text: a lost register, or lost portion of the surviving registers, of the abbey relating how the king became involved as founder of the abbey.⁴⁸⁴ John Benested did not become abbot of Whitby until 1505, so the note does little to date the extract, but it nevertheless demonstrates how an emerging tradition had developed at the abbey that the king was also its founder. At Whitby, at least, the monks clearly felt that it was worthwhile

⁴⁸¹ *Regesta*, pp. 78-82.

⁴⁸² See above, p. 35.

⁴⁸³ Dodsworth 118, f. 87r.

⁴⁸⁴ On the balance of probability the same register that Gascoigne consulted.

to attempt to attach themselves to his royal majesty. In the fifteenth century, the Percy family began to commemorate their own history in a series of historical works. A roll, surviving as Bodley Rolls 5, includes a Middle English genealogy of the Percy family down to 1454, dedicated to Henry Percy, fifth earl of Northumberland. This charts the origins of the family back to William de Percy alongside a genealogy of the kings of England.⁴⁸⁵ Two similar works survive from the sixteenth century dedicated to the fifth earl: a long verse poem authored by William Peeris, and a shorter chronicle sometimes attributed to the same author, although probably composed by someone else.⁴⁸⁶ Henry Percy's career as earl was beset by conflict which would rumble on into the time of his son, Henry, sixth earl of Northumberland, and would result in him being stripped of the earldom by Henry VIII in 1537. It is in this context that Henry, fifth earl of Northumberland, likely recognised the utility and need to turn to the family's history.⁴⁸⁷ This foray was not the Percys' first attempt to use historical writing to promote their house's interest, and previous generations had patronised John Hardyng in an attempt to explain the involvement of Henry 'Hotspur' Percy and the Percy family in Richard II's usurpation by Henry IV.⁴⁸⁸ At any rate, however, it is clear that William de Percy's foundation of Whitby Abbey was prominent in the family memory. Peeris was interested in rejecting the opportunity to paint Whitby as a Percy family foundation, but in doing so he nevertheless preserved a tradition of royal foundation:

Notwithstanding this first serle percy the secundi prior of whitby afterwarde
was the first that wolde have wrongide his blode from the defendinge
and foundership of the abbey to his dewty havynge no regarde
God perdon his sowle for he perposde a dampnable thyng
And when this serle cowde not deffete his brother of his right by wronge
by craft he devysede and by males oute fownde
To cause his house to pay to the kynge ten pownde
At every vacacyon whiche now is rasyde to mose large soume

⁴⁸⁵ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley Rolls 5, m. 11. A digital version of the start of this genealogy is available at [https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/p/f38efc8a-4ba1-43e6-8922-97014dcc536c, accessed 14/06/20].

⁴⁸⁶ For William Peeris, the verse chronicler of the Percy family, see Henry Summerson, 'William Peeris (fl. 1520)' ODNB. For a discussion of the shorter genealogy see A. S. G. Edwards, 'A Verse Chronicle of the House of Percy', *Studies in Philology*, 105.2 (2008), 226–44. For comments on the authorship and arguments against Peeris see particularly, p. 227.

⁴⁸⁷ Edwards, 'Verse Chronicle', p. 229. RW Hoyle, 'Henry Percy. Sixth earl of Northumberland, and the Fall of the House of Percy, 1527-1537' in *The Tudor Nobility* ed. by G. W. Bernard (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 180-211.

⁴⁸⁸ Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c. 1307 to the early sixteenth century*, pp. 279-280.

And bryngithe in variance to the house and causithe it in grete damage to kyn

No man may let a relyguous place
to geve or lende what they lyst it afforsythe but a finale
But be it litle or moche as shall requize the case
the founders right title it hurtithe nothyng at all
for when the saide serle prior of whitby had sayde his trappes all
yet god in his power would not suffer it for to lye
to defraude the right of the foundershipe from his brother lode william percy

In the monastery of Whitby olde recordes be
and annycnt monumentes of trewe remembraunce
that after the dyssease of Willyam percy
a contraversy was and also a veriance
Betwene Serle percy which was the secunde prior of Whitby and had the gouernaunce
of the said abbey and the lorde alayne the first founder of the saide monastery his nevew
whereupon a wronge title the saide serle forgyde oute newe

To entitle the kinge as founder was the said pryours entente
how be it the percys title is just playne and euydente
for his wrongfull dedis god gayf him sore punyshmente
for a long tyme or he departyde grete pety it was to see
with a contagious canker reufully veixde was he
After he had grete repentance for in his consciens he knewe
That Lorde Willyam percy his brother was the founder rightfull and trewe
for by euydens and dedis under seale which I have sene and lokide
The just title of the fundacione apperith obiectione may be nonne
And also the syete of the place stondith on the percis grounde
whereupon the saide lorde Willyam percy his abbey fryst dyd founde⁴⁸⁹

As Remensnyder noted in her study of Aquitaine, the fact that the king was distant was by no means a bad thing. Aquitanian foundation legends began painting the Capetian kings as their founders and protectors before Capetian control of Aquitaine had begun to be extended, and even in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the rulers were frequently absent.⁴⁹⁰ The royal founder was best as an idea kept at arm's length and ready to be invoked when needed, rather than ever present and interfering.

Selby

⁴⁸⁹ British Library, Royal MS 18 D II, f. 187v.

⁴⁹⁰ *Remembering Kings Past*, pp. 202-208.

Of all the abbeys in this study, it might be expected that Selby would make most of its royal links. The abbey preserved a rich tradition of royal foundation in the charter record. There can be no doubt that the Selby monks thought of themselves as a royal foundation, and were described as such by Henry I.⁴⁹¹ William I's foundation charter, an elaborate forgery which we will turn to in due course, explicitly states that Selby is an 'abbey of the king' and should enjoy its lands free and quit as is proper for royal gifts to such an abbey with the right to *soc* and *sac*, *tol* and *team* and *infangehtef*.⁴⁹² As a monastery Selby had little to commend it save its royal links — there lacked any sort of ancient monastic tradition at the site, Selby could not claim the enthusiastic support of powerful non-royal lay patrons. Their patron saint was obscure in the north of England, and — after 1088 — Selby were neighboured by an abbey that had none of Selby's issues, at St Mary's York.

The charter evidence may, too, preserve a tradition which also made Queen Matilda one of their founders. William's own foundation charter makes no mention of Matilda, but in a charter of Henry I, Selby is said to be a joint foundation of his father and mother.⁴⁹³ A joint foundation between William and Matilda would be unique, and this perhaps may be part of the basis for a long-standing tradition claiming Selby as the birthplace of Henry I, which still retains some cultural currency.⁴⁹⁴ Certainly, Henry I has to have been born somewhere, and Charles Warren Hollister, Judith Green, and Janet Burton, amongst others, have argued that the tradition, at its most basic level, is potentially plausible, but there is little to support it.⁴⁹⁵ Moreover, even if William can plausibly be placed in the general vicinity of Selby around the birth of Henry it seems highly

⁴⁹¹ *Selby Coucher*, i, IX, p. 16.

⁴⁹² See below.

⁴⁹³ *Selby Coucher*, i, pp. 12-13. At least one of these charters is said by Janet Burton to be questionable according to the preliminary findings of Richard Sharpe's work on the Acta of Henry I, *HSM*, p. xxxvii.

⁴⁹⁴ Charles Warren Hollister, *Henry I* (London: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 32.

⁴⁹⁵ *HSM*, p. xxxvii; Hollister, *Henry I* describes the likelihood that Henry I was born at Selby as 'a possibility, albeit a remote one', p. 32; Judith Green, *Henry King of England and Duke of Normandy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 20 suggests that 'it is not out of the question' that the queen was in the north with William, but suggests that more likely she was at Winchester. Bates dismisses it out of hand Bates, *William the Conqueror*, p. 320.

implausible that he would have been accompanied by the heavily pregnant Matilda – especially given the nature of William's trip North. If William so travel, then Edward Freeman's suggestion that this may have been a deliberate attempt by William to give his newborn son not just an English birth, but a north eastern birth to quell discontent with his rule, might be plausible. But if so then northern writers missed the significance.⁴⁹⁶ Nevertheless, as Burton and Green have shown, there clearly was some relationship between Matilda and Selby which is worthy of note.⁴⁹⁷ Alongside Henry's charters referencing the involvement of Matilda, some charters from Selby's earliest lay patrons, Gilbert Tison, also recall the involvement of Matilda. Gilbert Tison, a Domesday tenant in chief in Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, and Nottinghamshire, granted two charters in favour of Selby abbey.⁴⁹⁸ The first of these is dated by internal evidence to between May 1068, when Matilda was crowned queen (or perhaps to William's coronation in 1066 if the scribe was not being precise) and September 1069, when Aeldred, archbishop of York, died. Gilbert's charter describes Gilbert's gifts as having been given at the instance of Matilda, Queen of England.⁴⁹⁹ However, this charter has been viewed as suspicious by Burton on two grounds. Firstly, she considers the description of Gilbert Tison as 'the highest standard-bearer of the lord king of England' as suspect, and secondly she pointed out that Edward the Confessor, who was not canonised until 1161, is described in the charter as a saint.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁶ Edward Freeman, *The History of the Norman Conquest of England Volume IV: The Reign of William the Conqueror* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1871), p. 231.

⁴⁹⁷ *HSM*, p. xxxvii. Green, *Henry I*, p. 20.

⁴⁹⁸ Katherine Keats-Rohan, *Domesday People: A Prosopography of Persons Occurring in English Documents, 1066–1166. I. Domesday Book* (Woodbridge, Boydell & Brewer, 1999), pp. 204–5.

⁴⁹⁹ *Selby Coucher*, ii, DCCVI, p. 18.

⁵⁰⁰ *Selby Coucher*, ii, DCCVI, p. 18; *HSM*, p. xxxvi. Burton dates Edward's canonisation to 1163, presumably in error for the translation of Edward's relics: D Farmer, 'Edward the Confessor', in *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints online edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) Retrieved 15 Jan. 2018 <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199596607.001.0001/acref-9780199596607-e-521> I am grateful to Tom Licence for discussing Edward's cult with me, and for his suggestion that it would be unlikely to see Edward described as a saint before his canonisation. Selby's cartulary survives from a relatively late date; the addition of 'saint' to Edward's name, may simply be little more than the sort of anachronistic renovation that scribes often unwittingly fell prey to.

Gilbert's second charter in favour of Selby shares none of these problems and fortuitously survived as an original.⁵⁰¹ It was sold to a private collector in 1972, but purchased by the British Library in 2005 where it survives as British Library, Add Ch 77127.⁵⁰² Gilbert's charter is, to my knowledge, the earliest original document pertaining to Selby's foundation. It has been dated on palaeographical grounds to before 1100 with a date after the compilation of Domesday Book and towards the end of William II's reign considered most likely by Charles Travis Clay.⁵⁰³ This charter states that Gilbert's gift was made to Selby for the souls of King William, Queen Matilda, himself, and his wife and children. Gilbert was not alone in granting to Selby partially for the soul of Queen Matilda; one of Selby's early benefactors, Geoffrey de la Wryce, whose charter appears to show no obvious signs of forgery, likewise is recorded as having made his gift to Selby for the salvation of the king and queen.⁵⁰⁴ Whilst the reference to Matilda here is unusual it is not unique. A similar, although not identical passage in the foundation charter of Totnes Abbey, which again survives as an original, states that Juhel son of Alured made alms for 'King William, Queen Matilda, and their children'.⁵⁰⁵ Juhel's charter is addressed to St Serge and Bacchus of Angers, and it is notable here that the gift of the priory to Swavesey to the same church by Count Alan I of Richmond also makes reference to Queen Matilda.⁵⁰⁶ To this we can add copies of charters from Ramsey and Tutbury which mention Matilda's involvement.⁵⁰⁷ It is worth repeating, although well known, that charters were recorded by the beneficiary at this time, and in both instances the addition of 'Queen Matilda' indicates a decision made to include Matilda. This fact *may* indicate that Matilda was involved in the foundation at Selby, but it is certainly not the case for Angers, Ramsey or Tutbury. Moreover, if we consider all of the gifts in lay charters that are said to be made for the salvation

⁵⁰¹ EYC xii, pp. 47-48; *Selby Coucher*, vol ii DCCVII, p. 19. London, British Library, Add Ch 77127.

⁵⁰² Richard Mortimer, 'Anglo-Norman Lay Charters 1066-c1100: A Diplomatic Approach', in *Anglo Norman Studies XXV: Proceeding of the Battle Conference 2002*, ed. by John Gillingham (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2003) 153-176, p. 258 n. 21.

⁵⁰³ EYC xii, pp. 48-49.

⁵⁰⁴ Selby Coucher, ii, MCXCVI, p. 279

⁵⁰⁵ Mortimer, 'Anglo-Norman Lay Charters 1066-c1100', pp. 156-157 and transcription on pp. 174-175

⁵⁰⁶ Alan's charter is of doubtful provenance, but seemingly impeccable in terms of its diplomatic, see Ibid, p. 159, 165; EYC iv, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁰⁷ Mortimer, 'Anglo-Norman Lay Charters 1066-c1100', p. 165.

of William I alone we can include the original charter of Waleran to St Etienne, and Ilbert de Lacy to Rouen.⁵⁰⁸ It seems that rather than being proof of Matilda's involvement in the foundation of Selby, all Selby's charters serve to prove is that it was, around the turn of the twelfth century, a custom to give gifts — or more accurately to record gifts being given — for the salvation of the souls of the royal family as well as one's own family, as well as a particular personal attachment to Matilda for the grantors.

What then of Henry's charters? As we have remarked one of these describes Selby as a joint foundation of William and Matilda, but nine charters from Henry in favour of the abbey are recorded in their cartulary.⁵⁰⁹ In only one of these, the fourth in terms of placement, is Selby described as a joint foundation. The first confirms Geoffrey de la Wryce's gift 'for my soul and for the soul of my father and for my mother', the second orders that Selby Abbey should have its fishpond which it had when the abbey was founded by Henry's father and his ancestors, the third makes no reference to Henry's father or mother, the fourth orders that the abbey stay in the place where it was founded by Henry's father and his mother, the fifth and sixth make no reference to either his father or mother, the seventh refers to the rights the church of Snaith enjoyed in the time of Henry's father and mother, the eighth refers to the gift being made for Henry's father, mother, brother, and successors, and the ninth to Henry's father and successors. Even in Henry's charters Matilda's role is not certain. True in one charter he does refer to Selby as a foundation of his father and mother, but in another Selby is simply referred to as a foundation of his father and his ancestors.⁵¹⁰ In several instances Henry refers to his gifts as being for the soul of his father, mother, ancestors and successors,⁵¹¹ but on other occasions Matilda is absent.⁵¹² To this we may

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid, pp. 154-157.

⁵⁰⁹ *Selby Coucher*, i, III, p. 12; IX, p. 16; XVIII, p. 23; XIX, pp. 23-24; XX, p. 24; XXII, pp. 24 - 25; XXV, pp. 25-26; XXIX, pp. 27-28, and XXX, p. 28

⁵¹⁰ Ibid, IX p. 16; XIX, pp. 23-24.

⁵¹¹ Ibid, III, p. 12; XXIX, pp. 27-28.

⁵¹² Ibid, XXX, p. 28.

add that the copy of Gilbert's original is recorded in the cartulary without the reference to Matilda, and we may tentatively suggest that her potential involvement as the founder was not of particularly enduring interest to the community.⁵¹³ None of this is to suggest that Matilda definitively was not involved in the foundation of the abbey, but rather that her potential involvement was not considered enduringly important by the Selby monks and does not appear to have formed a long lived part of their memorialisation of the past. Her inclusion as a founder, or even as someone whose soul should be prayed for, had become optional in the story presented by Selby's cartulary.

One other event strained relationships between Selby and their royal founders. During the reign of William Rufus, Selby found itself drawn into a dispute between the archbishop of York and the bishop of Lincoln regarding the extent of their respective jurisdictions.⁵¹⁴ York claimed possession of Lincoln and Lindsey, as well as the manors of Stow and Louth, where Lincoln defended its own rights. William II was forced to mediate, and convinced Thomas, archbishop of York (1070-1100) to abandon his claims, offering the abbey of Selby and the church of St Oswald, Gloucester as compensation to the archbishop of York. The record of the agreement survives in cartularies held both by Lincoln and York.⁵¹⁵ What that meant in practice is uncertain. The wording of William's charter suggests that Selby should be held 'as the archbishop of Canterbury holds Rochester', an unusual tenurial relationship which saw Rochester hold its land from Canterbury as a subtenant, But the only possible reference we get to such a relationship from Selby's own records is in a charter from Thomas II, archbishop of York (d. 1114), granting and confirming various places to Selby 'because the church of Selby is in this way subject to the authority of the church of York'.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹³ Add MS 37771, f. 127r, EYC xii, pp. 47-48.

⁵¹⁴ *The Registrum Antiquissimum of the Cathedral Church of Lincoln*, ed. by C. W. Foster and K. Major (Lincoln: Lincoln Record Society, 1931), i, pp. 11-13. no. 4; London, British Library, Cotton MS Claudius B III, f. 5v; *York Minster Fasti*, ii, ed. by Charles Travis Clay, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Vol CXXIV (1959), p. 159; EYC, i, ed. by William Farrer (Edinburgh: Ballantyne, Hanson and co, 1914) no. 126, p. 116.

⁵¹⁵ London, British Library, Cotton MS Claudius B III, f. 5v.

⁵¹⁶ Selby Coucher, ii, CCCXCII, pp. 291-292.

There is no other reference to any such relationship in any of the charters issued by the archbishop of York to Selby and, as Barrie Dobson has pointed out, there is no evidence to suggest that the archbishops of York meddled at Selby beyond their rights as diocesan bishop.⁵¹⁷ There is, however, precious little to judge whether Rochester and Canterbury's relationship was the model for the new relationship between abbey and cathedral. Selby appears in the list of tenants in chief in Yorkshire in *Domesday*, although the section listing their holdings is curiously missing, and at any rate it predates any change of status. Post-conquest foundations were exempted from knight's service so Selby is absent from the *Cartae Baronum* and does not appear in the Book of Fees either.⁵¹⁸ It is not until the mid-thirteenth century when Selby begins to occasionally appear in the scutage rolls and must, therefore, have been considered a tenant in chief by the royal government that we can be certain of its status.⁵¹⁹ Even this is somewhat doubtful, for Selby had no more obligation to pay scutage in the second half of the thirteenth century than it did in 1166, but after the reign of Henry III requests were sent out to abbeys and cathedrals who, by rights, were exempt. Whilst Selby's exact status is uncertain the abbey's monks nevertheless consistently and repeatedly created and presented charters which unambiguously present the abbey as a royal foundation with no secular obligations to anyone but the king. A curious feature of Selby's royal charters is also probably related to this relationship. The kings frequently confirmed charters which granted Selby their rights 'as well as St Peter's has them', which, as Richard Sharpe notes is an unusual variant of the clauses which grant rights to successors 'as well as their ancestors hold' and may have its origins in this dispute.⁵²⁰ What precisely this meant is difficult to recover, for this change of status is entirely elided by the Selby historian, and no other Selby source comments on it.

⁵¹⁷ Barrie Dobson, 'The First Norman Abbey in Northern England: The Origins of Selby', in *Church and Society in the Medieval North of England*, ed. by Barrie Dobson (London: The Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. 29-46, pp. 42-43

⁵¹⁸ Helena Chew, *The Ecclesiastical Tenants in Chief and Knight Service* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 10.

⁵¹⁹ Chew, *Ecclesiastical Tenants*, pp. 10-11.

⁵²⁰ I am grateful to Richard Sharpe for sharing his preliminary work on the Acta of William II and Henry I for this point.

The most concrete expression of Selby's royal foundation occurs in its foundation charter. The charter as it stands is a forgery probably of the mid twelfth-century. A confirmation of King Stephen in favour of the abbey issued at the siege of Drax in 1154 replicates much of the Selby charter's language and refers to William's gift.⁵²¹ A copy of which charter survives as a single sheet in a late twelfth-century hand as St Petersburg Institute of History, Russian Academy of Sciences, collection 18, cart 381 1b and it was copied in to the *Historia* as well as the abbey's cartulary.⁵²² It was taken to Russia by the collector Nikolay Likhachev who had an interest in manuscripts and whose collections formed the basis of the archive. Indeed, the St Petersburg's Institute of History is housed in Likhachev's former mansion.⁵²³ The single sheet is itself a copy; various errors abound and a line between two 'qui's', present in both the cartulary copy of the charter and a copy of it recorded in the *Historia*, was omitted by eye skip.⁵²⁴ There are several other problems with the diploma. The witness list, whilst plausible, for a date range of 1070x1082-1083 is incompatible with the evidence of genuine diplomas of the Conqueror which were usually witnessed by the *crème de la crème* of Anglo-Norman society.⁵²⁵ William's half-brother, Odo of Bayeux appears amongst the witnesses but others (Edward of Salisbury, Hugh de Port, Hugh de Montfort, Robert de Olley, Richard fitz Gilbert and his brother Baldwin, Bishop Remigius of Lincoln, Ralph Taillebois, Robert de Tenu and Geoffrey de la Wirche) are not of the high status expected.⁵²⁶ The charter also presents an implausibly large early gift, even if it does appear that these grants were eventually accumulated

⁵²¹ *Regesta*, no 272, p. 820; *Regesta* iii, no 817, p. 300.

⁵²² The reference in the *Regesta* St Petersburg, Academy of Science, Arkhiv LOII AN SSR, koll. 18, kart 381, ed Khr. Iv which reflects the fact that the Institute was known as the Leningrad Department of the Institute of History, Moscow, during the USSR. I am grateful to Alexander Musin for help with the call number. *HSM*, XX, pp. 50-51 *Selby Cartulary*, i, pp. 11-2.

⁵²³ I am grateful to Andrey Kasatov for his help in acquiring a picture of this charter and for the information surrounding its arrival in Russia. For another Yorkshire single sheet which was purchased by Likhachev see Andrey, Kasatov, 'An Original Thirteenth Century Charter from Monk Bretton Priory (Yorkshire): In the Archive of St. Petersburg Institute of History (RAS)', *Scrinium* 7-8 (2011), 243-258.

⁵²⁴ *Regesta*, p. 820.

⁵²⁵ *Regesta*, p. 820.

⁵²⁶ Robert de Tenu may be Robert de Toeni, the interpretation of the rest of the names is more straightforward.

by the abbey, and various phrases are anachronistic and did not become common until the twelfth century.⁵²⁷

The diplomatic indicates that the charter was intended as a diploma, but it is not a very good attempt at one. It begins 'In nomine sancte et individue Trinitatis' and features an inflated preamble with religious overtones (although overtones intended as much to glorify William the Conqueror as anything else), but it lacks the spiritual anathema characteristic of English diplomas. In addition, the surviving single sheet was sealed (presumably indicating that the monks of Selby had access to a forged seal matrix of William the Conqueror) for the single sheet displays remnants of red wax on a parchment tongue. There are examples of sealed diplomas dating to William's reign, but these are rare, and it is likely an indication that the Selby forger was not particularly familiar with the type of document he was forging and that his expectations were that the document should be sealed.⁵²⁸ It has not been possible to consult this charter in person, and I am unable to provide measurements for it. Judgements of its size are therefore imperfect, but the impression given by the various hands which have written descriptions of the charter on the verso is that it is a small document intended for practical use. It lacks any ornamentation which may suggest the charter was not intended to be displayed, and the hand, whilst a tidy, regular book hand, also may suggest that the charter was produced for utilitarian purposes. It may be possible on these grounds to speculate that the surviving single sheet version of the charter was created specifically to be brought to Stephen at Drax.

The preamble to William's charter is of greatest interest, however. For it is a remarkable example of how monastic institutions could tie themselves to royal projections of power. It begins by describing William as 'the strongest and most powerful king of all those kings' who at that time

⁵²⁷ *Regesta*, pp. 817-818.

⁵²⁸ *Regesta*, pp. 102-105.

'were wielding royal sceptres under divine authority'. It continues to state that William was 'ruling with the greatest authority of the English lands which, with the permission and the will of God alone, he had acquired and governed, first through signs and marvellous prophetic symbols, and then through great force and battles which he won against the English'.⁵²⁹ Selby was a royal abbey and its royal founder was a remarkable example of a king indisputably and undeniably favoured by God.

The words that the Selby forger put into William's mouth are reminiscent of how the Battle monks came to understand their own foundation and advanced the aims of their own house. At the abbey, founded on the very spot where William had claimed the throne, the monks constructed the narrative of their foundation in terms of the battle. Across almost all of William's charters in favour of Battle it is almost universally stated that William founded the monastery either because he had vowed that he would do so or because God had given William victory in that place.⁵³⁰ The development of the vow motif in Battle's charters has been the subject of much discussion. It is absent from the earliest narrative source from Battle (known either as the *Brevis Relatio de Origine Willelmi Conquestoris* or the *Brevis Relatio de Guillelmo Nobilissimo*) and, although the 'ex voto' phrase appears in charters from as early as 1070, these are very possibly later interpolations of a phrase, and understanding of their foundation, which gained currency with the Battle monks during the twelfth century.⁵³¹ Not only was Battle Abbey founded by William the Conqueror, whose victory

⁵²⁹ Willelmus fortissimus immo potentissimus Rex omnium regum illorum a quibus eo tempore sceptrum regalia sub divo gubernantur, maximum imperium Anglicaë terrae regens quod permissione atque voluntate Dei primum Signis mirabilibus prodigiis, ac deinde magnis viribus bellisque debellando Anglos, tandem adquisitum gubernans, viris tam ecclesiasticis quam suis comitibus baronibusque atque ministris omnibus, salutos. *Regesta*, p. 821.

⁵³⁰ 'quam fundavi ex voto ob victoriam quam mihi Deus in eodem loco contulit' London, Lincoln's Inn, Hale ms 87 f. 7v, *Regesta* 15; London, Lincoln's Inn, Hale ms 87 f. 8v, *Regesta* 16, Add Charter 70980, *Regesta* 23; 'eo quo mihi Deus in eodem loco tantam victoriam attribuit ut de adversariis meis mihi iniuste resistentibus triumpharem' Lincoln's Inn, Hale ms 87 f. 6r-6v, *Regesta* 17; 'propter victoriam quam mihi Deus in illo loco contulit' *Regesta* 19, British Library, Cotton xvi 28, Lincoln's Inn, Hale ms 87 f. 8r, 'ob victoriam mihi a Deo in eodem loco' Lincoln's Inn, Hale ms 87 f. 7r-f. 7v, *Regesta* 20; 'quam cum essemus adepti votum Deo solvens inhonore Sancte Trinitatis et beati Martini confessoris Christi ecclesiam construxi' BL Harley Ch 83 A. 12, *Regesta* 22. A supposed thirteenth charter referring to Battle's *leuga* states that it was extended 'in memoriam Normannorum vivictorie' *Regesta* 25.

⁵³¹ 'Brevis Relatio de Guillelmo Nobilissimo', ed. and trans. by Elisabeth van Houts, in *History and Family Traditions in England and the Continent, 1000-1200*, ed. by Elisabeth van Houts (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 5-48. Elisabeth van

had been given to him by God, but, for the monks, their abbey itself had clinched God's support: William's promise to construct the abbey, and the victory God gave him made the construction of the abbey a manifestation of divine will.

At Battle, however, the charter evidence dovetails nicely with the various narratives that survive from the abbey. The monks did not quite achieve William of Poitiers's levels of sycophantic panegyric, but they did recognise the positive characteristics of William (whatever contemporary judgements, in both senses of the word, are made of him) as a royal founder. Even before the development of the 'ex voto' motif, the Battle monks were engaged with the process of glorifying their royal founder. The earliest example of this glorification is the *Brevis Relatio*. It survives in four manuscripts with one, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS e Museo 93, dating from around the mid 1110s, very probably the author's autograph manuscript.⁵³² The *Brevis Relatio's* theme, as the title of the work suggests, is a short account of the Dukes of Normandy. It starts with Duke Robert, William the Conqueror's father, and continues through the events of the reigns of William II and Henry I up to the Battle of Tinchbrai — although the author showed an awareness of Matilda's marriage to Henry V of Germany in 1114 — and ends by describing the lineage of the Norman dukes. The bulk of the text is concerned with William the Conqueror himself and the events which led to the Norman Conquest.⁵³³ Throughout, the author praised William for his character, his faith in God, his support for the church, and the peace he brought to the lands he governed.⁵³⁴ He made William's supporters and allies people 'whom he considered to be good and religious' and his enemies those who 'acted wrongly and lived disgraceful lives'.⁵³⁵ William's foundation of Battle is

Houts, 'Cnut and William: A Comparison', in *Conquests in Eleventh-Century England: 1016, 1066*, ed. by Laura Ashe and Emily J Ward (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2020), pp. 65–84.

⁵³² 'Brevis Relatio', p. 8; p. 12. pp. 14–15. The codex containing the *Brevis Relatio* also contained another version of Battle's foundation entitled *De constructione ecclesie Belli* was once bound with the *Brevis Relatio*, but was lost in the seventeenth century Elisabeth van Houts, 'The Ship List of William the Conqueror', in *ANS* 10, pp. 159–183, p. 165.

⁵³³ 'Brevis Relatio' p. 5, 25–48.

⁵³⁴ In particular 'Brevis Relatio', p. 27, 31, 34–35.

⁵³⁵ 'Brevis Relatio', pp. 34–35.

twice mentioned by the author. Firstly, he stated how William promised on the battlefield to have 'an abbey built to the memory of this victory and for the absolution of the sins of all who had been slain there' and secondly, whilst listing the abbeys that William had founded, the author recorded how Battle was built 'on the very site where the Lord granted him victory over his enemies'.⁵³⁶

The same theme was developed in both versions of the two-part chronicle which has become known as *the Battle Chronicle*. The relationship between the two versions of the chronicle has caused much debate, but both present a similar positive picture of a partially remembered William as the *Brevis Relatio*.⁵³⁷ In that chronicle's depiction of William there are striking similarities to the very model of saintly kingship that the mythical Charlemagne was believed to have achieved. In one of several sections on the character of their founder the author of the short chronicle explains how William:

everywhere trusted in heavenly aid, and from this source the glory of his reign was marvellously strengthened. And justly so. For he was outstanding in goodness, open-handed in generosity, notable for clemency, admirable in his abilities, constant in spirit, vigorous in arms, great-hearted in his undertakings. He was effective in conquering, pacific in ruling, diligent in reforming and maintaining the laws, a devoted worshipper of God, wholly dedicated to the good of churches, and (what one must most admire) though he ruled so many peoples, discretion, the kindler of virtues, so ruled him that, unconquered by men, he was of his own accord conquered in good time by the dictates of reason.⁵³⁸

In the Long Chronicle, the author explains how the abbey was founded and had gotten its name. William 'was not ungrateful for the favour shown him' by God and 'acting to carry out his vow, he commanded that a monastery worthy of such a victory be built on the battlefield' and 'resolved

⁵³⁶ 'Brevis Relatio, 6, pp. 32-33; 13, p. 40.

⁵³⁷ Nicholas Vincent, 'King Henry II and the Monks of Battle Abbey: the Battle Chronicle Unmasked', in *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to Henry Mayr-Harting*, ed. by R. Gameson and H. Leyser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 264–286; Eleanor Searle, *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, ed. and trans. by Eleanor Searle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); H. W. C. Davis, 'The Chronicle of Battle Abbey', *The English Historical Review*, 29 (1914), 426-434; Martin Brett, 'Searle, Eleanor (ed.)', 'The Chronicle of Battle Abbey (Book Review)', *Medium Aevum*, 50 (1981), 319-323.

⁵³⁸ *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, pp. 42-43.

that the abbey should be called Battle, to preserve the memory of his victory, because there by the grace of God the Thunderer he had won a victory and a kingdom for himself and his heirs.⁵³⁹

The only criticism that Battle monks directed towards William was for his failure to endow the monastery as well as the monks had hoped that he might. Even this criticism is relatively muted. In both the two Battle chronicles and in the *Brevis Relatio* the monks praised his intention to endow the abbey, but criticised him for his failure to make good on his promise, because life was fleeting, precious, and unpredictable and without immediate action death may always get in the way.⁵⁴⁰

The Battle Chronicle states that the kings continued to support the abbey beyond the death of William the Conqueror. William Rufus was remembered as a 'magnificent prince' who had generously provided gifts to the abbey, both out of his own initiative and in fulfilment of his father's bequests — although the chronicle eschews the lengthy passages of praise dedicated to his father, and, whilst describing his death, makes a passing reference to the terror of his reign.⁵⁴¹ But Henry I, was again effusively praised and remembered fondly for the favour and support he showed the abbey. As Mason points out, the Battle Chronicle's conceptualisation of the abbey in Henry's mind as the 'very ensign of his reign' managed to look past Henry's foundation of Reading Abbey, where he was buried.⁵⁴² Two manuscripts of the *Brevis Relatio* conclude with laudatory remarks on Henry I. These are almost identical, but one version was clearly written during Henry's life whilst the other was adapted following his death.⁵⁴³ Both state that Henry ruled 'rightly and

⁵³⁹ *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, pp. 67-68.

⁵⁴⁰ The theme is consistent across both the long and the short chronicle, but expressed far more strongly in the long. The short chronicle simply states that William had intended all these things but was prevented by death whereas the long chronicle laments that William had procrastinated. *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, p. 48, 94. 'Brevis Relatio', p. 40.

⁵⁴¹ *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, pp. 106-107.

⁵⁴² Emma Mason, 'Pro Statu et Incolumitate Regni mei: Royal Monastic Patronage 1066-1154', *Studies in Church History* 18 (1982), 99-117, 'Statu', p. 12.

⁵⁴³ 'Brevis Relatio', p. 47. Both copies are fourteenth century, for the relationship between the manuscripts see 'Brevis Relatio', pp. 8-10.

honestly according to God' with the first expressing the author's desire that the king should reign for a long time, and the second expressing gratitude that he had.⁵⁴⁴

Battle's royal favour became particularly important during Battle's dispute with the bishop of Chichester over Battle's obligation to their diocesan bishop. The long Chronicle summarises Battle's position succinctly (although indeed it is equally possible to quote from a number of Battle's charters here):

King William, who divine providence had brought to England to secure a right due to him, had made a vow at that place on the battlefield with the approbation of all his companions, that he would give the place to the Lord Christ, just as free as he himself might win it. And when, by divine favour he had won the victory and could discharge his vow, he built a church there in honour of God and St. Martin, for the salvation of all, and particularly of all killed there, as free and quit from all exaction of earthly service, from all subjection, oppression, and domination of bishops as is Christ Church, Canterbury.⁵⁴⁵

The memory of William, and Battle Abbey's relationship to him, therefore, became a central in the dispute. Not only was the inimitable example of their founder inherently beneficial, but his supposed battlefield vow became the justification for William's right to grant them the exemptions the monks claimed from the Bishop of Chichester. Battle's forged charters similarly do not fail to make the connection between the two and tie the claim to exemption to the process of their foundation.⁵⁴⁶

The attraction of William to the Battle monks is obvious and is a powerful example of the advantages a royal founder presented. The Battle monks turned to the past to explain why they claimed the rights and possessions they did, why they should continue to enjoy those rights and possessions as they had in the past, and why they should have even more rights and possessions in places where they felt that current reality was infringing on what they had been given. The claim

⁵⁴⁴ 'Brevis Relatio', p. 47.

⁵⁴⁵ *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, pp. 148-149.

⁵⁴⁶ For example, British Library, Harley Ch 83 A 12; *Regesta* 22, pp. 161-165; British Library Cotton Charter xvi 28; *Regesta*, 19, pp. 147-150. BL BL Add Charter 70980; *Regesta* 23, pp. 166-170.

that Battle had been given exemptions and privileges by William was fleshed out with an explanation of *why* he had done so, and what authority he had to grant what he had. The dispute itself may have provided the impetus to crystallise and order the past in the way they did, but the power that the foundation story gave them is clear.

At Selby, however, despite the fact that the monks there clearly recognised the same positive characteristics and preserved a tradition of royal foundation, the narrative they produced does not tie the abbey as closely to the king as might be expected. William undoubtedly appears, as we shall see, do his successors, but these appearances are brief and fleeting and the monks did not attempt to tie their place in the world to the new dynasty in the way the Battle monks had done. Beyond the references to Selby's royal status in the charter record, and the lengthy laudatory remarks in favour of William in the diploma's preamble, there is precious little to suggest that the Selby monks were invested in strengthening their royal links. The narrative the monks produced is, as we have seen, not concerned with explaining the abbey's royal links or strengthening, or perhaps even rekindling (depending on the nature of the relationship between the archbishop and the abbey), those ties, but instead embarks on an explanation of the *furta sacra* which brought Germanus and his cult to Yorkshire.

At several points the author explains the role that various people played in the community's foundation. The first 'foundational character', and inarguably the primary driver of the foundation in the narrative, is Saint Germanus himself. His appearance in visions to Benedict was the primary reason for the establishment of the monastery and his intervention in the foundation drove it towards its successful completion. It is he who provided the necessary theophany for Selby's foundation. Benedict is the story's second protagonist, but he is given little agency in his own right and is, in most instances, presented as little more than the real-world agent of Germanus. At times, such as the diversion to Salisbury which saw Germanus appear to him again to spell out syllable

by syllable the place where he should have gone, the author's depiction of Benedict is of little more than a bumbling idiot. That depiction may have something to do with Benedict's departure from the monastery to live the rest of his life at Rochester.⁵⁴⁷ As the author had previously laid out, however, Benedict's abbacy was a controversial one and his harsh treatment of two monks — Ralph and Ranulf, who had stolen money from the abbey's treasury — had made it before William Rufus, who ordered Benedict's deposition and instructed Stephen, abbot of St Mary's York, to carry out his orders.⁵⁴⁸ Yet the controversial end of Benedict's abbacy did not prevent the Selby Historian from providing a lengthy series of verses in the abbot's honour, and his reputation appears to have been in good standing.⁵⁴⁹

On several occasions, Benedict received aid and support on his journey, and the author dedicated some time to discussing the identity of Benedict's helpers. Amongst these is William the Conqueror, but the two men who the author discusses at greatest length are an Edward and Hugh fitzBaldric, sheriff of Yorkshire c.1067.⁵⁵⁰ Edward is not identified beyond his first name by the author, but it is likely that he is Edward of Salisbury, sheriff of Wiltshire. Benedict met him in Salisbury, and he appears as a witness in Selby's supposed foundation charter. According to the author, Edward was an enthusiastic supporter of Benedict. Soon after meeting, Edward provided Benedict with a reliquary to house Germanus's finger and a linen covering for the altar, which both survived at the abbey when the historian was writing, and supported Benedict in his mistaken efforts to find the site for the monastery near Salisbury.⁵⁵¹ After Germanus had revealed to Benedict that he had been looking for the location in the wrong part of the country, it was Edward who arranged for Benedict to be sent north, and for a clerk named Theobald to go with him as a

⁵⁴⁷ *HSM*, pp. 62-63

⁵⁴⁸ *HSM*, pp. 56-63.

⁵⁴⁹ *HSM*, pp. 54-57.

⁵⁵⁰ Katherine Keats-Rohan, *Domesday People*, Edward of Salisbury, pp. 186-187; Hugh Fitz Baldric pp. 267-268

⁵⁵¹ *HSM*, p. 27

translator.⁵⁵² This support was all that Edward seemingly provided. Other than his appearance as a witness in the foundation charter, there is no record of any other gift of his in favour of the abbey, but nevertheless he is given a prominent role in the foundation narrative as a supporter.

Hugh's involvement within the *Historia* is treated in much the same way. He appears in the narrative after Benedict had first established his dwelling at Selby. Whilst sailing along the River Ouse, Hugh spotted the cross Benedict had planted and disembarked to investigate. After meeting Benedict, Hugh promised to erect a pavilion for him to reside in, and informed Benedict that he and his men would have their wives send a carpenter to construct a chapel.⁵⁵³ This is the only mention of Hugh in the Selby sources.

The Selby historian informed his reader that he was preserving the oral traditions of the abbey and here presents these stories as the preserved oral tradition of the Selby foundation story which has not survived elsewhere. Subtle though the break is, it is, however, a noticeable one. The cast of characters involved in the foundation in the *Historia*, and the names of those involved in the foundation in the charter record, do not support one another. The two traditions, although overlapping and complementary, preserved different emphasises. In this instance however, it is at least questionable whether the 'memorial tradition' preserved by the Selby historian actually existed, and both Hugh and Edward could have entered the story in other ways. As Licence pointed out, the role that Hugh plays in the Selby story bears a resemblance to the same role he performs in Symeon of Durham's description of the foundation of Whitby and St Mary's York.⁵⁵⁴ Given the links between these institutions, it is not impossible to imagine that the *Libellus* served as the archetype for the Selby historian's story. Similarly, the diversion of Benedict to meet Edward of Salisbury could well be an invention to explain the otherwise odd donation of the reliquary and

⁵⁵² *HSM*, pp. 30-31.

⁵⁵³ *HSM* i 13-14, pp. 38-40

⁵⁵⁴ Licence, *Hermits and Recluses*, p. 92.

altar cover and, perhaps, his appearance as a witness in William's diploma. The story of wandering in Salisbury plays in to well established *peregrinatio* tropes that appear often in medieval monastic accounts, and, as we have already seen, it was a story that was also in currency at Durham.⁵⁵⁵ Perhaps more than any other source, we can detect the influence of the *Libellus* and other Durham historical works in the Selby historian's work. What is remarkable is, whilst this influence can be detected, there is little evidence to suggest that the Selby historian relies on the abbey's charters. Rather than the formative basis of the Selby story, the charter evidence stood alone, scarcely recording the people who, in the opinion of the *Historia*'s author, had been so vital.

It is only after Benedict meets Hugh fitzBaldric that William the Conqueror is introduced to the *Historia*. Hugh informed Benedict that the place he had settled was royal land and advised Benedict that he should meet William in order to receive William's blessing for the foundation. Benedict and William met, possibly at York in 1069/70, and William gifted Benedict substantial lands in Yorkshire, as well as the carucate of land 'on which the monastery called Selby was built, a wood called Flaxley, a vill called Rawcliffe... another half carucate of land in Brayton [and] a fishery which is called Whitgift.⁵⁵⁶ Following an awkwardly placed miracle performed by Germanus's finger and a description of the brigandry of a 'Swain, son of Sigge' in Yorkshire, the Selby historian returns to the topic of the early endowment of the monastery. He records how Geoffrey de la Wirche, Guy de Reinbuecurt and the archbishop all gave gifts to the abbey, in the one passage that is unquestionably reliant on the foundation charter of William the Conqueror, and explains how Benedict went to London to have the gifts confirmed.⁵⁵⁷ The next chapter of the *Historia* copies the foundation charter out in full, alongside a charter of William II (although attributed to William the Conqueror) granting Selby the same customs as the archbishop of York and the church of St

⁵⁵⁵ Manuela Brito-Martins, 'The Concept of *peregrinatio* in Saint Augustine and its Influences', in *Exile in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Laura Napran and Elisabeth Van Houts (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), pp. 83-94.

⁵⁵⁶ *HSM*, pp. 43-44.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 50-51.

Peter.⁵⁵⁸ In the first of these charters, Selby was referred to as 'the king's own abbey', and the historian made the same claim later in the narrative when explaining that the Archbishop of York was hesitant to accept the resignation of Hugh as he did not wish to be seen to be interfering in the king's abbey 'without good cause'.⁵⁵⁹ Despite these references, William the Conqueror never appears in the narrative again. There are no laudatory remarks following his death, nor any further attempt to explain why Selby should have attracted the interest of the new king. For, as much as the Selby historian evidently considered Selby a royal abbey, he was not interested in explaining that link or dwelling on what the status meant for his community. It was not the source of Selby's importance.

Neither do any of William's successors greatly concern the *Historia*, despite the fact that, as we have seen, the charter record is relatively consistent on those kings' interest in the abbey. William Rufus appears once in the narrative, where he orders the arrest of the first abbot, Benedict, and is promptly described as evil by the Selby Historian.⁵⁶⁰ Henry I never appears in the Selby narrative. In many respects, this narrative decision is bizarre. Why would Selby's *Historia* miss the chance to make more of its most obvious claim to status, a status that they may well have known the Battle monks were crafting and wielding in their own dispute? If the proximity to the king was not a problem, and the example of Whitby suggests that in Yorkshire royal founders were deemed valuable, then why else did the Selby monks not seek to solidify those royal links? One possible answer may lay in the events which surrounded the foundation of Selby. The precise date of Selby's foundation is a little unclear across the various sources for its foundation, but it can be dated to close to William's campaign of 1069/1070 known as the Harrying of the North. The *Historia* dates the arrival of Benedict to Selby to 'around' 1069 which was 'the fourth year of the reign of William I', with his blessing as abbot occurring sometime after 'Thomas, archbishop of York, had taken up

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid, pp. 50-55.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 70-71.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 58.

office in December 1070.⁵⁶¹ Marginal additions on a set of twelfth century Easter tables surviving from Selby, similarly date the foundation to 1070, and the rubrication of the *Historia* also gives the same date.⁵⁶² Later, however, the author of the *Historia* describes 1174 as being 'one hundred and six years after the foundation' of the monastery.⁵⁶³ The appearance of Hugh fitzBaldric in the narrative does little to date the foundation further. His meeting with Benedict is dated by *Historia* as occurring 'at the same time' as an undated miracle performed by Germanus's finger which had enabled a mute man to speak at the time of 'the savage brutality and ungovernably obstinacy of the English, who were constantly in revolt to take vengeance on the French'.⁵⁶⁴ The impression the author gives is that the arrival of Benedict at Selby, the visit of the mute man, and the discovery of Benedict by Hugh occurred quickly after one another, but whether this took place in 1069 or 1070 is unclear. References to Hugh acting as sheriff in Yorkshire in 1069 are taken from a questionable reading of the *Historia* itself, but Hugh can be seen acting as sheriff in 1070 in other sources, and appears to have acquired land from those deprived in 1069.⁵⁶⁵ Although it is impossible to date the foundation more firmly, it can nevertheless be placed within the context of William the Conqueror's campaigns north to crush rebellion in 1069/1070. As we have just seen, the Selby historian paints a picture of rebellion and disorder at the time of Selby's foundation, and returns to the topic again when describing Swain's ravaging of the land. It is between these two descriptions that William the Conqueror is first introduced to the narrative, but his conduct in the

⁵⁶¹ HSM, i, 10, p. 32; i 19, p. 48. The description of 1069 as the fourth year of William the Conqueror's reign is deceptively improbable. William was, of course, crowned on Christmas Day, the style of the Angevin kings, and thus the style that the Selby Historian was most familiar with, dated the regnal year from the coronation and there is no reason to assume — despite a lack of documentary evidence to prove it — that this practice was different under William. If that is the case William's fourth regnal year began 25 December 1069. For both these statements to be correct Benedict would have to have arrived in a six-day window at the end of the year and the Selby historian would have to be using 1 January as the start of the year. C. R. Cheney, *A Handbook of Dates for Students of British History* rev. by Michael Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 21-22 and *Handbook of British Chronology* 3rd edition, ed. by E. B. Fryde, D. E. Greenway, S. Porter and I. Roy (London: Royal Historical Society, 1986), pp. 30-31, 34.

⁵⁶² London, British Library, Add MS 36652, f. 5r.

⁵⁶³ HSM, pp. 152-153.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 36-39.

⁵⁶⁵ Farrer's argument in 'The Sheriffs of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire', *English Historical Review*, 30 (1915), 277-285, pp. 282-283 is based upon evidence from the Selby *Historia* itself and does not provide independent proof. For the argument based on deprivation of thegns see Dalton, *Conquest Anarchy and Lordship*, p. 66. Fleming, *Kings and Lords in Conquest England*, p. 167.

north is met with utter silence by the Selby historian. And nowhere in the entirety of the *Historia* is the Harrying of the North mentioned. That oversight was deliberate. At William the Conqueror's own foundation, the monks could hardly have forgotten the atrocities that their founder committed — even if they might have wished that they could.

The date of Selby's foundation naturally leads to the suggestion that the entire abbey's *raison d'être* owed something to William's actions. As have already seen, there can be little doubt that the Harrying of the North shocked contemporaries and near contemporaries, and it would be understandable if William's campaign in Yorkshire did cause him to reflect on the state of his eternal soul. The arrival of Benedict — if indeed we can accept any of the Selby *Historia* as accurate — may have provided him with the opportunity to repent. Such speculation has proven attractive to modern historians, such as most recently Bates, but the association of Selby with penance does have a medieval heritage.⁵⁶⁶ The earliest connection between penance and Selby's foundation was made within a hundred years of the writing of Selby's *Historia* by Matthew Paris. Paris could be a notoriously unreliable witness, and his version of Selby's foundation finds no support elsewhere, but it is nevertheless worthy of repetition. It appears as a marginal addition to Matthew Paris's *Historia Anglorum*, which at this point was closely following Roger of Wendover's *Flores Historiarum*. Here, Paris added the correction to Roger's statement that William had founded one abbey in Normandy and one in England to state that William had founded two abbeys in England: Battle and Selby. Selby, Matthew explains, had been founded to atone for William's murder of his kinsman whilst out hunting.⁵⁶⁷ Seemingly Matthew had the death of Conan, count of Brittany (d. 1066) in mind, whose sudden death led to suspicions that he had been poisoned by William.⁵⁶⁸ It seems thoroughly unlikely that William, even if he was involved Conan's murder, would decide

⁵⁶⁶ Bates, *William the Conqueror*, pp. 319-320

⁵⁶⁷ Matthew Paris, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. by Frederic Madden (Rolls Series: London, 1866), i, p. 34. Roger of Wendover, *Chronica: sive Flores Historiarum*, ed. by H. O. Coxe (London: English Historical Society, 1841), ii, p. 24.

⁵⁶⁸ Orderic Vitalis, *HE*, ii, p. 312; Bates, *William the Conqueror*, p. 203. *HSM*, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii.

that 1069/1070 was the right time to atone for his part in the count's death, but it nevertheless seems plausible that Matthew could be conflating two traditions: the association of William with the murder of Conan, and the association of the foundation of Selby with penance.

By no means is this example conclusive, but the comparison with Battle might again prove illustrative. For, even there, the monks seemingly struggled with the association with their founder's penance. We have already seen that the dominant explanation for the Battle monk's own understanding of their foundation was the vow motif, but, even when the monks offered other explanations, they did not indicate that they felt William ought to do penance for the events of the battle. Both the Long and Short Chronicles employ almost identical descriptions of William's motivations: the Short Chronicle describes William as vowing to construct the monastery 'for the salvation of all, and especially for those who fall here', and the Long Chronicle 'for the salvation of all, and especially of those who should fall in that battle'.⁵⁶⁹ The following clause in the long chronicle states that the monastery is to be a place of refuge and aid for all, where the example of never-ending good works would pay back for the blood shed at Hastings.⁵⁷⁰ It is only this statement in the entire corpus of Battle's material that explicitly states that Battle was founded out William's personal desire to pay back for what had happened during the Battle itself. In contrast, the *Brevis Relatio*, which records no vow whatsoever, states that William 'had an abbey built to the memory of this victory and for the absolution of the sins of those who died during the battle'.⁵⁷¹ In the *Brevis Relatio*, William's desire to found the monastery is therefore presented as a desire to absolve the sins of those who died in general terms and not a desire to absolve those people of the sins they had committed during the battle specifically.⁵⁷² William's own sins are omitted: he did not die

⁵⁶⁹ 'pro salute cunctorum et hic nominatim occumbencium' *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, pp. 36-37; 'pro omnium illorumque nominatim qui in eodem bello occumberent salute' *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, pp. 66-67.

⁵⁷⁰ 'quatinus igui bonorum operum instantia commissa illic effusi cruoris redimerentur', *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, pp. 66-67.

⁵⁷¹ *Brevis Relatio*, p. 33.

⁵⁷² *Brevis Relatio*, p. 32.

at Hastings and it was not for him that the monastery was founded. The *Brevis Relatio* also records the first attestation of the idea that William constructed the monastery as a monument to the victory that God had granted him.⁵⁷³ The idea that Battle had been founded as a monument to the Norman victory, and as a memorial of God's favour towards William's claims, was, therefore already in place by the end of the reign of Henry I at Battle. It, however, appeared to gain no currency outside of the abbey at any point, and therefore is absent from early Norman accounts of the conquest, such as the *Carmen* and William of Poitier's *Gesta Guillelmi*.

Whilst Battle's monks may have felt sanguine about the conquest itself, there cannot be much doubt that the events were seen as shocking by many observers.⁵⁷⁴ Amongst English sources, a growing sense of sympathy towards the English losses at Hastings is detectable in the next generation of sources, alongside an unhappiness with the sheer quantity of blood shed, even if chroniclers felt the battle was justified.⁵⁷⁵ Arguing that William's motivation for founding the abbey was a vow he had given to God before the battle, or even casting it as a thanks giving, rather than an act of penance, therefore made the foundation a symbol of divine favour for the new Norman kings' rule, and mitigated the link between the abbey's foundation and their founder's involvement in the sinful bloodshed of the battle itself. But Battle Abbey could not, of course, move past the battle in its entirety. The abbey was inevitably and inexorably linked to the event which gave the abbey its name, but the evidence does suggest that monks felt it better not to lay the blame for the loss of life which occurred at that battle at their founder's feet. They preferred not to be seen as a symbol which attempted to whitewash his sins.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷³ *Brevis Relatio*, p. 40.

⁵⁷⁴ van Houts, 'The Memory of 1066 in Written and Oral Traditions', p. 172; van Houts has argued that the reaction to the conquest in European sources is mixed in the true sense of the word. Some express admiration for the Norman's martial skill and emphasise the legitimacy of William's actions, others condemnation of the violence and Norman justification. Van Houts, 'The Norman Conquest through European Eyes', *English Historical Review*, 110 (1995), 831-853.

⁵⁷⁵ van Houts, 'The Memory of 1066', p. 177. For the legal arguments surrounding the Norman Conquest see George Garnett, *Conquered England: Kingship, Succession, and Tenure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁵⁷⁶ Battle's own failure to record William's own personal penance as a motivation for the foundation is however echoed in other sources. Orderic adds the foundation of Battle in his extrapolations of the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*

At Selby, a similar hesitancy is detectable. William appears frequently in the abbey's charter record, but the foundation story that the monks cast, and the abbey's history which continued from it, was looked past the abbey's royal links. Even Henry I, who was remembered in preference to William the Conqueror and William Rufus at St Mary's, is unmentioned in Selby's *Historia*, despite the number of surviving charters issued to the abbey by him. The Selby historian was not interested in explaining royal links, whether the abbey had benefited or suffered under a king. That decision, and its contrast to Battle Abbey, is revealing – although there are important caveats to be raised. The first is that the facts of Selby's foundation meant that the abbey was slotted in to a powerful nexus of northern saints. Competing with Cuthbert may well have been a folly, but it was incumbent upon the monks to demonstrate that their own patron saint, and the relic of his finger which they possessed, was a powerful force to be reckoned with. Donors, patrons, and supporters needed to be assured that donations to the abbey were worthwhile, and that Germanus was as worthwhile an intercessor as the north-east's local constellation of saints. As Burton has pointed out, the abbacy of Germain (1154-60) appears, from the evidence of the *Historia*, to have coincided with an attempt to spread Germanus's cult through preaching tours.⁵⁷⁷ The miraculous appearance of Benedict at Selby, guided by Germanus himself, may well have been constructed with such 'promotional' attempts in mind.

immediately after removing William of Jumieges's more overt pro-Norman sentiments from the preceding paragraph. Orderic's understanding of the foundation cannot be sufficiently explained by a pro-Norman viewpoint *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, ed. by Elisabeth van Houts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), ii, pp. 172-173; In his Ecclesiastical History Orderic gives no specific reason, save William's piety, for the foundation of Battle and instead argues its further proof of his general piety. Orderic Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ii, pp. 192-194. Henry of Huntingdon states that William founded Battle for the departed, but again does not state that it was because of their sins, Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. and trans. Diana Greenway (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 394. William of Malmesbury also does not make the connection between Battle and penance in either *the Gesta Pontificum* or the *Gesta Regum*, even though he does ascribe penitential motivations to Henry's foundation of Reading. *Gesta Regum*, 267.3, p. 492. *GP*, i 89, p. 304.

⁵⁷⁷ *HSM*, pp. xcii-xciii.

The second caveat is that despite the lack of interest in their royal links in the *Historia*, the Selby monks did not fail to take advantage of them when they felt those links could be advantageous. In those charters repeatedly presented to the king for confirmation, the description of Selby as a royal abbey is frequent and commonplace. When the monks wished to appeal to the local community for money, they emphasised the theophany of their foundation and the importance of Saint Germanus and their relic, and when they wanted royal confirmation they emphasised the involvement of William instead. How memorial, then, are these two strands of Selby's identity? And how much were these constructs designed to serve immediate purposes? Whilst the royal charters constantly re-appear and are re-confirmed, there is no evidence of dissemination of the Selby *Historia* after the twelfth century at Selby itself. That, as much as anything, may suggest that the work's 'shelf-life' at Selby was short lived, although that judgement may depend too much on the vagaries of survival. The reality is monastic memory is always somewhat of an artificial construct, shaped by the contours, pressures and developments that the institution underwent, and expressed in certain ways in certain sources. For the Selby monks, being able to foreground different aspects of their past when required allowed them to cater their past to different audiences. In doing so, the version of their past which they presented was never fully represented in one single source, but fragmented, multi-layered, and piecemeal with the various strands of their identity being amplified and minimised based upon each work's purpose. The existence of Selby's *Historia* does not suggest that they *only* remembered the past in the ways it laid out, but that it was one of the ways they did.

There is also the tantalising evidence that another version of the Selby foundation story may have existed, preserved in the abbey's coat of arms. A drawing of those arms, made by Thomas Tonge, the Norray herald, survives as British Library, Harley MS 1499, and an edition was printed for the

Surtees Society as *Heraldic Visitation of the Northern Counties in 1530 by Thomas Tonge*.⁵⁷⁸ The arms feature three swans, which — in popular retellings of the Selby foundation story — are said to have marked the spot where Benedict should found his abbey, but that information did not come from the pen of the Selby historian. It may be a minor point of difference, but it is evidence that the foundation story evolved and changed and was not bound by the confines of the *Historia*.

St Mary's York

As at Selby, the monks of St Mary's York recorded their royal foundation in an elaborate, impressive, obviously forged, diploma. Selby's, as we have seen, is a purported diploma of William the Conqueror in favour of the abbey, whereas St Mary's diploma records William Rufus's supposed confirmation of gifts to the abbey. Like the Selby diploma, St Mary's survives in a twelfth-century copy. In both cases, the witness lists are coherent, if not without problems, and in neither case, do the abbeys appear to claim land that had not genuinely been gifted to them — although in both cases the abbeys implausibly claim sweeping exemptions. The St Mary's York diploma has never before been published. Seemingly, the editors of *Early Yorkshire Charters* and the editors of both volumes of the *Regesta* were unaware of the manuscript which contained it. It had been noticed by Richard Sharpe and was due for inclusion in the collection of the *acta* of William II and Henry I, which remained unfinished before his death in 2020. Appendix I, therefore, contains a transcript of this diploma based on the version in Add MS 38816. This codex contains two other major documents, a general confirmation of Henry I of gifts given to the abbey since William Rufus's diploma (which also has not been published), and a confirmation by Henry II, which appears in two abbey cartularies, and brings the contents of the two documents together.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁸ Harley MS 1499, f. 59v. *Heraldic Visitation*, p. 61.

⁵⁷⁹ Add MS 38816, ff. 22v-28v.

The most remarkable feature of the William Rufus diploma is the elaborate narrative preamble put into William's mouth by the St Mary's monks:

Because of all of our works we profit only from those, which proceeding out of love and fear of god, are worked to honour him and his bride our holy mother church, and scripture witnesses, which orders us to honour the heavenly father and our mother church in the hope of eternal life and Moses insinuates, who was devoted with such a great submission of the heart to the building of the tabernacle. Solomon who contrived to honour God and the church did not dismiss as needless the thought of building a temple to the lord, which his father David had devised in his mind, saying, 'My father thought to build a temple to the lord, but because he was occupied with the battles of the lord he was unable to complete it, I (to whom there is neither adversary or opponent) shall satisfy that idea to build a temple to the lord.'⁵⁸⁰ From where afterwards he merited to listen from the lord himself that for the completion of the aforesaid temple he would be greatly supported with all good things if indeed he should add to this the observation of the other commandments.⁵⁸¹ Therefore, because my father King William promised with words and partly showed in writing that he conceived from his mind to construct, to confirm, and to honour the church of the monastery of York in honour of St Mary the mother of God.

The narrative of the charter continues in to William's reign and 'he' explains how:

I his son William, succeeding him in royal power, having been instructed in the aforesaid plan, having been urged on by authorities, or rather having been led by the reason of piety to the aforesaid example of my father concerning the aforesaid church, I have undertaken to fulfil the vow so that to him God would reward the arrangement of the pious idea and to me he would reward the completion of the pious arrangement. Therefore, I wish to make known both to those present and future and both to those hearing and those going to hear that I, William, king of the English, son of William, king of the English and duke of the Normans, for the salvation of my soul and the souls of King Edward and King William my father and Queen Matilda my mother and for the good standing of my reign with the advice and assent of my archbishops, bishops, earls, dukes and other nobles, authorise the unconsecrated church of the monastery of St Mary of York. And I grant to that church in perpetual possession the lands given to them free from all customs and liberties which are written here.⁵⁸²

If there can be any doubt that the overwrought comparison between William Rufus and his father and Solomon and David was designed to portray William Rufus as a founder of the community,

⁵⁸⁰ 1 Kings 5:4-5.

⁵⁸¹ The author had in mind 1 Kings 6.

⁵⁸² For the Latin see Appendix.

then it can be put to bed with its subsequent description of Alan Rufus's gift to the monastery.

The charter William goes on to describe how:

Count Alan, who is after me and my father the founder and beginner of this abbey, for the rest of his soul and also his lord my father King William and my mother Queen Matilda and also his father Count Eudo of Brittany and also his mother and of himself [gave] the church of St Olaf's, in which the head of the abbey was better set up in honour of St Mary, and the borough in which the church sits. In Holland the church of St Botulf and that which pertains to it and i carucate of land and the site of a windmill, the church of Catterick and the tithes of the lordship of the castelary which he held in Yorkshire except for the part of the churches and also a third part of the tithes of his Frenchmen of that land which they hold in the aforementioned castelary.

Not only, then, did the diploma argue that William Rufus and William the Conqueror should be thought of as the community's founders, but that they should be thought of as the founders before Alan Rufus. Stephen, whose own narrative makes him the primary actor, and who the liturgical commemoration of the abbey suggests was remembered above all others, is not mentioned at all.⁵⁸³

By what right William Rufus, or William the Conqueror, could be considered the founder is not at all clear. As the description of Alan's gift makes clear, it was his gift of both the church and the borough which constituted where the head of the abbey sat. By comparison the two kings, whilst clearly benefactors of the abbey, had not provided the sort of benefaction that would ordinarily lead one to expect them to be designated as founder:

Therefore William my father gave to the abovementioned abbey iiii carucates of land in Appelton, iii in Normanby, ii in Spaunton, iii in Lastingham, the church of St Michael in York and iiii mansuras of land, and what Ernegrinus the monk held, that is iiii carucates of land and vi bovates and in York ii mansuras of land and the church of St Saviours.

I [William Rufus], also, in augmentation of the possessions of the aforesaid church add out of my gift four and a half carucates of land in Grimston.

The list of gifts given by William could not be further from the impression given by the diploma's preamble. William Rufus had authorised that the abbey be founded, and granted the abbey possessions, but he himself had only given the monks four and a half carucates of land in Grimston. William the Conqueror's donations were more substantial, but could hardly qualify him

⁵⁸³ See below.

for the role set out by 'William Rufus' in the charter. For, with the exception of the gift of three carucates at Lasingham (although there is no mention that the abbey had previously been situated there), none of these could have been gifts that founded an abbey in any usual sense or understanding of the word. That is even more striking because of the absence of a key piece of information from this charter, which did give William Rufus a more direct role in the foundation. As we saw above, in his narrative Stephen stated that William Rufus came to York shortly after his coronation, and seeing that the monks' provision at St Olave's was insufficient for their needs, accordingly gave them the land next to Olave's to construct a larger abbey church. That information was not, however, included in the charter's preamble. The result is a rather incongruous document which provides poor evidence not only for the claims contained within it, but also sits poorly with the abbey's other foundation tradition recorded by Stephen of Whitby. The story the preamble tells is demonstrably not the story of a peripheric community which began life at Whitby, moved to Lasingham, and then to York with Alan Rufus's sponsorship (and Stephen of Whitby's brilliance) but the story of a royal monastery founded at York by royal initiative.

Why should the writer of the charter's preamble cast the foundation in this way and how did those ideas disseminate down successive generations of monks? The first question is partially answered by the existence of another charter by William Rufus to the abbey, which replicates much of the same information contained in the diploma.⁵⁸⁴ There are, however, some differences between the two documents. The extensive preamble, solemn language, and religious overtones of the Add MS 38816 charter (along with the prohibition and sanction clauses) were removed, as they are characteristic of the diploma format. As the new format now demanded one, the charter contained an address clause; in this a general one to the 'archbishops, bishops, abbots, justices, and all his

⁵⁸⁴ This charter survives in two St Mary's cartularies. British Library Harley 236, f. 2r-v and Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS lat. 220-21, fol. 207r; *EYC*, i, 264-268.

men throughout England'. But there are also other changes too to the list of grants made by the king. This document has featured more prominently in discussions of St Mary's records in the past. Farrer believed the charter was genuine, but it was dismissed as spurious by Davis in the *Regesta*.⁵⁸⁵ On the grounds of the appearance of a general address alone, which was occasionally deployed in authentic acts of William Rufus but did not become common until the reign of Henry I, the document appears very suspicious.⁵⁸⁶

This charter describes gifts not mentioned in Add MS 38816, as well as some extra detail, such as something approaching a boundary clause to record that Alan Rufus's gift of land ran from Galmou to Clifton down to the river, as well as a grant of nine and a half carucates of land in Clifton itself.⁵⁸⁷ The Add MS 38816 diploma however contains donors not included in this charter's list. Gilbert Tison, Norman d'Arcy, Leving the Monk, Wulfstan the Priest, Uhtred, and Baret fitz Karli all have land confirmed in the William diploma which were not included in the charter. Nor do the two documents share the same witness list. The diploma's witness list includes most of the leading lights of the Anglo-Norman realm, but this charter was witnessed just by Count Alan (either Rufus or Niger) and Miles Crispin. The wording of the two documents, and the list of grants they recorded, run too close (despite the omission of those donors just mentioned, the other donors appear in the same order in both document) for the two documents to be entirely unrelated to one another, but which appeared first and why the other version was created is not possible to say. Without the preamble of the Add MS 38816 diploma, this charter is less explicit about precisely what royal involvement looked like, but, as in the first version, they repeat 'William Rufus's'

⁵⁸⁵ Davis, *Regesta*, i, p. 41; EYC, i, pp. 264-267.

⁵⁸⁶ Richard Sharpe, 'Address and Delivery in Anglo-Norman Writs and Writ Charters', in *Charters and Charter Scholarship in Britain and Ireland*, ed. M.-T. Flanagan and J. A. Green (London: Palgrave, 2005), 32-52, pp. 45-46.

⁵⁸⁷ 'Comes vero Alanus post me et patrem meum huius abbacie inceptor et institutor dedit ecclesiam sancti Olavi in qua capud abbacie in honorem sancte Marie melius constitutum est et burgum in quo ecclesia sita est Galmou uersus Cliftonam et uersus aquam, novum carrucas terre in Cliftona et dimidiam et villam de Overtona, in Hoilandia ecclesiam sancti Botulfi et quod ei pertinet et unam carrucatam terre et sedem molendini, ecclesias Gillinge et Catrice et decimas de dominio castellarie sue'. British Library Harley 236, f. 2r-v.

statement that he had been the founder of the monastery, followed by his father and, finally, Alan Rufus.⁵⁸⁸ And, unlike the Add MS 38816 charter, we see this version bought to the king for confirmation. It survives in *inspeximi* of Edward I (in which it is stated that Edward exemplified the charter on account of the old age of its writing and damaged state of its seal), Edward II, Edward III, Richard II, and Henry VI.⁵⁸⁹

The exact wording of the phrase used in these two William Rufus charters, that is the claim that 'Count Alan, is after me and my father the founder and beginner of this abbey', is not seen again amongst the St Mary's records, but the charters of Henry I and Henry II do preserve the similar claim that William Rufus was the abbey's founder. Henry I's charter is also uniquely preserved in Add MS 38816. It is a two-part charter confirming, in its first part, the liberties supposedly granted to the abbey by his brother, and, in its second, the possessions given to the abbey.⁵⁹⁰ As with the copy of William II's charter in Add MS 38816, this charter escaped the notice of Farrer and Davis and has never before been printed. It claims to confirm gifts given to the abbey, but it is not exhaustive. There is little overlap between the gifts recorded in the William Rufus charter and this one and the original foundational gifts are not recorded. Nevertheless, the charter's preamble again states that St Mary's is a royal foundation founded with the involvement of William Rufus. In the charter, Henry I is recorded as saying that his brother had founded the abbey 'with his own hand', but, through the negligence of the donors, allowed gifts to be given without grant or royal seal. To right that wrong, he therefore was issuing his own confirmation.⁵⁹¹ The contents of Henry I's charter were then subsequently combined with William Rufus's diploma to create a third royal

⁵⁸⁸ British Library Harley 236, f. 2r-v.

⁵⁸⁹ Patent Rolls 35 Ed I, m41. Charter Roll 1 Ed II no 4. Charter Roll 4 Ed III no 14. Patent Roll 20 Richard II m. 16. Patent Roll 12 Henry VI mm. 34-33.

⁵⁹⁰ Add MS 38816, ff. 22v-24v.

⁵⁹¹ Henricus rex anglorum archiepiscopis et episcopis vel abbatibus et omnibus baronibus et omnibus ministris suis per angliam salutem. Regnante fratre meo rege Wilelmus qui abbatiam sancte marie eboraci propria manu fundavit et eidem libertatem leges et consuetudines regia potestate donavit et sigillo suo firmavit multi etiam de hominibus eius ecclesias terras decimas et alias possessiones predictae abbacie in elemosinam contulerunt'. Add MS 38816, f. 22v.

charter in the name of Henry II, which was again entered into Add MS 38816.⁵⁹² Here, Alan Rufus's gift to the abbey was described as 'the church of St Olaf and the borough in which it is situated where the abbey had been established with the authority of king William when the community was at Lastingham'.⁵⁹³ The charter's witness list would date the charter to 1155, but it includes the use of the 'Dei Gratia' clause in Henry II's royal title which did not become a regular feature of his diplomatic until some point between March and July 1173.⁵⁹⁴ The use of the phrase provides (at the very least) a date after which the scribe of Add MS 38816 may have copied the charter into this manuscript, and, if it can be assumed that the scribe of Add MS 38816 faithfully reproduced the original — rather than unconsciously inserted the phrase when copying a charter which did not include it, a date after which the St Mary's monks produced the forged charter.⁵⁹⁵ Only in this final charter do we get an indication that there was a chapter to this story which took place at Lastingham. But, again, this is a story which centres royal agency and relegates Stephen of Whitby to the margins.

Here the two genres (charter and chronicle) dictated how the past was reconstructed. Stephen is never mentioned by name in charters, and, whilst that may be natural, the result is that the reconstructed past in the charter record, and the reconstructed past in the chronicle record, once again differ. The result is not a harmonious intermingling of charter and chronicle record, but significant points of difference between the information recorded in both types of source. The most significant of these, 'William Rufus's' claims in the diploma preamble, also fit awkwardly

⁵⁹² This charter will appear in the forthcoming Angevin Acta Project. I am grateful to Nicholas Vincent for allowing me to view the drafts. EYC, i, pp. 269-277.

⁵⁹³ 'ecclesiam sancti Olai et burgum in quo ecclesia sita est ubi a Willelmo rege abbatia competentius fundata est quam apud Lestingaham fuit' Add MS 38816, ff. 25r-25v.

⁵⁹⁴ This change is traditionally dated to 1172/1173, but that date range has been narrowed by Vincent. See, Nicholas Vincent, 'The Letters of England's Kings and Queens 1154-1215: A Vast New Resource?' The Stenton Lecture 2018, University of Reading, 22/11/2018. For the discussion of Dei Gratia see the video of the lecture at <https://www.facebook.com/UniRdgHistory/videos/stenton-lecture-2018-professor-nicholasvincent/325464348254007/32:32>.

⁵⁹⁵ This assumption is unsafe however as J. H. Round pointed out in a typically nasty response to Deslisle's first notice of the introduction of Dei Gratia. Edmund King, 'John Horace Round and the Calendar of Documents Preserved in France' *ANS* 4, 93-103, p. 103.

alongside the other evidence from the abbey and need to be unpacked further. Why did monks of St Mary's choose to venerate him as a founder in that way in that one document, and how did that memory with the other ways in which the monks were working and re-working the past?

The answer to these questions may lay in the exact circumstances of the diploma's production, hinted at by the diploma's witness list. Apart from Hildebert, bishop of Le Mans, the diploma's witness list is not impossible, and would date the charter to 1088.⁵⁹⁶ The witnesses form an important group. Both Lanfranc and Thomas, archbishops of Canterbury and York respectively, were said to be present, as was the Cardinal Albert, Anselm, as abbot of Bec, Serlo, abbot of Gloucester, and, amongst the barons, Henry de Beaumont and William de Warenne.⁵⁹⁷ If 'Hildebert' is made 'Hoel', and it is assumed the scribe mistook the letter 'H' alone for the more famous bishop of Le Mans, then these witnesses do not pose a particular problem — although the appearance of Cardinal Albert, at a time when William Rufus did not recognise a pope, is suspicious, and Anselm would be a rare witness.⁵⁹⁸ As remarked earlier, there is no doubt that the diploma as it stands is a forgery, but the coherence of the witness list might suggest that a genuine act underlay it. And, if so, might the preamble have been taken from it, too? In other words, it is just possible that the preamble is a reflection not of what the St Mary's monks thought about their own foundation, but what they thought the new king might want to hear. The monks, therefore, wrote into the diploma they presented to William Rufus a comparison to a biblical king which they thought might flatter him. This is no doubt wild speculation based on very tenuous evidence, but there is evidence that such beneficiary produced diplomas did put into the king's mouth words which they thought he might want to hear. The diploma of William the Conqueror in favour of

⁵⁹⁶ Appendix I. Richard Sharpe, '1088 – William II and the Rebels', in *ANS 26* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2004), pp. 139–58; pp 153–154. This analysis is developed further in the *acta*.

⁵⁹⁷ It should also be noted that Roger Dodsworth records a version of this diploma with a longer cast of witnesses. The general remarks here about the witness list are also true for the version he copies.

⁵⁹⁸ Sharpe, '1088 – William II and the Rebels', p. 154. Frank Barlow, *William Rufus* (London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 338.

Wells provides a succinct example of such a phenomenon. It opens with William the Conqueror expressing his right to rule the whole of Britain and claiming to follow ancestors in promoting the integrity of the catholic and apostolic faith.⁵⁹⁹ William's gift of land to Wells, the diploma goes on to state, was necessary because it had been taken away by King Harold who was 'inflamed by avarice'.⁶⁰⁰ The description of Harold as 'king' would not have gone down well with William, (although it is perhaps a later interpolation) but the description of Harold as a greedy and avaricious man, utterly unnecessary to the main point of the diploma, and the overt statements on the piety both of William and his lineage, look for all the world like they were written with the new king in mind. There is no doubt that the preamble to the William Rufus diploma is exceptionally grandiose, but, as Stephen Marritt and Nicholas Karn have both pointed out, the style of even a royal scribe, Robert de Siglio, would be considered suspect if not for the fact that his output survived in originals.⁶⁰¹ Stephen of Whitby's own narrative showed him to be able to access and call upon the support of powerful friends in high places, first the king and then Alan Rufus. In the preamble we might see one of the ways in which he, and the monks he took with him to York, sought to massage that relationship and benefit from it. Is this, therefore, an expression of the St Mary's monks understanding of the past, or an expression of royal authority channelled through a beneficiary's scribe and surviving imperfectly in their archives? This problem has tended to be addressed from the other angle, with historians seeking to explore how beneficiary produced charters can give glimpses in to expressions of royal power when the terms and phrases used are more dependent on the beneficiary producing the charter than royal preference. But as Bates (among others) has stressed, the dichotomy between the two is unhelpful. Rather than seeing these two institutions (the royal *scriptoria* on one hand and the beneficiary on the other) in isolation we should consider

⁵⁹⁹ *Regesta* no 286, pp. 863-865; see also Bates's comments on the charter in the introduction, p. 72.

⁶⁰⁰ *Regesta* no 286, p. 864.

⁶⁰¹ Stephen Marritt, 'Prayers for the King and Royal Titles in Anglo-Norman Charters', *ANS* 32. Nicholas Karn, 'Robert de Sigillo: an unruly head of the Royal Scriptorium in the 1120s and 1130s', *English Historical Review*, 123 (2008), 539-553, pp. 540-541.

them in dialogue, and the documents produced by them as the product of a negotiation.⁶⁰² If we consider what we know about William Rufus's movements in 1088 and the context of the diploma, which if the witness list is genuine would, as we have seen, have been drawn up in the summer of that year, then it is not impossible to conceive the presentation of William Rufus in it as the product of his own attempts to secure legitimacy and strengthen control of the kingdom. There is good reason to believe Stephen of Whitby's claim that William Rufus went to York in the early weeks of 1088, where he ceremonially cut the first sod of turf for the new monastery, and, as we have already seen, a writ of William the Conqueror to Alan Rufus, most likely dating from 1086, transferred the land of St Olaf's to Alan Rufus. This royal interest occurred at the same time as other developments at York, such as the creation of vast swathes of royal forest, the patronisation of the hospital of St Peter's, and the construction of the stone minster at St Peter's.⁶⁰³ As Sarah Rees-Jones has argued, the policy at the end of William the Conqueror's reign looks very much like a deliberate attempt to stamp Norman, church-sponsored authority onto a city that had caused him some trouble.⁶⁰⁴ Stephen of Whitby leaves us in no doubt that he was aware of such a policy and explicitly ties William the Conqueror's attempts to atone and control, giving his assent, as we have seen, to the foundation of St Mary's:

because in that same city iniquities greatly abounded, and much more blood had been shed in the city than in the other cities of England, and the light of divine religion should begin to shine in that place in eternity so that men of barbarity, becoming accustomed to the humble way of life and the example of the religious men who were going to be in that place in our time and afterwards, should learn to preserve the true faith for the heavenly lord and earthly king, and in order that they might stand strong to watch over their souls with constant observation and consolation of the monks.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰² David Bates, 'Charters and Historians of Britain and Ireland: Problems and Possibilities', in *Charters and Charter Scholarship in Britain and Ireland*, ed. by Theresa Flanagan and Judith Green (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 1-15, pp. 7-8. A discussion of the scholarship is provided in Joanna Dale, *Inauguration and Liturgical Kingship in the Long Twelfth Century: Male and Female Accession Rituals in England, France and the Empire* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2019), p. 163.

⁶⁰³ *Regesta*, 8, p.122. Bates, *William the Conqueror*, p. 478, 496. Sarah Rees-Jones, *York: The Making of a City 1068-1350* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 98-100. Norton, 'Building of St Mary's', pp. 281-282.

⁶⁰⁴ Rees Jones, *York*, p. 100.

⁶⁰⁵ Add MS 38816, ff. 32r-v.

In this context a description of William Rufus as Solomon ready to build the 'temple' that his father, as David, had been prevented from doing owing to fighting the 'battles of the Lord', fits neatly with Norman policy towards York in 1086-1088. But the description of Rufus 'facing no opponent or adversary' and ready to reap the rewards God would bestow on him strikes as rather awkward. William Rufus had spent much of the intervening months between his visit to York in 1088 and the summer of that year, when the diploma may have been produced, dealing with rebellion. But the rebellion had nevertheless been quelled, and William, bishop of Durham, who had been in rebellion himself but was now reconciled with the king, appears amongst the witnesses.⁶⁰⁶ Might it be that, in the Summer of 1088, it looked like William Rufus faced no adversary? Reading this preamble as an expression of Norman authority and William Rufus's aspirations on York (or at least what the St Mary's monks believed they might be) is no doubt fanciful (let alone based on the shaky evidence of a suspicious witness list), but the image of William Rufus, creatively invoked by the monks in the preamble as a Solomon intending to live his life according to the ten commandments, fits atrociously with the memory of his reign following his death. Such creative remembering of a founder by a monastery, at odds with the general perception of them, is hardly outside the realms of possibility, but it may more represent the hopes of the St Mary's monks in 1088 that William Rufus's reign might mark a departure from the bloodshed and destruction that had occurred in York, and the north east, during his father's reign, and it might represent an attempt to shape William's nascent kingship through biblical exemplar. Stephen of Whitby makes frequent references to documents, none of which appear to survive wholly unaltered, and all I wish to suggest here is that the preamble may have a relationship to one of them.

⁶⁰⁶ Sharpe, '1088', pp. 156-157. A particular feature of how William dealt with the rebellion quickly with apparent leniency is exemplified by how quickly the rebels appear again witnessing royal *acta*.

Invoking this issue is not meant to argue that the diploma's preamble should be thought of as a product of William Rufus's reign, or to suggest that the document should be thought of as genuine in its totality. It may well not be the former, and it certainly is not the latter. But it does highlight an important issue: the production of the diploma, whether for William's consumption or not, by St Mary's as beneficiary, and the document's survival in their archive does not, automatically, indicate that it formed a part of the abbey's memorialisation of the past. The diploma could equally as likely survive as a record of a temporarily constructed past which served a time limited and short-term purpose. What was written by one generation could be forgotten by the next. It is only through the dissemination and reproduction of that past through successive generations that an idea became memorial.

We never again see anything approaching as solid an expression of the monastery's royal foundation as the William Rufus diploma's preamble, but, even if we were to place aside the evidence of the preamble on the grounds of the witness list, there can however be no doubt that there is verifiable chain of the St Mary's monks continuing to reproduce and ask kings to confirm documents which claimed a royal role in the foundation of their monastery. The appearance of the three royal charters in the Add MS 38816 codex also places them with a collection of documents which are all highly commemorative in nature. Stephen's narrative requested that the monks pray for him and was followed by a charter recording arrangements on the anniversary of his death. This was itself followed by a series of short charters which continued to be entered for some 150 years into the manuscript with the arrangements for other benefactors, and the codex was completed with a list of confraternity agreements recording how the monks should pray for various communities.⁶⁰⁷ The impression given by the collection of material is that this is a book

⁶⁰⁷ See above, p. 26.

designed to record and remember who the monks ought to pray for, and the Norman kings were included within it.

That is a conclusion supported by the charter evidence. In William Rufus's diploma and charter, he explained his gifts as being given 'for the salvation of my soul and the souls of King Edward and King William my father and Queen Matilda my mother and for the good state of my kingdom'.⁶⁰⁸ Likewise, Henry I granted these gifts 'for the salvation of my soul and also for the salvation of the soul of my father William king of the English and Queen Matilda my mother as well as my brother King William and for the good state of my kingdom'.⁶⁰⁹ Henry II's gifts were similarly given 'for the salvation of my soul and the salvation of the souls of King Henry, my grandfather, and King William, my great-grandfather, and his son the second King William and for the redemption of the soul of my father and mother and all my relatives and also for the good standing of my reign'.⁶¹⁰

So far, the pattern is no doubt the one we would expect to see, but much has now been written on the place of gift giving in the medieval church and the social, cultural, and religious frameworks which underlay it, and a good deal of care is needed to handle the evidence of these clauses.⁶¹¹

⁶⁰⁸ 'pro salute anime mee pro salute quoque animarum Edwardi regis et Willelmi regis patris mei matrisque mee Matildis regine necnon pro statu regni mei' William Rufus, Add MS 38816, f. 21r.

⁶⁰⁹ 'pro salute anime mee pro salute quoque animarum Wilelmus patris mei regis anglorum matrisque mee matilidis regine vel fratris mei Willelmi regis necnon pro statu regni mei' Henry I, Add MS 38816, f. 22v.

⁶¹⁰ 'pro salute anime mee et pro salute animarum Henrici regis aui mei et Willelmi regis proauis mei et Willelmi regis secundi filii eius et pro redemptione animarum patris et matris mee et omnium parentum meorum necnon pro statu regni mei' Henry II, Add MS 38816, f. 24v.

⁶¹¹ The starting point for almost any discussion of gift and gift giving is Marcel Mauss's, *Essai sur le Don*, translated into English as Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Society*, trans. by W. D. Halls (London: Routledge, 1990). Arnold Angenendt, 'Donationes pro anima: Gift and Countergift in the Early Medieval Liturgy', in *The Long Morning of Medieval Europe: New Directions in Early Medieval Studies*, ed. by Jennifer R. Davis, Michael McCormick, pp. 131-154; Emma Mason, 'Pro Statu', 99-117; Marritt, 'Prayers for the King and Royal Titles'; Wendy Davis, *Acts of Giving: Individual Community and Church in Tenth Century Christian Spain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); *The Language of Gift in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by Wendy Davies and Paul Fourace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-modern Figurations of Exchange*, ed. by Gadi Algazi, Valentin Groebner, Bernhard Jussen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2003).

What is clear is that in return for the gift, the donor expected a counter gift.⁶¹² The earthly gift of land, rents, tithes, and also simply cold hard cash to the monastery, was made with the expectation that the monks would pray for the donor's soul, the souls of their ancestors, and redemption for their sins. The monks would then intercede on their behalf to God through prayer, through the mass, and through donations to the poor. This arrangement, pious though the intentions of the donor might well have been (at the very least the language of the gift almost invariably expresses the donor's pious intention) was nevertheless recognised as mutually beneficial and reciprocal.⁶¹³ The gift did not obligate the recipient to reciprocate with a counter gift, but the insinuation and tenor of the grant indicates that it was strongly expected.⁶¹⁴ The donor's supposed intentions are commonly held to be expressed in the charter's *pro anima* clause: a catch all term which, as Wendy Davis points out, implies more standardisation than is often the case.⁶¹⁵ Such clauses become exceptionally common in English and continental charters in the eleventh century and are often utterly conventional and highly formulaic.⁶¹⁶ These clauses were not however meaningless, although there is a difficulty in recovering exactly what precise liturgical practices a donor believed they might lead to. Whilst it is clear that a donor might make his gift '*pro anime mee*' and expect that the beneficiary would pray for him, it is less clear how a beneficiary might be expected to pray '*pro animabus parentum meorum*' or for any of the other countless ways in which unnamed relatives, ancestors, friends and family appear in *pro anima* clauses.⁶¹⁷ The balance in English *pro anima* clauses falls in favour of unnamed relations over named relations, and, when named relations do appear, they do so to emphasise dynastic claims as much as anything else. A gift made '*pro anima Edwardi*

⁶¹² The recognition of this essential cross-cultural universality of this reciprocal gift giving is generally held to be the crowning accomplishment of Mauss's work. Patrick Geary presents a number of issues with this received reading in Patrick Geary, 'Gift Exchange and Social Science Modelling the Limitations of a Construct', in *Negotiating the Gift*, pp. 129-140. In particular, he points out that the 'universality' that Mauss reads may instead be owed to European interactions with the 'other'. Geary, 'Gift Exchange', pp. 139-140. For the development of the gift/counter gift system in Christianity see Angenendt, '*Donationes pro anima*', pp. 131-133.

⁶¹³ Marritt, 'Prayers for the King', p. 187.

⁶¹⁴ Davies, *Acts of Giving*, p. 114.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 116-120.

⁶¹⁶ Marritt, 'Prayers for the King', p. 187; Angenendt, '*Donationes pro anima*', pp. 135-135. Davis, *Acts of Giving*, pp. 116-117.

⁶¹⁷ Davis, *Acts of Giving*, p. 120.

Regis' by William the Conqueror or William Rufus, for example, might not indicate that the monks were expected to pray for Edward's soul, but that the two kings were tracing their legitimacy back to him past Harold.⁶¹⁸ In these instances, though, the donor themselves still expected that the piety of their gift would earn them eternal salvation. In the case of dynastic claims emphasising their legitimacy, and in the use of the overt reference to a gift being made '*pro statu regni* [for the (good) state of my kingdom]', a royal donor explicitly tied the success and good governance of their reign to the support of the church; it can be no surprise that both Matilda and Stephen's charters deploy the phrase more frequently than Henry I had.⁶¹⁹

There is a familiar problem here, however. As we have seen, all of these charters were produced by St Mary's monks and, more than likely, are forgeries produced in the twelfth century. Although these phrases do appear both in genuine single-sheets and in charters produced by royal scribes, these expressed motivations — generic though they no doubt are — cannot *prima facie* be taken to be the motivations of William Rufus, Henry I and Henry II as they stand. They are, in fact, products of a St Mary's *scriptoria*.⁶²⁰ In her study of Spanish gifts from the tenth century, Davies noticed significant regional and institutional variation in the use of *pro anima* clauses.⁶²¹ In addition, there was a tendency for them to appear far more frequently in later cartulary copies than they did in the originals, suggesting they were added by cartulary scribes who were, consciously or unconsciously, 'improving' the records they were copying.⁶²² In other words, these clauses could be, and often were, expressions of the beneficiary's understanding of why things had been given to them, rather than records of benefactors stated intentions. Here, this leads to a number of questions, what did it actually mean to the St Mary's monks when they created records identifying

⁶¹⁸ Marritt, 'Prayers for the King', pp. 118-119.

⁶¹⁹ Mason, '*Pro Statu*', pp. 99-117. Marritt points out a number of problems with Mason's argument in 'Prayers for the King', pp. 186-187.

⁶²⁰ Marritt, 'Prayers for the King', p. 189.

⁶²¹ Davies, *Acts of Giving*, p. 119.

⁶²² Davies, *Acts of Giving*, pp. 119-120.

English kings as their founders who had given gifts to the monastery 'for the salvation of their souls'? what did the monks think they should do about it? and what does that tell us about the memory of the kings as founders of St Mary's?

It is here that problems begin to emerge. Initially, we see the monks including, or at least saying they are including, the kings in their prayers. In a letter of John of Salisbury's written in 1160 to Henry II on behalf of Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury, the archbishop attempts to intercede on the behalf of the St Mary's monks.⁶²³ He explains to the king that the St Mary's monk are 'instant in their prayers' for the king and especially worthy of the king's commendation on account of the 'virtue of its cultivation of true religion and of its devotion to yourself and your children'.⁶²⁴ The king, according to Theobald, should continue to support the monastery (and the church more generally) as it is 'the prayers of the saints' who will bring peace, stability and prosperity to his kingdom.⁶²⁵ Marritt pointed to this letter to argue for the efficacy of *pro anima* clauses in the minds of the people of the twelfth century, and certainly there is a sense that king, archbishop and abbey were all talking the same language, but it is the other elements of this letter which are arguably of greater interest.⁶²⁶ As the letter reveals, it seems the monks had a specific grievance that they wanted remedied; a 'certain brother' had left the monastery and gone to Henry seeking 'a privilege entitling him to sin against the rule of the blessed Benedict' and was refusing to return to the monastery 'unless the rule of the Order was relaxed'.⁶²⁷ The archbishop implored Henry to deny this brother, who 'strives to hinder the brethren who pray without ceasing on your behalf' and, instead, to give an audience to the abbot.⁶²⁸ What powers to interfere in the adherence to the Rule either the 'certain brother' or St Mary's believed the king had is unclear, but at any rate, the letter

⁶²³ John of Salisbury, *The Letters of John of Salisbury Vol I: The Early Letters (1153-1161)*, ed. by W. J. Millor and H. E. Butler, revised by C. N. L. Brooke 123, pp. 203-204.

⁶²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 203.

⁶²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 203

⁶²⁶ Marritt, 'Prayers for the King', p. 187.

⁶²⁷ John of Salisbury, *Letters of John of Salisbury*, pp. 203-204.

⁶²⁸ John of Salisbury, *Letters of John of Salisbury*, pp. 203-204.

suggests that the monks themselves were continuing to pray for the dynastic successor to their founders. That is entirely natural, and it was the obligation of any religious house (let alone one with royal links), at least according to prescriptive manuscripts which survive, to pray for the current king and his family, but it is clear that the relationship between St Mary's and the royals had broken down to some degree. It was a far cry from the heady early days when Abbot Stephen (at least in his telling of the story) could access the king with apparent ease and when William Rufus could be enticed to cut the first sod of turf for the monastery.⁶²⁹ Now, the archbishop had to intercede on the monks behalf to request an audience with the king. It is hardly a surprise that Henry II might not show much favour to St Mary's York — despite the royal involvement with its foundation, it was not one of the great royal, ducal or comital monasteries on either side of the channel — but we might expect more emphasis in the archbishop's letter on the links between Henry II and a foundation of William the Conqueror and William Rufus.

When we move forwards in time again the relationship breaks down even further. Despite the efforts Stephen made to involve the Norman kings in the foundation process, despite the forged charters of the twelfth century, and despite the letter to Henry II in 1160 indicating the monks were praying for the king and his successors, the royal family makes virtually no mark in the abbey's surviving liturgical manuscripts. William the Conqueror and William Rufus do not appear at all in either the customary in MS Bodley 39 or the *Ordinale*. Not only are they not recorded as founders, they are simply absent in their entirety, even from the list, contained in the *Ordinale*, of the principal anniversaries [anniversarius praecipuus] celebrated by the monastery.⁶³⁰ The earlier customary in MS Bodley 39 also contains a list of the dead for whom certain liturgical arrangements were made;

⁶²⁹ *Regularis Concordia Angliae Nationis Monachorum Sanctimonialiumque: The Monastic Agreement of the Monks and Nuns of the English Nation*, ed. and trans. by Dom Thomas Symons (London: Nelson, 1953), p. 5. As has been noted however the *Regularis Concordia* is a statement of unity and an attempt to bolster Edgar's royal majesty. It is more important as a statement of Edgar and Æthelwold's own intentions than it is as a reflective document of liturgical practice. Helen Gittos, 'Researching the History of Rites', in *Understanding Medieval Liturgy: Essays in Interpretation*, eds. by Helen Gittos and Sarah Hamiton (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016), pp. 13-38, p. 21.

⁶³⁰ *Ordinale*, iii, p. 369.

this list does not match up perfectly with the *Ordinale's* (Abbot Stephen is absent, although he is included implicitly grouped with the rest of the abbots). Henry I and the two Lords of Richmond (who are unnamed but presumably both of the Alans) are included whilst William the Conqueror and William Rufus are omitted.⁶³¹ These late liturgical manuscripts would indicate, then, that, the monks were not praying for William Rufus and William the Conqueror. Neither is there any mention at all for prayers for any other member of the royal family since Henry I. The St Mary's monks were demonstrably not including the kings, either as founders or at all, as a prominent part of the liturgy in the fourteenth century and, although the evidence from MS Bodley 39 is a little more tenuous, they may not have done so in the thirteenth century either. Even more remarkable is the consistent appearance of Henry I. The abbey's twelfth-century written sources provide absolutely no explanation for why the monks should commemorate the anniversary of his death. If this feature of the St Mary's liturgy had a textual tradition it is one entirely lost to us, but as it happens there is a clue in the architecture of the north east which might suggest why he, and not William the Conqueror or William Rufus, formed a part of the liturgy.⁶³²

The evidence of *Valor Ecclesiasticus* does warn against over-interpreting this evidence, however, for it indicates that the monks were giving alms to the poor on the anniversary of William the Conqueror's death prior to the dissolution of the monastery.⁶³³ A payment known as 'Frereright' was given to ten widows and ten poor people, as well as an allowance of bread and ale, and the distribution of barley malt on Wednesday and Sunday; similar alms are recorded in the name of William of Nesfield and William Wells who is identified in *Valor Ecclesiasticus* as bishop of Rochester, but who also had been abbot of St Mary's between 1423 and 1436. Nesfield is present in the *Ordinale's* obit list (recorded on 7 July), but Wells is naturally absent as his abbacy dates to

⁶³¹ St Mary's Chronicle, pp. 108-109.

⁶³² See below.

⁶³³ *Valor ecclesiasticus temp. Henr. VIII: autoritate regia institutus*, ed. by John Caley (London: Record Commission, 1825), v, p. 6.

after the composition of the manuscript.⁶³⁴ Alms were also given to the poor every day on behalf of Count Alan (singular) and Stephen or Richmond of thirty five quarters and six butts of barley malt valued at five shillings per quarter.⁶³⁵ But, even though William the Conqueror does appear in this source, we are once again presented with the absence of William Rufus.

It may be possible to speculate on St Mary's interest in Henry I. A particularly common motif of Romanesque church arches in the region is the beakhead 'an ornament taking the form of the head of a bird, beast or monster, the beak or jaw of which appears to grip the moulding across which it is carved'.⁶³⁶ Fifty-seven churches in Yorkshire incorporate the motif and York is one of only two cities (alongside Oxford) where beakheads survive at more than one church.⁶³⁷ After Yorkshire, the other region with substantial numbers of beakheads is the part of the country roughly incorporating the Cotswolds and the Chilterns.⁶³⁸ It is here, at Henry's favoured abbey of Reading, where the motif is largely reckoned to have been popularised.⁶³⁹ As Jonathan Turnock has recently shown, a number of churches with an association to St Mary's York incorporate these beakhead motifs, and the lost Romanesque abbey church of St Mary's York may have provided an important piece of the jigsaw to understand the spread of the motif in the county.⁶⁴⁰ At a number of other churches, a direct link can be drawn between the appearance of beakheads and the patronage of the church by close supporters of Henry. And, at Doncaster, it may be possible to link the motif to the king himself.⁶⁴¹ This, Turnock suggested, was a deliberate choice of the king's supporters to

⁶³⁴ *Ordinale*, iii, p. 373.

⁶³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁶ A. W. Clapham, *English Romanesque Architecture after the Conquest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 120. Françoise Henry and George Zarnecki, 'Romanesque Arches Decorated with Human and Animal Heads' *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 20:1 (1957), 1-34, pp. 19-34.

⁶³⁷ Henry and Zarnecki, 'Romanesque Arches', pp. 20-21.

⁶³⁸ Henry and Zarnecki, 'Romanesque Arches', pp. 20-21.

⁶³⁹ Henry and Zarnecki, 'Romanesque Arches', pp. 22-28; Roger Stalley suggests their emergence is less certain. 'Diffusion, Imitation and Evolution: The Uncertain Origins of 'Beakhead' Ornament', in *Architecture and Interpretation: Essays for Eric Fernie*, ed. by Jill Franklin, T. A. Heslop, and Christine Stevenson (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2012), pp. 111-127.

⁶⁴⁰ Jonathan Andrew Turnock, *Landscapes of Patronage, Power and Salvation: A Contextual Study of Architectural Stone Sculpture in Northern England, c. 1070-c. 1155* (York: The University of York, Unpublished PhD Thesis, 2018), i, pp. 114-121.

⁶⁴¹ Turnock, *Landscapes of Patronage*, ii, p. 342.

emphasise their close ties to the king and the claims to authority which derived from him.⁶⁴² The result is a series of newly constructed churches in the region linked directly or indirectly to Henry I. At the same time, the number of new monasteries introduced to the region exploded during Henry's reign. A number of new houses were established *de novo* and those (such as Selby, Whitby, and St Mary's York), which had already been founded, received generous endowments.⁶⁴³ Dalton, like Turnock, saw these foundations as politically motivated attempt to consolidate Norman control, and these considerations were very possibly not far from Henry's mind. But for a region that had suffered greatly during the reigns of William the Conqueror and William Rufus, the construction of these churches also represented an appreciable shift in policy towards the region during Henry I's reign.⁶⁴⁴ Rather than antagonism, hostility, plundering, and robbing, Henry's reign saw support, construction and, perhaps, conciliation. Although it was hard won, Henry achieved something approaching a peace.⁶⁴⁵ And, in the scale of support provided to religious institutions throughout the region, Henry may have attempted to draw a line under the bitter experience Yorkshire had suffered during his father and brother's reigns. If so, it is perhaps this which explains Henry's prominent position in the liturgy of St Mary's York. It was he, rather than the two Williams, who the monks wished to commemorate, for it was he who had begun to make restitutions for the suffering which the Conquest had brought, and it was, perhaps, he, rather than his two immediate predecessors, with whom the monks of St Mary's would rather be associated.

There is one last stop to be made before some threads can be tied together here. In the early sixteenth century we once again can observe an interest in St Mary's royal foundations. The evidence is slight but suggestive. Harley 236, one of the surviving St Mary's cartularies which contains royal charters, contains a set of manicules and interlineations drawing attention to William

⁶⁴² Turnock, *Landscapes of Patronage*, ii, p. 342.

⁶⁴³ Burton, *Monastic Order in Yorkshire*, pp. 3-11; Dalton, *Lordship*, pp 133-142.

⁶⁴⁴ Dalton, *Lordship*, p. 142.

⁶⁴⁵ Judith Green, 'King Henry I and Northern England' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 17 (2007), 35-55

Rufus's charter. The interlineation draws attention to William's augmentation of Alan Rufus's original gift and highlights the words 'doni mei addidi in Grinestone quatuor carucatas terre et dimidiam. Comes vero Alanus post me et patrum meum huius Abbacie inceptor et institutor'. There are three manicules pointing towards sections of this manuscript. The first to the 'vero' between the words 'Comes' and 'Alanus', the second to 'inceptor', and the third, over the leaf, pointing towards the 'et' preceding 'institutor'.⁶⁴⁶ This same set of manicules also appears in Add MS 38816 on f. 21r alongside a sixteenth-century hand, written above the beginning of William Rufus's diploma in Add MS 38816, which explains that the reader should 'louk the v leafe and the xiii for your porpose marked with this hande'.⁶⁴⁷ Duly, on the fifth folio of this booklet, using the medieval foliation, another manicule appears. This points to a sentence in Henry II's charter which reads 'Alanus Comes Ruffus ecclesiam Sancti Olavi et burgum in qua ecclesia sita est ubi a Willelmo rege abbatia competentius eius fundata est', and, on the thirteenth folio, another manicule points towards a picture of a church and a lengthy exert from Stephen's narrative which reads:

Comes etiam Alanus burgum quem extra civitatem, iuxta ipsam ecclesiam habebat, libenter, annuente rege, nobis imperpetuum donavit, atque advocacionem abbacie nostre in manus regis tradens, ut deinceps defensor et advocatus noster existeret, ipsum postulavit et postulando impetrauit. Actum est autem hoc anno incarnationis dominice M'LXXXVII.⁶⁴⁸

These manicules appear nowhere else in the surviving records from St Mary's York. The 'purpose' to which they appear to be drawing attention is the claim that, alongside Alan Rufus, both William the Conqueror and William Rufus could be considered founders of the abbey.

What had caused the resurgence of interest in the abbey's royal links? Surviving from roughly the same date is the evidence of the visitation of the herald Thomas Tonge to the abbey. A crude drawing of the abbey's arms survives in the manuscript which can be blazoned as: argent on a

⁶⁴⁶ Harley 236, f. 2r-2v.

⁶⁴⁷ Add MS 38816, f. 21r.

⁶⁴⁸ This extract is Add MS 38816, f. 33r. Henry II's charter is f. 25r.

cross gules charged with a demi king. There can be no certainty when the arms were adopted by the abbey, and they may well have been in use at the time that the *Ordinale* was being written, but Tonge did not miss the importance of their claim, and recorded that it should be noted that as the abbey had been founded by William the Conqueror and William Rufus and that, as a result, 'by inheritance ys the founder to the said Monastery our soueraign Lord kyng Henry viiiith'.⁶⁴⁹

We are in the realm of speculation here, but the early-sixteenth-century date is suggestive. Could, perhaps, this be a desperate attempt to curry favour with Henry VIII prior to the dissolution? The dissolution had targeted smaller houses first, and St Mary's was large, wealthy, and useful — the abbey seems to have acted as a storehouse to the border garrison and became an accounting office during the campaign against the Scots which led to the Battle of Flodden. The monks might well have believed that a well targeted appeal to the king, emphasising the abbey's royal status and support for him, could have spared the house, and, perhaps even have led it to prosper during Henry VIII's reign.⁶⁵⁰ If so, the appeal was futile, and the abbey was dissolved on 29 November 1539. The former abbey's land came into the king's hand, and Henry himself stayed at the former abbey site in 1541 when visiting York.⁶⁵¹ The Abbot's house, which became known as the King's Manor, was in turn passed to the King's Council in the North where they remained until 1641, and, although the King's Manor has, since 1961, been a part of the University of York, a portion of the site remains crown property.⁶⁵² In some respects, the monks were right: the abbey precinct was conveniently located for the purposes of royal administration in the north, but it was a royal administration that did not need the monks. Nor, in fact, did it need the abbey buildings, for the

⁶⁴⁹ Harley MS 1499, f. 58v *Heraldic Visitations*, p. 60.

⁶⁵⁰ 'The English Army at Floddon', ed. by J. D. Mackie, *Miscellany of the Scottish Historical Society*, 8 (1951), 35-85, p. 57

⁶⁵¹ Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic in the reign of Henry VIII, Vol 14 (2) (London: Spottiswoode, 1895), 603, 698. *The History of the Kings Works (1485-1660)* Volume IV (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1982), pp. 355-364.

⁶⁵² Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic in the reign of Henry VIII, Vol 14 (2) (London: Spottiswoode, 1895), 603, 698. *The History of the Kings Works (1485-1660)* Volume IV (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1982), pp. 355-364. Norton, 'Buildings of St Marys Abbey York', pp. 271-275.

transfer of the site into the king's hands saw them ruined within decades of the abbey's dissolution.⁶⁵³

Conclusion

The picture from the St Mary's and Selby sources is chaotic. In various strands, and in various records of the foundation story, different elements of the royal foundation are minimised and emphasised. In the previous chapter, I have provided some speculation as to why this may have been, and attempted to place the chaos into a framework which may make some sense of why certain pieces of information are presented in certain ways in certain sources. What emerges clearly, however, is that each one of the strands places different emphasises on different aspects of the foundation story. Each strand presented information in a way the monks deemed most appropriate for the particular form of record they were drafting. In doing so, the monks included information that they believed should be present, even if the monks may not necessarily have believed that information to have been true. Even in a region where William the Conqueror had done more damage than most, and where the Selby monks clearly wished to construct their identity along very different lines to his other English foundation at Battle, the monks happily painted a picture of him which, at least in their minds, approached how William might have described himself. Similarly, in the preamble to William Rufus's diploma, the monks of St Mary's cast him in a positive light, even though they did not do so in other sources. Outside of the St Mary's charter record, that legacy appears questionable, and the positive portrayal of royal founders melts away. The monks could scramble, search the archives, and turn back to William Rufus when they felt he might be needed, but the impression is he was not actively commemorated in the abbey's liturgy. What is clear, is that, unlike some of those institutions founded before the Conquest, there does not appear, at either Whitby, Selby, or St Mary's York, an attempt to create a royal cult. The

⁶⁵³ Norton, 'Buildings of St Mary's Abbey', p. 275.

evidence of their commemoration of their founders is more piecemeal, more fragmentary and more reluctant. The difference to the pre-conquest evidence is marked. There is also clear evidence that of demarcation in how each institution told its story, how they presented it, and what information they relayed upon, depending on which records were consulted. There is no order, cohesion or unity in either institutions records, but, rather, layers upon layers of different monks and different scribes recording different memories of the past, which, in turn, were influenced by scribes' own perceptions. As we will see in the next chapter, this phenomenon was not confined to the abbey's supposed royal founders, but also influenced how the abbey's sources presented their lay founders, too. The impression is that we are left with snapshots and moments of the abbey's reconstructions of the past. These may represent proof that the memorial traditions which underpinned them continued under the surface of the written record, and only sporadically re-emerged. But, when those snapshots do not fit together, it may also suggest that they were isolated, short term expressions of immediate needs.

Chapter 6: The Norman Past II: Non-royal Founders

Until this point, this thesis has been concerned with how aspects of the foundation process were written in various sources, and how the events of the foundation could shape and dictate that presentation. In the previous chapter, I explored the odd treatment of royal founders and speculated that it may have been a result of regional considerations surrounding the legacy of the Norman kings in the north east of England. In this final chapter, I consider how non-royal founders, both lay and in-house, are treated in those same sources.

Remembering, creating, and solidifying links to a founder could ensure that a monastery would reap the benefits and continued patronage of those links. More powerful founders could provide other benefits too, and their names, advocacy and support (or the advocacy and support of a founder's descendants) could be turned to in times of dispute and hardship. As we have seen throughout this thesis, however, foundation was messy. It was a process which took many years, with many moments, and involved many actors. These complexities presented both problems and opportunities, which are reflected in the memorialisation of the process by these abbeys. As Vivian Galbraith showed, the messiness did not easily lend itself to the recording of original gifts or grants in charter form, and, whatever format used to record those grants, issues arose. These issues neatly illustrate the purpose of the charter as a record of a grant rather than as a dispositive document in its own right.⁶⁵⁴ From the outset, then, the records of foundation are a record of a series of choices: the choice of a moment of creation, the choice of what (and whose) grants to include, the choice of which format of document (be it the diploma or a sealed charter) to use, and the choice of which people to designate as founder of a community. In some instances, these choices might

⁶⁵⁴ Vivian Galbraith, 'Monastic Foundation Charters of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', *The Cambridge Historical Journal*, 4:3 (1934), 205-222.

have been easy; in others, a great number of complex, twisted, and awkward events were smoothed over and obscured by the creation of the foundation charter.

Perhaps the best example of the complexities faced by an institution from Yorkshire is that of Whitby Abbey. As we have already seen, Whitby's foundation process was complex. From the first arrival of Reinfrid, at some time in the 1070s, to the foundation of the abbey in roughly 1109, over 30 years had elapsed. The community had also fractured, relocated to Hackness, and returned to the site again. In the meantime, William de Percy, who is recorded in the *Memorial* pancarte as having given the original grant of land to Reinfrid, died on crusade. And, on top of this, *Domesday* reveals a curious tenurial relationship between William de Percy and Hugh, earl of Chester, which showed that Hugh, rather, than William, held the Whitby land as tenant in chief. None of these complexities made it into what is presented as the abbey's foundation charter. That charter is recorded on what is now folio 8r of the Abbot's Book, the first folio of the cartulary proper. It is preceded by a rubric explaining that 'Here begins a transcript of all the charters pertaining to the abbey of Whitby' and that the document that follows is a 'Charter of William de Percy, first founder of the abbey of Whitby'.⁶⁵⁵

The charter begins by stating that William de Percy granted 'to God and the abbess St Hilda of Whitby, and to Prior Serlo, [his] brother, and to the monks in that place serving God in perpetual alms, the church of St Peter and St Hilda, to found the now destroyed abbey'.⁶⁵⁶ Evidently, unlike in the *Memorial* pancarte and unlike in the poem, the decision was made by the cartulary scribe that the foundation did not occur when Reinfrid settled the site, nor with the circumstances which led to the election of the other William de Percy as abbot, but at a point during the priorship of Serlo,

⁶⁵⁵ 'Incipit transcriptum omnium cartarum pertinentium ad Abbatiam de Wyteby', 'Carta Willelmi de Perci primi fundatoris abbatae de Wyteby' Abbot's Book, f. 8r. Whitby Cartulary, xxvii, p. 31.

⁶⁵⁶ 'Deo et sanctae hildae abbatissae, ad fundandam Abbatiam olim destructam, ecclesiam sancti Petri et sanctae Hildae de Wyteby, et Serloni Priori, fratri meo, et Monachis ibidem Deo servientibus, in elemosinam perpetuam' Ibid.

William's brother, and the second prior. It seems likely that that point was the return of the monks to Whitby from Hackness, before William de Percy's departure on crusade (from which he did not return), but the scribe could equally as likely have chosen either of the other two moments — Reinfrid's arrival or the other William de Percy's elevation to become the first abbot — as the moment which marked the foundation of the abbey. The evidence from the *pro anima* clause of the charter would indicate that the moment of the return to Whitby occurred during the reign of William Rufus, for William de Percy is made to say that he made his gift 'for the soul of my Lord King William and my Lady Queen Matilda and also for my Lord King William, their son, and for their heirs as kings of England'.⁶⁵⁷ Strictly speaking, then, this charter would place the foundation in the reign of William II, but the evidence of the cartularies strongly indicates that the abbey monks believed they had been issued charters by William the Conqueror, too. Both cartularies contain copies of the same charter, entered in different hands, and both have been rubricated as charters of, in the Abbot's Book, 'Carta Regis Willelmi Primi' and, in Add MS 4715, as 'Carta Primi Regis Willelmi'.⁶⁵⁸ A charter of Henry I also confirms to the abbey all donations and liberties and customs, which King William, his father and King William his brother gave to the abbey and confirmed with their charters.⁶⁵⁹ Subsequent royal charters also confirm all the gifts which were given to the abbey by both King Williams.⁶⁶⁰

In the supposed charter of William the Conqueror, he, however, confirms, as in William de Percy's foundation charter, grants made to Serlo, prior of the church of Whitby. The date Serlo became

⁶⁵⁷ 'pro anima domini mei Willelmi, regis Anglorum, et domine me matildis regine; necnon pro domino meo, rege Willelmo, eorum filio, et pro heredibus eorum regibus Anglorum' Abbot's Book, f. 8r. Whitby Cartulary, xxvii, p. 31.

⁶⁵⁸ Abbot's Book, f. 47r; Add MS 4715, f. 153v. Whitby Cartulary, CLXXXIV, p. 147.

⁶⁵⁹ 'Sciatis me concessisse et confirmasse deo et ecclesie sancti Petri et sancte Hilde de Wyteby et monachis ibidem deo seruientibus omnes terras et ecclesias et decimas et omnes possessiones quas rex Willelmus pater meus et rex Willelmus frater meus eidem ecclesie dederunt et per cartas suas confirmauerunt in perpetuam elemosinam' Abbot's Book, f. 67r; Add MS 4712, f. 153v; Whitby Cartulary, p. xlvi.

⁶⁶⁰ For example, Henry II: 'Concedo etiam et confirmo predictae ecclesie omnes donationes et libertates et consuetudines quas Willelmus rex proauus meus et Willelmus rex filius eius et Henricus rex auus meus eidem ecclesie dederunt et cartis suis confirmauerunt' Add MS 4715 f. 161r.

prior is uncertain; it is occasionally given as 1092, but the evidence for this is non-existent.⁶⁶¹ The Durham *Liber vitae* shows Serlo as head of the community at Hackness, where we know the monks resided at the time of *Domesday*.⁶⁶² The simple fact, however, is that we have no knowledge whatsoever of when Reinfrid died, or when Serlo succeeded him, save for the fact that this must have occurred before William de Percy's death whilst the community was at Hackness. The appearance of Serlo in a charter does not, therefore, automatically date said charter to the reign of William II, as David Bates assumed, and the monks clearly believed (or claimed) that they had received charters in their favour from William I. This the monks were perfectly content to square with a foundation charter which placed the foundation of the abbey in the reign of his successor, even though, in reality, such a squaring was impossible.⁶⁶³

Likewise, the charter seems to smooth over the complex relationship to Hugh, earl of Chester. The evidence of the Abbot's Book does suggest that the monks thought his relationship to the abbey was important, but does not provide much in the way of explanation as to why. Hugh is mentioned in the *pro anima* clause in William de Percy's foundation charter, with the 'h' of 'Hugone' and the 'c' of 'comite' shaded in a red ink. This shading appears elsewhere — including in the initial 'N' in notum, which begins the address clause; the 'h' in 'Hilda'; and the 'e' and 's' in 'ecclesiam sancte petri' — but the only other person the scribe highlighted was Emma de Port.⁶⁶⁴ William the Conqueror, Matilda, or William Rufus all appear in the *pro anima* clause, but no special attention is drawn to their name. Clearly, the scribe thought Hugh was of particular importance, even if his role was elided from the foundation charter's version of the foundation. The continued relevance of Hugh is also shown in a charter recorded on folio 7r of the Abbot's Book. It purports

⁶⁶¹ David Knowles, C. N. L. Brooke, and Vera C. M. London, eds, *Heads of Religious Houses: England and Wales 940-1216*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 78.

⁶⁶² *Durham Liber Vitae*, f. 52v6.

⁶⁶³ Bates for example, leaves it out of the *Regesta* arguing that it must be a charter of William II because of the reference to Serlo. *Regesta*, p. 9.

⁶⁶⁴ William de Percy's name begins the charter and is marked by a large initial 'W' in red ink accompanied by a green pen flourish.

to record Hugh's grant of the church of Whitby to Reinfrid, and his gift to the new abbey of the church of *Fleinsburgh*. The charter has received a healthy amount of scholarly discussion. J. C. Atkinson devoted several pages in his introduction to his edition of the Whitby Cartulary discussing it, and Farrer, likewise, discussed it at length in *Early Yorkshire Charters*.⁶⁶⁵ Atkinson concluded that the charter was genuine, but — faced both with the fact that the church never again appears in Whitby's cartularies, and that the church of nearby Flamborough was given to Bridlington Priory — argued *Fleinsburgh* was a mistake for Middlesbrough.⁶⁶⁶ Atkinson, whilst at least able to provide some supporting evidence that Earl Hugh may have been in a position to give Middlesbrough to Whitby, was unable to find much evidence within either cartulary to suggest that he had. He pointed both to the fact that *Domesday* recorded that the vill of Acklam had a church and was held by Hugh, and to a convention between Guisborough Priory and Whitby concluded with the monks of Whitby quitclaiming to the canons of Guisborough any claim which arose from the gift of Earl Hugh of Chester over the church.⁶⁶⁷ The same convention also stated that the monks held the church of Middlesbrough through the alms of Robert de Brus, not Hugh, and a further charter, recorded in the Abbot's Book (and incorrectly glossed by Atkinson), states that Robert and his wife Agnes gave the church to the monks of Whitby.⁶⁶⁸ Farrer did not follow Atkinson's identification of *Fleinsburgh* as Middlesbrough and preferred the more intuitive Flamborough. Unlike Atkinson, he also interrogated the witness list to the charter and concluded the charter was likely spurious. Most of the witness list is acceptable, and would date the charter to 1086–1087, but the inclusion of Aschetil de Bulmer and Robert de Brus raised suspicion. Robert de Brus does not appear in England before 1100 — although Ruth Blakely has argued that it would

⁶⁶⁵ EYC II, 854, p. 193–194.

⁶⁶⁶ Whitby Cartulary, pp. xlv–xlviii.

⁶⁶⁷ Abbot's Book. f. 68r; Whitby Cartulary, CCLXXI, pp. 214–216. Add. MS. 4715, f. 124.

⁶⁶⁸ Abbot's Book, f. 23r; Whitby Cartulary, p. 95.

‘occasion no surprise’ for him to have been in England this early — and Aschetil de Bulmer does not appear in charters before 1115.⁶⁶⁹

Neither Farrer nor Atkinson were much concerned with how the document fitted in with the rest of Whitby Abbey’s story of the past, and neither gave much thought to its location in the cartulary. As already noted, the charter is copied on to folio 7r of the Abbot’s Book, but the cartulary ‘proper’ does not begin until folio 8, and the first quire does not contain the quire signatures which are found within the core of the cartulary codex. Although this quire does begin on folio 1r, with a similar thirteenth-century hand to that found on folio 8r, and although there is similar rubrication, it is not at all clear when the quire was bound to the core cartulary codex.⁶⁷⁰ At any rate, however, this specific charter was not copied into the cartulary, or the quire which eventually became the cartulary, in the thirteenth century, and nor was it added during any of the subsequent sustained periods of additions to the cartulary manuscript. It was, in fact, added in a fifteenth-century hand at the foot of the folio.

The charter, though, whether forged, genuine, or interpolated, is not the only indication of a late memory of Hugh, earl of Chester at Whitby. Another document, also entered into the Abbot’s Book in a late hand, is transcribed on folio 129. This document, written in a hand which is different to any other hand in the cartulary, follows four extant blank folios and a cut out leaf. It begins by stating ‘It is to be remembered that in 1067 Hugh, earl of Chester, and William de Percy came to England with Lord William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy’ and goes on to record that William I gave Whitby to Hugh who, in turn, gave land to William de Percy, who used it to found

⁶⁶⁹ Ruth M Blakely, *The Brus Family in England and Scotland, 1100–1295* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2012), p. 14. For Aschetil: EYC ii, p. 194.

⁶⁷⁰ Atkinson states that ‘the handwriting is the same’, and they are certainly similar. But there are noticeable variations in many of the letter forms between f. 1r and f. 8r. For example, on 8r the ‘i’ consistently descends beyond the base line whereas on 1r it does not, the scribe on folio 1r occasionally deploys an upright ‘d’ whereas the scribe for folio 8r does not and there are differences between how both scribes form the letter ‘a’.

an abbey.⁶⁷¹ The version of Whitby's history described in the memorandum is not without its problems, particularly in regards to the descent of the Percy family, and it is difficult to take the statements for which it is the sole source at face value.⁶⁷² It is interesting though both for the roles it assigns its various players and its lucid chronology: King William gave the land to Hugh, Hugh gave the land of Whitby to William de Percy, William de Percy founded an abbey, and William de Percy gave to Serlo and the monks of the new abbey the vill of Whitby. The memorandum states this all explicitly took place in the time of William the Conqueror — a statement obviously at odds with the *pro anima* clause of the foundation charter.⁶⁷³

It may be possible to solve these problems in a number of ways: one may be that the written record of William de Percy's gift(s) to the abbey was produced in the reign of William Rufus, but refers to gifts made orally (or in charters which do not survive) in the reign of William the Conqueror; in this explanation the foundation charter would be a neat simplification of a complex process made at a point where the monks felt it necessary to commit the gifts to writing — although that explanation would run into conflict with the issues presented in *Domesday*, which show the Whitby lands being held from William de Percy by Stephen of Whitby and the Lasingham/York monks with the Whitby community at Hackness.⁶⁷⁴ It, alternatively, could be suggested that all these issues were resolved, and William de Percy's grant to the Lasingham community of Whitby was made between the culmination of the *Domesday* inquest and William the Conqueror's death, a possibility perhaps strengthened by the evidence from *Domesday* which would suggest that the move from

⁶⁷¹ Memorandum quod AD millesimo sexagesimo septimo, Hugo Comes Cestrensis, et Willelmus Percy, venerunt in Angliam cum Domino Willelmo, Duce Normannorum, Conquestore. Whitby Cartulary CCCLXXVI, p. 312. Abbot's Book, f. 129.

⁶⁷² The most obvious is the statement that Alan de Percy died without heir. He did not; the Abbot's Book records charters of his son in various places see Whitby Cartulary, p. 312n. There are also problems with its description of William de Percy and Hugh's arrival for which see CP Lewis, 'The Formation of the Honor of Chester 1066–1100' *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society* 71: *The Earldom of Chester and its charters: a tribute to Geoffrey Barraclough*, ed. by A. T. Thacker (Chester, 1991), 37–68, p. 40.

⁶⁷³ Atkinson imagines that Hugh's gift could have been the moment that William came to hold Whitby as a tenant in chief, but as these events took place prior to *Domesday* it is either entirely incompatible with that evidence or more simply the start of the relationship which saw William hold as a subtenant.

⁶⁷⁴ *Domesday Book* Yorkshire, 4N1.

Lastingham to York by Stephen had only very recently occurred, but this window is necessarily small and the possibility perhaps unlikely.⁶⁷⁵ A change in the relationship between William and Hugh also occurred after *Domesday*, and the lands that William de Percy held from Hugh of Chester came to be held either by him, or by his son Alan, directly from the king. The requirement for a confirmation from Earl Hugh, as the foundation charter may show, would, after this change, have been unnecessary.⁶⁷⁶ Further difficulty is added here by the seeming preference of the Whitby community to write the Hackness sojourn out of their charter record. 'The monks of Hackness', or any variation thereof, is never used to describe the community in either Whitby cartulary, even when a gift is specifically made to Serlo.⁶⁷⁷ It is, of course, possible that these charters under discussion were issued to a community that had returned to Whitby from Hackness under Serlo, and it is possible, too, that they are charters which were issued before the monks went to Hackness (although here Reinfrid's burial at Hackness may suggest that the community was already away from Whitby by the time Serlo became prior), but the point is still the same: whereas we have contemporary records from Durham describing Serlo's community as a community of Hackness we have nothing that survives amongst Whitby's charters which does so. Explanations can, of course, be found. Perhaps their stay at Hackness was so brief that the community simply received no gifts worthy of record whilst there. Perhaps the community always believed that they were the monks of Whitby, that they would return from Hackness, and that they should continue to style themselves as a Whitby community, even when they were not present there, or perhaps they did receive gifts as a community of Hackness, but later cartulary scribes decided to update the charters they copied to refer to the community as it had come to be known. Whichever of these reasons is favoured, they highlight the complexity hidden behind the neat, simplistic fiction of the foundation charter, which compressed an awkward history into an acceptable and coherent document.

⁶⁷⁵ The York Abbey's landholdings are referred to as the lands of 'The Abbot of York', but no lands are recorded as being held as Tenant in Chief.

⁶⁷⁶ Dalton, *Conquest, Anarchy and Lordship*, p. 120.

⁶⁷⁷ For example, William de Percy's Foundation Charter; Abbot's Book, f. 8r, or a charter of William II to Whitby Cartulary, pp. 495–496. Now British Library, Add MS 4715, f. 153r.

Divergent Strands

A particularly striking feature of the Whitby foundation charter, and the tradition of charters that followed it, is the complete divergence between the version of history presented within it, and the version of Whitby's history we have seen in the *Memorial* pancarte and the poem. If we pull together the various strands of the charter record, a relatively clear picture emerges: William de Percy, during the reign of William the Conqueror, granted various gifts to his brother Serlo for the purpose of founding an abbey.⁶⁷⁸ Two things emerge clearly. Firstly, the charters' version of events is almost completely consistent. There are some variations found in individual charters themselves, but the general impression, that the above was the broad outline of what the monks believed to have been the case, could not come across more strongly. The second, even more remarkable, fact is that this consistent version of the past presented in the charter record, is completely distinct from the narrative records, despite, as I have argued in the previous chapters, the obvious property focus of the *Memorial* pancarte. Across the entire corpus of charters preserved in the two cartularies, there are only scattered references to Reinfrid, the founder and of the monastery and protagonist of the narrative accounts, and two of these references are in right of the appearance of his son as a witness. The foundation charter is witnessed by Fulk, son of Reinfrid, and he appears again in Alan de Percy's, son of William de Percy, charter to the abbey as 'Fulk, son of Reinfrid, prior of Whitby'. Fulk was a patron of Whitby in his own right, and later gifts two carucates of land in Toulston to Whitby Abbey, confirmed by his son, Richard.⁶⁷⁹ His father, the recipient of William de Percy's gift in the *Memorial* does not appear in the thirteenth-century core of the Abbot's Book, and does not appear in British Library, Add MS 4715 at all. The only reference to Reinfrid at all in

⁶⁷⁸ Notwithstanding the evidence of the *pro anima* clause in the foundation charter, which (as we have seen) implies a different chain of events.

⁶⁷⁹ Abbot's Book, ff. 20r–20v Whitby Cartulary LXXXIX, p. 81.

either cartulary is as the recipient of Earl Hugh's gift of *Fleinsburgh* squashed into the foot of folio 7r, which is discussed above.

Why might Reinfrid not have appeared in Whitby's charters? One explanation may lie in the records of the Augustinian's, where hermit types like Reinfrid are frequently removed from charters. As Jane Herbert noted, at these foundations there is a marked paucity of English records of hermits as founders compared to continental sources.⁶⁸⁰ This trend, Herbert argues, owed much to the fact that the transformation of these Augustinian houses from hermitage to priory was more likely to depend on external factors and secular interest from patrons rather than being driven internally from the community surrounding the hermit himself — as was more likely to be the case on the continent. The records of English Augustinians therefore reflected the moments where that secular interest led to the formal creation of the institution.⁶⁸¹ In particular, the Augustinians' willingness to accept small gifts, combined by the universal acknowledgement that hermits were intrinsically spiritual, allowed a founder to receive much greater spiritual benefit relative to their grant than might otherwise have been the case.⁶⁸² The re-discovery of the Rule of St Augustine in the twelfth-century, which mandated a simpler life for its adherents than the Rule of St Benedict, fitted well with the lives already being led by groups of ascetics, and, thus, in the twelfth-century, Augustinian priories replaced Benedictine monasteries as the favoured institutions to be founded on top of hermitages. These features meant that Augustinian priories founded over hermitages proved particularly attractive to lower members of the aristocratic classes, and, therefore, numerous small, poor, institutions were created, which did not produce *vitae* or *historia foundationis* explaining their foundation.⁶⁸³ If Herbert's thinking were applied to Whitby, the absence of Reinfrid the hermit from the charter record might be explained by a focus on external support, i.e.

⁶⁸⁰ Jane Herbert, 'The Transformation of Hermitages into Augustinian Priors in Twelfth-Century England' *Studies in Church History*, 22 (1985), 131–145.

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 140–145.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 142–143.

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 131–134.

that of William de Percy, which, naturally, was crystallised at the moment the abbey's life became more conventual. In the case of Whitby, however, the institution which emerged from Reinfrid's hermitage *was* in a position to write about its past. But it was clearly felt, however, that there was no need to bring either the charter record in line with the narratives, or the narratives in line with the charters. The two memorial traditions, largely contradictory and incompatible though they were, co-existed peacefully, explaining, on the one hand, how the monastery had been founded by a hermit, Reinfrid, and on the other how it had been founded by a wealthy Norman patron. Both of these foundations, too, could be — and were — remembered as refoundations — the foundation charter awkwardly inserts the information that William had made his gift to Serlo for the purpose of (re)founding the destroyed abbey, just as the narrative mentions the ruins at the site, and the poem explicatively links the community to Hilda —, but both also presented the monastery as a part of the post-conquest fabric of society. All of these things could be true, and the Whitby monks felt no need to resolve the various contradictions they created.

In many respects, we should not be surprised by the duality of the Whitby traditions. In the first instance, two conflicting traditions were, in actuality, incredibly useful to the monastery: on the one hand it allowed them to tap into a Northumbrian nexus of saints, and, on the other, it allowed them to cultivate and tie themselves to an increasingly upwardly mobile Percy family who continued to patronise the abbey. In the Percy genealogy, which survives as Alnwick Castle 79, the relationship is made clear:

This William at Whitby cawsid to be bylde
 A gracious monastery of monkys ther to serve,
 In honor of God seynt Petyr and saint Hylde,
 That God by his grace wolfe hym þe more preserve
 And the lyffe perdurable þat he myght also deserue;
 Which abbey he indewyd with othir diuerse moo
 With grett lordshipe³ and fee³, the trewth recordyð soo.

Cosyn to this lorde Perse, ser Raynfryd a knyght,
 First prior of Whitby, inspyryd be heuenly grace,

Mayntenyd his religion and of his chyrch þe ryght.
 Serlo perse, þe secund prior, succeeded in schort space,
 Brodthir to lorde William, fyrste founder of þat place,
 So not only be mercy all actress flowred þe perse nayme,
 Bot by faders of Crystes chirch increscyð a vertuous fame.

The fyrst William Perse was a noble man of werr,
 Beyond the sea he did many a ryall enterprise,
 Werby his name was dilated and spokyn of farr.
 A lusty captain he was, sobre and wyse;
 To magnifye his meritiss my connyng will not suffyce.
 Beyond the see the deseassyð and ther his body doth ly,
 His harte brought into Englande was beryd reuerently.⁶⁸⁴

The chronicle then goes on to record that Alan de Percy was buried in the chapter house of the monastery, and that his son, William, and his sons, Alan and Richard, were buried in the monastery.⁶⁸⁵ The claim that Reinfrid was a relation of William de Percy is also repeated in the Peeris manuscript, which takes the genealogy back to the pre-conquest Percy family, and adds some remarkable details to the foundation story:

At Whitby he foundede and causyde to be bilde
 A graciuss monastery of monkes there to serue
 in the honoure of god saynt peter and saynt hilde
 That god of his grace the better wold hym preserue
 and the perdurable lyff also that the myght deserve
 whiche abbay he endewide as he dyde other moo
 with large possessyone as this booke will declare and shew

The saide monastery first was bilde of sante hilde doughter to kinge edwyn
 that tyme a place of nonnyes of the whiche place she
 was the first abbas by inspiacracione divyne
 but longe after it was made desolate and distroyde by the daynes cruelte
 But the saide first lorde Willyam percy sone after the conquest
 causide the saide house of whitby to be bilde agayne as he thought best

Cosyn to this fist lorde Willyam Percy, Raynfrede a knyght,
 was first prior of Whitby, inspyrede be heuenly grace,
 Mayntenyge the fundacione of his unckle the ryght.
 Serle percy the first the secund prior, succedeð in short space,
 Broder to the first lorde Willyam Percy and first founder of the place,
 So not onely be mershi all actis flowrede the percy name
 But also the blode of them were faders of cristis chirch encresinge a vertuous fame.⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸⁴ Edwards, 'Verse Chronicle', pp. 232-233.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 234.

⁶⁸⁶ British Library, Royal MS D II, ff. 180r-180v.

The description of Reinfrid as a relation of William de Percy is unique to these sources. It strengthens the author's presentation of Whitby as a Percy house, which Peeris elaborates on in detail. The suspicion may be that Reinfrid's status as a Percy was a creation of the author of the shorter version of these chronicles to strengthen the familial ties to the monastery, rather than a part of Whitby's traditions. Nevertheless, Peeris's claim that he has seen the 'evydens end dedis under seale' of the abbey should be taken seriously. Firstly, he preserves details which mesh incredibly well with the abbey's memorialisation of the past (which we will turn to in due course) and, secondly, the evidence of Bodley Rolls 5 would indicate that the Percy's were using Whitby sources to construct their genealogies. There, the genealogy contains records of the Percy's endowments to Whitby, apparently based on a Latin chronicle produced in 1458 by Thomas Pickering, abbot of Whitby.⁶⁸⁷ In Peeris's version, the two strands of the Whitby story are brought together, and, as in the Whitby poem, the refoundation is tied to Hilda's community, but here Peeris strips Reinfrid of the agency of the refoundation and grants it instead to William de Percy, in an obvious attempt to glorify the Percy lineage. Whitby Abbey and the Percys, clearly recognised the mutual benefits of the founder/abbey relationship. On the one hand the Percy family could use the link to enhance their own reputation and, on the other, Whitby's position was strengthened by links to a family who, eventually, rose to become the Earls of Northumberland. Although, as it happened, neither link proved particularly beneficial to the other party in the sixteenth century: Whitby Abbey was dissolved and Henry Percy, sixth earl of Northumberland, was deprived of the earldom within a year of each other.

In-house Founders

⁶⁸⁷ *A Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford*, ed. by Falconer Madden and H. H.E. Craster (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), ii pt 1, 2986.

Despite the differing accounts of foundation present in the Whitby sources, what remained consistent was the designation of William de Percy as the abbey's founder. No matter how much Reinfrid's actions *look* foundational the Whitby sources never describe him as a founder. At both Selby, and St Mary's York, however, that picture is far less consistent. In both these cases, Stephen of Whitby, at St Mary's, and Benedict, at Selby, became the first abbots and are described as founders, although the consistency with which they are so designated varies.

One of the first glimpses of the conceptualisation of Selby and St Mary's past, is given in the mortuary roll of Matilda of Caen. In both instances, the roll arrived after the death of their first abbots. Stephen had died in 1112, whilst Benedict died at some point following his resignation of the abbacy in 1096/1097, having been abbot for 'twenty-seven years, that is from the fourth year of King William I to the tenth year of King William II'.⁶⁸⁸ After resigning the abbacy, Benedict is reported by the Selby historian to have gone to Rochester where he died.⁶⁸⁹ The Selby monks entered into the mortuary roll a verse in praise of Matilda, followed by a request that their own dead be prayed for. That request began with Abbot Benedict 'first founder of our church' and then 'for the others whose names are written in the *Liber viventium*'.⁶⁹⁰ That identification of Benedict as founder continues into the *Historia* where the historian described Reinfrid as having ruled over the community 'that he had founded' as its first abbot.⁶⁹¹ The St Mary's evidence is even more explicit. In Matilda's roll the monks composed three verses, seemingly composed by the monks Benedict, Richard, and Peter, and then listed the dead of their monastery beginning with 'Stephen, first abbot and founder of the monastery', followed by Prior Reinfrid, Prior Hildebert, and a lengthy list of monks amongst whom the name 'Count Alan, our benefactor' was placed.⁶⁹² This 'Count Alan' was one of two men. Either it was Alan Rufus, who as we saw in Stephen's narrative, gave the

⁶⁸⁸ *HSM*, pp. 62-63.

⁶⁸⁹ The identification of Rochester is not absolutely certain, see *HSM*, p.62 n. 114.

⁶⁹⁰ Deslilse, *Rouleaux des morts*, p. 195.

⁶⁹¹ *HSM*, pp. 62-63.

⁶⁹² Deslilse, *Rouleaux des morts*, pp, 198-199.

grant of St Olave's church to the York community, or it is his brother, Alan Niger, who was also a benefactor of the community, and who succeeded Alan Rufus as Lord of Richmond. Again, however, we can glimpse at the fictions inherent in foundation. The designation of Stephen as founder, and one of the Alan's as benefactor, places the foundation of St Mary's York firmly in a York context, and yet the monks remembered Reinfrid, who, as far as we can tell, either moved with the Whitby monks to Hackness or remained at Whitby when the two communities split, as a member of the York community. The community may have begun at York, but the monks continued to remember people from their 'pre-history' as members of their new community.

The difference in the designation of Stephen and Benedict as founders, and the absence of that designation in the Whitby sources for Reinfrid, may be owed to the fact that both Stephen and Benedict did something that Reinfrid had not. They both oversaw the transformation of their community of monks from a loose collection into a conventual community living under the Rule of St Benedict. For Stephen, the narration of that transformation was the express purpose of his work. The need for a formal Rule was his justification for his election as the Whitby community's leader, and, as we saw, as early as his arrival at Lastingham, he saw himself formally blessed as abbot. At Selby, Benedict's period living as a hermit is presented as so brief and so temporary that one wonders if it ever even occurred, or if the author of the *Historia* imaginatively and fictitiously created it. As we have seen, it was a popular *topos*, in vogue with institutions north of the Humber and elsewhere in the country.

If the creation of an abbey proper was a prerequisite for both those two men to be designated as founders in their own abbey's historical writing, then it may explain why Reinfrid (or even Serlo — despite his role as the recipient of the founders' gift) was not remembered as a founder in the Whitby sources — although, in that case, we might expect the first abbot, the other William de Percy, to be designated as a founder. Even at Whitby, however, there must be some scepticism

about whether it was the sort of site which might have attracted hermit types such as Reinfrid, if he was seeking solitude. It is only in sources outside of the abbey that he is remembered as an eremitic, and post-Conquest Whitby does not seem a conventional location to found a hermitage. Like Selby, the place name would indicate Scandinavian settlement, and it was valued at the phenomenally high pre-conquest value of £112.⁶⁹³ That valuation had fallen off of a cliff by 1086 (figuratively, unlike the Whitby headland itself which has done so literally), and was valued at 60s only, but the Whitby monks were evidently well placed to take advantage of the area's recovery. A number of finds of jet cross pendants, dating from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, appear across the North Sea region and point to the existence of a jet workshop at the abbey in the late twelfth century. The pendants they created were sold and distributed through Whitby's port.⁶⁹⁴ The appearance of hermits on the edges of settlements would hardly be unusual, and certainly it becomes a feature of the late medieval hermit's life, but what the divergent strands at Whitby may preserve is an element of the stop/start nature of their foundation. It became useful to recognise Reinfrid as a part of the Whitby community, even if the community did not recognise itself as having been founded until after his death, because by incorporating him in to their community, the monks could challenge the claims of St Mary's York to the Whitby land. The St Mary's monks evidently recognised Reinfrid as part of *their* community, but that memory not over-write the charter evidence which the abbey preserved which suggested that the foundational gift of land occurred much later, after the community had long left Whitby. The result is somewhat of a legal fiction: Reinfrid was a member of the York community at a time when the community did not exist.

When we turn way from Whitby to the example of Selby and St Mary's, the abbot founders were not the only people remembered by the community as their founders. We have already seen how

⁶⁹³ *Domesday Book* 30, 4N1.

⁶⁹⁴ Elizabeth Pierce, 'Jet Cross Pendants from the British Isles and Beyond: Forms, Distribution and Use', *Medieval Archaeology*, 57:1 (2013), 198-211.

both communities do, and do not, remember their royal founders, but the St Mary's *Ordinale* also provides a good deal of evidence to explore how the three brothers who succeeded each other as Lords of Richmond shortly after the Norman Conquest, Alan Rufus (d. 1093), Alan Niger (d. ~1096-1098), and Stephen, count of Trieguer (d. ~ 1136-1138), were commemorated.⁶⁹⁵ All three were evidently remembered as founders of the community, and all three receive a good deal of attention in the *Ordinale*; Alan Rufus and Alan Niger share an anniversary on 2 August, with Stephen's death commemorated on 21 April.⁶⁹⁶ A number of sources also point towards a lingering interest in the genealogies of the Lords (and then Earls of Richmond). One of these is a genealogy preserved in MS Rawlinson C 553: the St Mary's Book of Hours. The genealogy begins correctly by correctly recording the early history of the Lords of Richmond and continues to match the known facts of the family until Conan, son of Alan, who was also count of Brittany. But from there the descent becomes confused. The genealogy records that Conan was succeeded by his son, John, who was in turn succeeded by his son William, and William by his son John, following whose death the earldom transferred into the hands of the king.⁶⁹⁷ It is difficult to know what to make of this genealogy. In places it is rather accurate, the names of Count Stephen's three children are correctly given for example, but the details provided from Conan onwards cannot be squared with any known facts, even allowing for the disorder surrounding the Richmond honour following Conan's engineered disinheritance in favour of his daughter, Constance II (who at any rate is not

⁶⁹⁵ These death dates have been the subject of much debate owing to a disagreement between the Magram Annals, which gives the death of Alan Rufus as 1089, and Bury sources, which give the year of his death as 1093, and confusion between the two Alan brothers. Richard Sharpe has demonstrated beyond all doubt that the later date is preferable for the death of Alan Rufus. Stephen had inherited Alan Niger's land by the time he witnessed a charter of William Rufus in Normandy on 28 December either in 1096, 1097 or 1098. Richard Sharpe, 'King Harold's Daughter', *Haskins Society Journal*, 19 (2008), 1–27; p. 10. Stephen's son, Alan, appears to have succeeded him as Lord of Richmond by 1136, but there is some suggestion that he may have lived until as late as 1138. Katharine S. B. Keats-Rohan, 'The Bretons and Normans of England 1066-1154: The Family, the Fief and the Feudal Monarchy', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 36 (1992), 42–78.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ordinale*, iii, pp. 370-371.

⁶⁹⁷ The hand is tricky and the scribe uses abbreviations almost at random. This section seems to read '... successit post quem Conan filius eius post quem Johannes filius eius cum successit Willelmus comes Albimarr' post quem Johannes filius eius cum decessum comitatum Richmund fuit ad habitum regis usque in presens', MS Rawlinson C 553, f. 147v.

mentioned in the genealogy), by Henry.⁶⁹⁸ There is some suggestion Conan may have had a legitimate son called William, who was disinherited in favour of Constance by Henry II's political manoeuvrings, but there is no evidence of any John.⁶⁹⁹

Despite this interest, no foundation charter in favour of the monastery issued by Alan Rufus survives, but a collection of charters issued by his successors as Lord of Richmond do. None of these, however, survive in any of the St Mary's cartularies, and it must be wondered whether a separate cartulary containing this material may have been lost, or whether they may have been recorded in the lost quire which precedes the royal material in British Library, Harley MS 236. It is more usual for royal material to begin a cartulary, but with the unusual commemoration of St Mary's royal links, it would not be outside the realms of possibility that royal charter material was entered second into the cartulary, behind the charters of the Lords of Richmond.

At any rate we can be sure that these charters existed, and that the monks of St Mary's York had access to them, because they appear in a series of *inspeximi*. We have already seen two of these charters in the context of Stephen's dispute with the archbishop: the charter issued to Alan Rufus by William the Conqueror, recording the grant of St Olaf's and the manor of Clifton which he in turn passed on to the York monks, and his brother Alan Niger's confirmation of his gift.⁷⁰⁰ In addition to these two charters, Henry VI also inspected a charter of Stephen, count of Tréguier, recording the grant to the abbey of Fulford, Foston, Shipton, and 'Chetellestorp', as well as two carucates of land in Escrick, half a carucate in Acaster, eleven bovates in Water Fulford, two carucates in Thornton le Clay, twelve bovates in Flaxton, three carucates in 'Buleford,' and one

⁶⁹⁸ Conan retained the title Lord of Richmond alongside his title as Count of Tréguier until his death in 1171 despite being disinherited of Brittany in 1166.

⁶⁹⁹ Judith Everard, *Brittany and the Angevins: Province and Empire 1158-1203* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 42-43.

⁷⁰⁰ 18 Nov 1433, 12 Henry VI. Cal Pat Henry VI Vol II 1429-1436, p. 362.

carucate in 'Aluoldestorp'.⁷⁰¹ Another charter of Stephen's in favour of the abbey, which, again, records the gift of Fulford, and also confirms all the gifts given by Stephen, his ancestors, and his men, survives in an *inspeximus* of Edward II alongside a charter of his grandson, Conan, in favour of the abbey.⁷⁰² Conan's charter serves to confirm various gifts made to St Mary's by his ancestors, including his father's gift of Rumburgh Priory (Suffolk) to the abbey; the charter of Conan's father, Alan III, recording the original gift does not survive.⁷⁰³ All of these gifts are also confirmed in a series of royal charters, all seemingly forgeries, which survive in the abbey's cartularies. The pattern of the gifts granted to the abbey by the lords of Richmond is relatively clear cut: from the foundation to the death of Count Stephen the monastery was generously supported by the Breton lords. After his death, however, that material support ebbed away, with the gift of the cell of Rumburgh by Alan III the only significant grant in the abbey's favour by these lords.

Strictly speaking, none of these gifts were actually foundational, for they did not gift the land where the abbey church ultimately sat, but Alan Rufus's gift of St Olaf's to the church marked the penultimate move for Stephen and his monks and, although it did not ultimately end up being the site of the seat of the abbey, it formed a part of the abbey precinct. His death in 1093 coincided awkwardly with the existential threat posed to the abbey by the Archbishop of York and occurred before the event Stephen of Whitby describes as 'the foundation' of the abbey (presumably here meaning the consecration ceremony) at which Alan Niger is described as present.⁷⁰⁴ Alan Niger's own death, some three years after his brother Alan's, and the succession of his brother Stephen, who is unmentioned in Stephen's narrative during these formative years, earned all three the designation of founder. Another early relative of those three and an early benefactor to the abbey,

⁷⁰¹ EYC, iv, p. 4. I follow here Clay's identification of these lands.

⁷⁰² 10 Oct 1316, Cal Pat Edward II, vol ii, p.556. EYC, iv, p. 8.

⁷⁰³ There is a fair amount of confusion regarding this gift to St Mary's and debate about whether it was Stephen or Alan who gave it as a cell to St Mary's. Conan's charter explicitly confirms the 'cellam Romborough quam pater meus eidem ecclesie dedit' EYC. iv, p. 39.

⁷⁰⁴ Add MS 38816, f. 33v.

Walter d'Aincourt was related to Alan Rufus through his marriage to Alan's daughter Matilda, but despite the prominent placement of his tomb, located near Simon of Warwick's, he was not thought of by the monks of the abbey as a founder.⁷⁰⁵ And neither was Matilda, who had given gifts to the abbey in her own right. Matilda, who was the granddaughter of King Harold through her mother Gunnhild, was not even given her own entry in the abbey's necrology. The designation as founder, then, was not automatically familial. The importance of those three men who were designated it was tied to Alan Rufus's grant of St Olaf's, and the designation required active support and was not automatically acquired. It was time limited — the patron of a long-established abbey could hardly be considered a founder — but the process was long and could be stretched to accommodate multiple people.

At Whitby, too, we see examples of multiple generations of the same family being designated as founder. Throughout the narrative sources we have seen William de Percy recalled as the community's founder, even if he was not always remembered as generous, or even likeable. As we have seen, in the rubrics to the Abbot's book, William de Percy is consistently described as 'primus fundator Abbathae de wyteby'. His foundation charter, for example, is recorded as 'Carta Willelmi de Perci primi fundatoris Abbatae de wyteby' and the charter of Alan de Percy is transcribed under a rubric which describes it as 'Carta Alani de Perci filii Willelmi de Perci primi fundatoris abbatae de wyteby'.⁷⁰⁶ This was not the preference of one rubricator. The first folio of the fourteenth-century additions to the Abbot's Book contains another charter of Alan de Percy, which confirms his and his father's gifts to the abbey. This charter, like the charter on folio 8v of Alan's, is given the rubric 'Carta Alani de Perci filii Willelmi de Perci primi fundatoris abbatae de wyteby de terries et earum divisio'.⁷⁰⁷ It might be possible to speculate that the rubricator of the fourteenth-century

⁷⁰⁵ Richard Sharpe, 'King Harold's Daughter' *Haskins Society Journal*, 19 (2007), 1-27.

⁷⁰⁶ Whitby Cartulary XXVII-XXVIII, pp. 31-35; Abbot's Book, f. 8r-9r.

⁷⁰⁷ BL Add MS 4715 is rubricated in places, but these are less consistently filled in and blank spaces where rubrics were presumably intended.

additions to the cartulary was copying the style of the original thirteenth-century one, for the folio layout of the fourteenth-century core is similar to the thirteenth-century core and the charters, initially at least, are accompanied with rubrics in the same places. But if this is the case, then, at the very least, it can be said that the fourteenth-century rubricator did not think that the description of William de Percy as the abbey's first founder was an egregious error that needed to be corrected, and, if it is not, it is a continued preference to style William de Percy as the community's first founder.

As it happens, a charter of Henry I proves that this was not an error.⁷⁰⁸ The charter confirms all lands, forests, and pastures – specifically those which had been given to the abbey by William de Percy and Alan de Percy. Quite conventionally, William de Percy is described as a founder of the abbey, but, in this charter, so too is his son Alan.⁷⁰⁹ Confirmation charters of Henry II and Richard I all deploy the exact same formula, with 'pater and frater' exchanged for 'proavus', and a confirmation of John says much the same thing with the wording slightly altered.⁷¹⁰ Both of these charters find their way in to *inspeximus* charters of Edward II, Edward III, and Richard II, and were self-evidently presented by the community for confirmation to various kings.⁷¹¹ These *inspeximi* charters are all entirely self-contradictory. In the same documents which describe William and Alan as the founders of the abbey, other charters have been inspected and transcribed which describe William alone as the founder. The inconsistency was apparently neither problematic nor troublesome to the monks who required confirmations, nor for the kings from whom

⁷⁰⁸ Abbot's Book, f. 50r; Add MS 4715, f. 162v.

⁷⁰⁹ Concedo etiam eis et confirmo omnes terras, forestas, nemora et pasturas quas Willelmus de Perci et Alanus de Perci filius eius fundatores predictae abbacie eis dederunt in elemosinam perpetuam per metas sicut habetur in carta Alani de Perci. Ibid.

⁷¹⁰ Concedimus etiam et confirmamus praedictae ecclesie Sancti Petri et Sancti Hildae de Wyteby et monachis ibidem Deo serventibus omnes terras, forestas et pasturas quas Willelmus de Perci, et Alanus filius ejus, fundatores illius Abbatis, dederunt in elemosinam perpetuam per metas sicut in carta Alani de Perci...

John: Whitby Cartulary, CXCI p. 157 Abbot's Book, f. 50v; British Library, Add MS 4715, f. 159v–160v; Richard: Abbot's Book ff. 48v–49r.

⁷¹¹ Edward II, Cal Char. Roll, vol 2, p. 188; Edward III, Cal Char. Rol, vol 4, p. 293; Richard II, Cal Char. Roll, vol 5, p. 279.

confirmation was required. How and why the tradition that Alan could be considered a founder of the abbey emerged is unclear, but there is nothing inherently implausible about it. It might be tempting to argue that the identification of Alan as a founder was simply the result of a transcription error, and it is easy to believe that a scribe, possibly a scribe in Henry II's chancery where the first description of Alan as a founder alongside his father occurs, could easily make 'Willelmus de Perci fundatoris predicte abbacie et Alanus filius ejus' the similar but very different 'Willelmus de Perci et Alanus filius ejus fundatores predicte abbacie'. No other charters, except those charters related to these royal issues, describe William and Alan as founders of the abbey, and Alan is never described as a founder without his father in the abbey's sources themselves. But, in William Peeris's Percy genealogy, we are given the explicit statement that Alan was adopted by the community as a second founder. Following the quarrel between Serlo and William de Percy transcribed above, Peeris records the death of William and his succession by Alan:

The first Alayne Percy the first William Percis eldest sone and heire a knight right valiant
was next after the first Willyam his fader by lawfull successyone
A lady mariede he callyde Em de Guante
he confrmyde his faders graunte of Whitby the fundacione
the monkis of Whitby wer sayne to be under his proteccyon
he gayve to them of reasone what they wolde requyre
And they honowride hym as founder withe harty desyre⁷¹²

Peeris then continued on to record the gifts that Alan had given to the monastery himself, and recorded that Alan had been buried in the chapter house next to his mother.⁷¹³ Late though Peeris's testimony is, there can be no doubt that it fits well with a memorial tradition that we can glimpse at throughout Whitby's sources, and we can, I think, be certain beyond any doubt that Alan was remembered as a founder of the community alongside his father. It would be tempting to conclude that that status had something to do with the change of circumstances that saw Whitby appoint an abbot, but Peeris is heavy on details and it is difficult to think he would have missed mentioning

⁷¹² Royal MS 18 D II, f. 188v.

⁷¹³ Ibid.

it were that the case. It appears, then, that it was the confirmation and the taking of the Whitby community under his protection that earned Alan the honour.

Multiple founders and the Liturgy

The survival of liturgical books and a collection of short charters from St Mary's gives us an insight into how the monk commemorated the memory of their founders in the liturgy. The monks clearly believed they had multiple founders, but there can be no doubt that Stephen was elevated above these in the abbey's liturgical practices. The anniversary of Stephen's death is the locus of the monks commemoration. Following the copy of his narrative in Add MS 38816, appears a list of arrangements made on the anniversary of important people in the abbey's history. There are a number of entries here in different hands, which were entered over the span of about 100 years. The first of these, written in the same hand as Stephen's narrative, follows immediately from the end his work. It is absent from the other twelfth-century copy of Stephen's work, and did not form an integral part of it—Stephen can hardly have written about arrangements made after his death. There is, however, a thematic unity with the end of his work. Stephen had requested that monks of future generations should remember and pray for him, and the subsequent generations of the monastery's monks therefore recorded one of the ways in which they gave gifts to the poor on the anniversary of their founders death:

Know all who come after us that I, Richard, second abbot of this monastery, with the kind assent of the whole of our chapter concede and put in place a payment of 10 shillings which are to be rendered in ermine each and every year to our almoner to be apportioned amongst paupers on the anniversary [of the death] of the lord Stephen, of good memory, the first abbot and founder of this church.⁷¹⁴

⁷¹⁴ Sciant omnes posteri nostri quod ego Ricardus secundus abbas huius monasterii cum benigno assensu totius capitula nostri concede et constituo x solidos qui reddendi sunt de eirminna unoquoque anno elemosinario nostro dividendos pauperibus manniuersario bone memorie domni Stephani abbatis primi et fundatoris huius ecclesie. Add MS 38816, f. 34v.

From St Mary's surviving ordinals and customary we can also flesh out some of the other arrangements made for the anniversary of Stephen's death. From the evidence of the *Ordinale*, it is clear that his anniversary took place on 9 August every year, and that a number of special liturgical arrangements were made to commemorate it. The *Ordinale* calls for the abbot himself to take vespers, matins, and both the morning and solemn masses on the anniversaries of those men who were remembered in the ordinals as founders: Abbot Stephen, Alan Rufus, Alan Niger, and Stephen, count of Richmond. It was these days, along with Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, the Assumption of Mary and All Saints Day, and the abbey's other principal feasts, that the *Ordinale* called for the abbot specifically to be involved with the divine office and mass.⁷¹⁵ The identification of the other three men here as founders will be addressed in due course, but for now it will be noticed how Stephen's anniversary is pulled out for special attention, and placed alongside some of the most important dates of the Christian calendar and the saints deemed most important to the abbey. Other than the founders, the only other person to receive close to their level of commemoration, although absent from the above list, is Simon of Warwick, the twelfth abbot, and builder of the new gothic church between 1271 and 1294. It is in that role in which he is remembered; *Abbatis Simon qui istam ecclesiam de novo fabricavit*.⁷¹⁶ On these days, certain changes to the performance of the liturgy were made, some of which are detailed in the section of the *Ordinale* devoted to recording the duties of the choir.⁷¹⁷ These include the reading of three nocturns during vigils, with each nocturn comprised of three readings. The sixth reading, the final reading of the second set of nocturns, was read by the prior and the ninth reading, the final reading of the third set, read by the abbot.⁷¹⁸ On the anniversaries of the abbots, the three verses *Dies illa, Quid ergo,*

⁷¹⁵ Vigiliarum quarundam principalium, scilicet navitatis domini, Pasche Pentecostes, Assumpcionis et Omnium Sanctorum, Anniversariorum dompni Stephani Abbaatis, Alani Ruphi, Alani Nigri, domini Stephani comitis Richmundie, et Commemoracionis Animarum, missas, utrasque eciam vespervas, matutinas et missas solempnes omnium principalium festorum per annum, Domnus Abbas celebrabit. *Ordinale*, i, p. 12. If the abbot was not present, the next highest-ranking member of the community would take charge, *Ordinale*, i, p. 12.

⁷¹⁶ *Ordinale*, i, p. 63.

⁷¹⁷ *Ordinale*, i, p. 58-67.

⁷¹⁸ *Ordinale*, i, p. 64.

and *Clementissime Domine* were sung, and on the anniversary of Stephen's death the antiphon *Rector Clementissime* was specifically sung.⁷¹⁹ The morrow mass of the anniversary days of the founders were also to be performed, with six monks in copes signing the tract.⁷²⁰ In addition to the precept that the abbot should be involved in the celebration of the mass on those particular days, the *Ordinale* also indicates that a Mass of the Dead, in honour of the founders and benefactors of the church, should be performed daily, except on certain special days.⁷²¹ The daily requiem mass is a common feature of monastic life, and the exchange of benefaction for prayers for the eternal soul of the benefactor is a well-known feature of medieval life. Perhaps more unusual, though, is the seemingly ritualistic setting of a place for Abbot Stephen at the monks' meals. A section in the *Ordinale* concerning the order in which meals should be served indicates that Stephen should have a portion of bread (a 'mica'; either a crumb, morsel or even a loaf, but presumably the latter here) placed before him.⁷²² The fate of that bread is not mentioned, but it could then presumably have been used in the monastery's almsgiving and divided out amongst the poor. Nevertheless, it is more evidence to suggest that Stephen earned a special place in the abbey's liturgy and was elevated above the other founders and abbots in the abbey's memory.

Lay founders also received special liturgical arrangements in the *Ordinale*, but these were distinct to those reserved for Stephen of Whitby. Like on Stephen's anniversary, the abbot was tasked with performing several parts of the Daily Office for the three lords of Richmond, but the responses chanted during the nocturns were different. Rather than *Credo, qui Lazarum* and *Deus eternus*, in the first set of three; *Heu michi Dominae, Ne recorderis* and *Congregati* for the second; and *Peccantem, Libera me, Libera* for the third; the responses to be sung for the Lords of Richmond were: *Credo, qui*

⁷¹⁹ *Ordinale*, i, iii, p. 64, 368, 372.

⁷²⁰ *Ordinale*, i, p. 72

⁷²¹ *Omni die per annum, exceptis quos prediximus, ad altare sancti Stephani ab intabulato ad illam erit missa specialis pro animabus fundatorum nostrorum, benefactorum et omnium fidelium defunctorum. Ordinale*, i, p. 68.

⁷²² *Item ponatur cotidie in loco ad hoc deputato ex parte prioris unum Micheum pro Domino Stephano primo Abbate hujus monasterii*, p. 147.

Lazarum, Domine quando veneris; Heu michi, Ne recorderis, Domine secundum actum; and *Pecantem me, Requiem eternam, Libera me Domine de morte eterna*.⁷²³ What was meant by the precise changes to the responsories is difficult to say, but they do highlight that Stephen of Whitby and the lords of Richmond were treated with a conscious difference by the St Mary's monks, despite their shared designation as founder.

Unlike William the Conqueror and William Rufus, these founders also appear in the *Ordinale* in the list of the important anniversaries of abbots, priors, monks, and lay benefactors (although only three priors and two monks are recorded). That list contains the name of every abbot of the monastery, starting in January with the obit of Robert, the seventh abbot of the monastery who died on 11 January 1239, followed by an obit for Richard, second abbot of the monastery, on 13 January; in total there had been seventeen abbots of the abbey between the foundation of the monastery and the production of the manuscript.⁷²⁴ Stephen, count of Trieguer, is included in this list, alongside his wife Hawise, on 21 April, and Count Alan Rufus and Alan Niger share an anniversary on 4 August.⁷²⁵ In general, the coverage of early benefactors is poor. Except from the Lords of Richmond, none of the early benefactors appears, even when the *Ordinale* itself suggests that they continued to be important to the community. To give but one example, the tomb of Walter d'Aincourt was located prominently in the abbey church, the directions for the Christmas Day procession indicate that the monks were to enter the choir, pass the tomb of Abbot Simon, then Walter d'Aincourt and then Count Stephen, but, despite the fact his tomb was located in the choir, no anniversary was included in the *Ordinale* for Walter.⁷²⁶ The lay donors, as Janet Burton noted, are almost all as a rule local, and are almost bafflingly low status, but there is total agreement between the names recorded in the *Ordinale* anniversaries and the list of memorandum recording

⁷²³ *Ordinale*, i, p. 64.

⁷²⁴ Robert de Longchamp, the second successive 'Abbot Robert', *Ordinale* iii, p. 369. *HRH* i, p. 84. Richard's death was either within a year of his election in 1112 or in 1118. The short list of obits in Bodley MS 39 gives his death as 12 January. *Ordinale*, iii, p. 369, *HRH* i, p. 84.

⁷²⁵ *Ordinale*, iii, pp. 370-371.

⁷²⁶ *Ordinale*, ii, p. 183.

the agreements between these lay donors and the abbey in Add MS 38816. Stephen of Whitby, Count Stephen, Abbot Thomas of Warthill, Simon of Warwick, Astin of Pickering, Robert of Skegness, Walter of Aske, Conan of Aske, Agnes of Aske, Ralph Flethe, Robert Verendel, and Richard of Harpam all appear both in this list of anniversaries in the *Ordinale* and have anniversaries recorded in Add MS 38816.⁷²⁷

In Add MS 38816, Count Stephen's charter arrangement begins immediately after Stephen of Whitby's, but only two lines could be fitted into the foot of the folio. The scribe had written the catch word 'Stephanus', but the next folio is a later insert beginning with the anniversary for Abbot Thomas of Warthill. Two further stubs follow this insert, before the folios containing the names we have just seen.⁷²⁸ These must have been removed before the fifteenth-century Roman foliation, which runs continuously across the lacuna. This lacuna presumably corresponds to the loss of folios which contained more of the names which appear in the *Ordinale* obit list. The only names we can say probably were not in the Add MS 38816 manuscript, but who are in the *Ordinale* obit list, are the names of Alan Rufus and Alan Niger — who do not have arrangements with St Mary's recorded between those for the two Stephens, despite both dying before Count Stephen had been added. In any case, Alan Rufus was buried at Bury, if he had always intended to be buried there, it would perhaps have been unlikely that the St Mary's monks would have made provisions for his anniversary, despite his status as their founder.⁷²⁹

⁷²⁷ Most of the anniversary dates much too, although there are some exceptions. Astin of Pickering died 18 May *Ordinale*, iii, p. 370 and Add MS 38816, f. 35r. Robert of Skegness 16 March, *Ordinale* iii, p. 370 but 17 March Add MS 38816 f. 35r. Walter of Aske 5 December *Ordinale*, iii, p. 373 but 'infra dies natalis domini' in 1262 in Add MS 38816, ff. 35r-35v. Agnes of Aske 26 November in both *Ordinale*, iii, p. 373 and Add MS 38816, ff. 35r-35v. Conan of Aske 11 August in both *Ordinale*, iii, p. 372 and Add MS 38816, ff. 35r-35v. Ralph Flethe 12 November *Ordinale*, iii, p. 372. Robert Verendel 6 August in both *Ordinale* iii, p. 371 and Add MS 38816, f. 35v. Richard of Harpam 26 August *Ordinale*, iii, p. 372 and Add MS 38816, ff. 35v-36r.

⁷²⁸ Add MS 38816, ff. 34v-37r.

⁷²⁹ This information is contained in a Bury set of additions to John of Worcester's chronicle. John of Worcester, *Chronicle*, iii, p. 314.

For the rest of the entries, the overlap would seem to suggest that Add MS 38816 and the list in the *Ordinale* are closely related. Add MS 38816 looks like it was the repository in which agreements were first recorded, and then the names of those who had sought for the anniversary of their death to be commemorated at the monastery were subsequently entered into a martyrology, which may have been the direct source of the *Ordinale* list.⁷³⁰ The *Ordinale*'s list is not exhaustive (the evidence of earlier in the *Ordinale* does suggest that the monks were praying 'pro animabus' for both Walter d'Aincourt and Henry de Lascy; Henry de Lascy's obit is included (6 February) but Walter d'Aincourt's — as we have just observed — is absent from the list), but it does look like it records, as the title indicated, the anniversaries most important to the community.⁷³¹ The local nature of the donors, beyond the Breton lords of Richmond and Henry I, seems likely to reflect the fact that (as I have touched upon) there is little evidence of continued benefaction of the abbey by the powerful founder dynasties beyond Alan III, count of Brittany and Henry I. Instead, the abbey seems to be supported by numerous grants from local benefactors. In summary, then, it seems possible to take the *Ordinale* at face value as an accurate summary of the most important anniversaries of the abbey's liturgical year.

What emerges from this material is a hierarchical list of patrons, but not necessarily in the expected way. There is absolutely no indication of any demarcation between the three brothers who held as Lord of Richmond. All three were founders, and all three were honoured in the same way in the abbey's liturgical practices, these brothers were not just part of a founding family but founders themselves. That title was clearly semi-hereditary, but not automatic. With the exception of the kings of England, nobody outside of the founding family at York, at Whitby, or at Selby is granted the title 'founder' unless they are related to the original grant of land, and it is perhaps in the attempts to seek confirmation for that grant that the monasteries sought to adopt those kings as

⁷³⁰ For the relationship see Burton, 'Commemoration in a Yorkshire Context'.

⁷³¹ *Ordinale*, i, p. 68; iii, p. 369.

their founders. But the status as founder was, however, a status that could be bestowed on the various successors of that family, regardless of whether or not the abbey had, strictly speaking, already have been founded. The Whitby examples would however suggest that it was an earned title. Alan de Percy was not adopted as a founder because of his father's gift, although his confirmation of it is specifically cited in the *Peeris* poem as a reason why he was eligible for it, but because of his active support for the monastery. In that source, the monks differentiated between William de Percy and his son Alan by making them first and second founders, and the rubrication of the cartulary would suggest it was a familiar style in the monastery too, but there can be no doubt from the charter evidence that they could be equally treated together as men on the same level and status even if, in modern reconstructions at least, we would see Alan's actions as those of a patron rather than a founder.⁷³² By designating those people as founders, the evidence of the St Mary's *Ordinale* would suggest, the monks were elevating those early patrons, and those close to the people who had given the original grant of land, above the normal status of patrons in their prayers. The lengthy, complex, and messy nature of foundation gave the monks the opportunity to stretch time and grow the process to allow the introduction of more people into their cast of founders. It may be tempting to argue that, in these cases, the title represented people who granted or confirmed land at various, important stages of the foundation process, such as the grant or the consecration of the abbey, but the Yorkshire sources do not allow such precision.⁷³³ In fact, in the one instance where we can provide some cross referencing it is Alan Rufus who gives the original gift and Alan Niger who attends the consecration ceremony. What their brother, Count Stephen, had done to also be invoked as a founder is unclear, but he indisputably was.

That recognition has some important ramifications, and can help to smooth out some of the complexities which surround foundation. The case of Whitby is again a good bellwether. As we

⁷³² For a discussion of the terms used see Burton, *Monastic Order in Yorkshire*, pp. 182-183.

⁷³³ For similar comments, particularly with regards to the compression of time in foundation charters see Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*, pp. 19-20.

have repeatedly seen, the Whitby foundation process was convoluted and stop start, but the sense of quite how fragmented it was is exasperated by the records that survive for it. The monks did not designate various men as founders because of their role in the breaks and restarts of the community, but because they were men involved in one continuous process. Whitby had many founders, who could live harmoniously together in the monks' memories, but the monks could also selectively invoke them for reasons that seem almost imperceptible at our distance. Why Alan was sometimes included alongside William in royal charters, and why he was sometimes absent, is impossible to say, but it was not an issue for the Whitby monks, or an aspect of their record of the past that they wished to improve upon. The two could live happily side by side. Nevertheless, the differences are meaningful and preserve important strands of the foundation story. In the Whitby case it is fortunate that the late medieval Percy family provides a more concrete expression of that story, but it is also present in the Whitby sources themselves.

This chapter should, however, end with a note of caution. It would be dangerous to extrapolate the evidence from the St Mary's *Ordinale* across to the other abbeys, in the absence of any other evidence. Whether the pattern of commemoration we have observed at St Mary's was also the case at Selby and Whitby is uncertain, and, despite the three abbeys' links, and despite the shared northern heritage making it likely that Selby, Whitby, and St Mary's York practised the Use of York, there can be little certainty that the same customs were observed at all three institutions.⁷³⁴ Recent liturgical study has emphasised just how artificial supposed liturgical norms can be. As Salisbury has demonstrated, the Use of York implies a consistency that never existed, and there are variations between books and institutions contained within the Use.⁷³⁵ Even the 'touchstone' of liturgical certainty, the *Pontifical romana-germanique*, is an artificial construct of the twentieth

⁷³⁴ Matthew Cheung Salisbury, *The Use of York: Characteristics of the Medieval Liturgical Office in York* (York: Borthwick Institute 113, 2008), p. 40.

⁷³⁵ See also Matthew Cheung Salisbury, 'Rethinking the Uses of Sarum and York: A Historiographical Essay' in *Understanding Medieval Liturgy: Essays in Interpretation*, eds. by Helen Gittos and Sarah Hamilton (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016), pp. 103-122.

century which poorly reflects the large degree of variation which can be found in the manuscript tradition.⁷³⁶

⁷³⁶ Henry Parkes, 'Questioning the Authority of Vogel and Elze's *Pontifical romano-germanique*', in *Understanding Medieval Liturgy: Essays in Interpretation*, eds. by Helen Gittos and Sarah Hamilton (Farnham: Ashgate, 1998), pp. 75-102.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have explored the various ways in which the monks of the abbeys of St Mary's York, Whitby, and Selby looked back to and wrote about one aspect of their past: the foundation. What has emerged is that these institutions entertained many different versions of that event, of these the grand, agenda-setting narratives of the twelfth century, with which the first half of this thesis, and most scholarly study to date, was concerned, were merely one. The prominence that foundation narratives generally, and these foundation narratives specifically, have been given in the wider historiography of monastic memory and the revival of monasticism in Yorkshire is perfectly understandable — they are coherent, accessible glimpses in to the events they describe — but that coherence has a distorting effect on our understanding of how the monks were using, constructing and working the past.

In the past, studies of foundation legends (and the phenomenon of historical writing in monasteries in general) have focussed on how communities turned to their history to create a useable and useful past with which to fashion their identity. As Remensnyder pointed out, the process was one of institutional definition.⁷³⁷ The legends helped to carve out where institutions belonged in the world, how they had acquired relics, where the boundaries of their physical location should be set, and how they had become (if they believed they were) independent from secular or ecclesiastical obligation. In the Yorkshire corpus with which this thesis has been concerned, we can see many of these themes shining through. We have also seen how those identities can crystalise and metamorphosise during moments of crisis and conflict. Stephen of Whitby's narrative account of the foundation of St Mary's serves as a particularly good example of this phenomenon. It is a narrative of conflict and of existential struggle with the archbishop of York, and it is a text, too, which had a profound, replicating effect on the abbey's memory, which

⁷³⁷ Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*, pp. 289-292.

was diffused, copied, and re-copied by successive generations of monks into different codices. Duly, distilled in that are powerful statements about the abbey's identity. St Mary's was the spectacular example of coenobitic, Benedictine monasticism, and an abbey of the Norman kings, the counts of Richmond and of Abbot Stephen himself. That identity passed down through the monastery and the generations of monks who lived, worked, and prayed there. In this thesis, monks' desire to create a useable past, and to give context to their abbey's place in the world in the present, is a constant theme, which manifested itself across the variety of sources produced at each institution, and influenced how and why the events of the past are portrayed to us. Each different source played a different role in securing the present benefits that the monks desired. Like universities spending millions of pounds to construct new buildings with the hope of attracting ever larger student numbers, monasteries were in an ongoing arms race with those around them to entice patrons, pilgrims, and donors away from their neighbours. The foundation legends played their own role in that arms race. As Remensnyder again pointed to, those legends sprouted and grew out of a need to differentiate abbey from abbey and community from community.⁷³⁸ In the corpus of abbeys in this study, Selby provides the most obvious examples of how these legends did so. Theirs is the story of a *furta sacra* which explained the presence and power of Germanus's relic at Selby, if (as Burton suggested) one of the impetuses for that story was for preaching tours, then the example of how these foundation stories could be used to financially bolster the monastery is obvious.⁷³⁹ Attributing the preponderance of legends to this phenomenon makes these foundation legends sound artificial, however, as if they propagandistic constructs designed for promotional purposes, but — Remensnyder argued — this was not the case and these foundation legends reflected genuinely held identities.⁷⁴⁰

⁷³⁸ Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*, p. 293.

⁷³⁹ *HSM*, pp. xciv-xcv.

⁷⁴⁰ And this is a charge which Remensnyder is at frequent pains to counter see for example, *Remembering Kings Past*, pp. 14-15, p. 293.

Remensnyder's own study was not narrowly confined to *narrationes fundationes*, instead she searched out foundation legends in a variety of different records including *vitae*, charters, and cartularies, but her focus was on the legends, how they were constructed, and how the contours, pressures, and conflicts which could shape them did so. Remensnyder's central contention, which explicitly and implicitly underpins much of the book, is that these legends were memorial.⁷⁴¹ In the first few pages Remensnyder centres that understanding and argues that if 'the monks of twelfth-century monks of Braunweiler had not believed in some fashion that the site for their abbey had been designated by a miraculous cow with candles burning between her horns, why would they have bothered to commemorate this event — narrated by her legend — with an annual liturgical celebration and a feast at which a cow was the main dish?'⁷⁴² The question on first glance might seem sensible, but it quickly and obviously runs in to problems. One might ask, for example, why atheists without a religious bone in their body attend carol services in December, exchange gifts on Christmas Day and buy each other chocolate eggs at Easter and wonder if, by engaging in such ritualistic behaviour, they must believe in the existence and presence of the Almighty in some sense. Stretched even further, does a parent sneaking into their child's room on Christmas Eve to leave a stocking of presents at the end of their bed imply, deep down, a lingering belief in the existence of Father Christmas? If they did not believe it in some sense, then why perpetuate the story to future generations? Remensnyder's insistence that these legends must, therefore, reflect fundamentally held beliefs misses the point about the purpose of societies and communities telling such stories to themselves, and how those stories interplay with an abbey's memory of the past. Stories can have powerful and constitutive effects on community identity, and supply a shared communal experience for a group, whilst nevertheless still being understood by that very same community as stories. Those stories *may* reflect a communities' memory of the past, but this is not a pre-requisite and these stories need not do so, and they would still be capable of performing the

⁷⁴¹ Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*, p. 2.

⁷⁴² Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*, p. 2.

same role in the construction of an abbey's group identity. Memory played a role in the construction and framing of foundational narratives, but the link is complex and obscured by authors who played around with topos of memory and adopted its language. Credulous modern readings of the authors of the middle ages, who claimed to be writing for the sake of memory and to be recording for posterity, solidify those tropes as the genuinely held aims of the author. The particular difficulty for the historian is that stories which did transmit, record, and shape the memory of a community look indistinguishable from stories which borrow elements from the past to create a fictional, idealised version of the past, and both could equally play the same role in the identity formation and self-expression of a group.

That argument might sound dangerously close to being an attempt to revive debates about 'fact' or 'fiction' and 'forgery' or 'genuine' which studies of memory have attempted to eschew, but the argument is in fact more simple. Something cannot be considered 'memorial' if nobody truly believed that those events happened; they may remember the story, they may remember the shared social bonding that the story caused, they may remember that bits of the story *were* things that they believed had happened, but they could recognise, too, that the narrative which was created from it was imagined. The Selby historian, as we have seen, in his account of the arrival of St Germanus, was lightly playing with the genre, including humorous interjections, and pulling together strings from different places. The impression he gives is that he is a recorder of the abbey's oral tradition; the text had obvious identity forming properties, may have been useful in promoting the cult of the relic of St Germanus's finger, and gave the abbey theophanic origins, but until we see the text emerge we can see no evidence of the Selby monks thinking of the past in the ways the historian set out, and we can similarly see no evidence of the text's reception amongst future generations. The elements that we can see prior to this, and indeed after, are not rejected — the *Historia* does not reject Selby's status as a royal foundation, in fact as we have seen it repeatedly references the fact — but are rather left by the wayside. Selby's claims to have been founded by William the

Conqueror or his successors feature in passing, and the historian makes little use of them in his attempts to advance Selby's claims to status. Henry I's self-evident interest in the abbey receives no mention and although the monks clearly at some stage entertained the idea that the abbey had been founded out of a joint initiative between William and Matilda the Selby historian is uninterested in exploring that link. The abbey's coat of arms, which depict three swans on the shield, and which in popular explanation have been conflated with the *Historia's* story for their supposed reference to Benedict's arrival at Selby, also hint at another version of the foundation story which has not survived. Whatever we choose to think of these various traditions, the Selby historian was nevertheless engaged in the process of invention and creation. Either he selectively picked from the abbey's memory, stored in the collective minds of the monks of the community—minds which have obviously been lost to us—or he was crafting something new. Neither interpretation makes him the neutral recorder of community memory he presents himself as, and the *Historia* therefore does not represent the abbey's memory in its totality. It was, to borrow Nancy Partner's title, serious entertainment. Whether it ever truly represented what any generation of the abbey's monks *really* believed to have happened is a far more open-ended question, for the answer surely shifted over time. The *Historia*, a text created to serve the present circumstances of the abbey at the end of the twelfth century, may have been recognised by the abbey monks of that twelfth-century generation as simply a good story, but, on subsequent retelling, and diffused down further generations, may have come to be recognised as more than that. In the instance of Selby, however, we simply do not know. We do not see the text again, we do not see the version of the story again, and we do not see it being received and consumed by the monks. The argument from silence is dangerous, but it is surely as big a leap of faith to suggest from that silence that the text *must* have undergone that transformation and entered the pantheon of things the Selby monks genuinely believed happened, as it is to speculate that it might not have.

Considering the corpus of foundational materials, rather than foundation legends narrowly, has highlighted the number of ways in which a monastery could work the past. It has also highlighted how these grand, supposedly agenda-setting narratives did not always disseminate and replicate themselves in each abbey's memory of the past. In every single instance, different versions of the telling of the story of the foundation process for these Benedictine monasteries in Yorkshire left out facets of their identity which clearly mattered to them. They elided, emphasised, or omitted parts of that story depending on the present purposes each version of the foundation story was crafted to meet. Above all else, the example of Whitby Abbey shows this most clearly. The *Memorial* pancarte has always fitted awkwardly with the charter evidence which the monks produced, but how divergent those two strands were is remarkable. The existence of the poem and its elaborate tale of Reinfrid killing cannibalistic women and being inspired by a maiden at Hackness to shun life and found a monastery again changes the events, motivations, and chronology of the foundation process, and adds a tale of royal involvement which is given its fullest expression in genealogies written to glorify the Percy family.

In scholars' usual search for the kernel of truth which runs through the heart of these stories, and even in the designation of certain strands as memorial, there is a real danger of doing violence to what we have been left. Inevitably, that judgement is a modern value judgement of which version sounds most plausible. At Selby, the line between the two different records of the past is blurred and there is a good deal more overlap, but here, too, the monks were entertaining several versions of the past at the same time. At St Mary's York, where Stephen's narrative appears in a number of copies and clearly did disseminate through the community, and which clearly thought of itself as a royal foundation, there is nevertheless evidence that the monks preserved a powerful tradition of discomfort with their royal founders actions, and by the fourteenth century were not including them in their prayers. The apparent re-appearance of interest in those royal founders, as seen in the marginal additions in St Mary's cartularies and in the evidence of the abbey's coat of arms, in

the sixteenth century, nevertheless suggests that those royal founders did not entirely disappear from the abbey's understanding of their foundation. When they became useful again, those strands of the foundation re-emerged.

The picture which emerges from this study is often hazy and unclear. The pieces produced by each monastery rarely fit together neatly. To re-create the events of each monastery's foundation from them, those pieces need to be jammed in, forced, and coerced to fit. But the evidence would suggest that this dissonance caused little concern to the monks themselves. The monks of Whitby could happily make themselves the monks of St Hilda and make their community one which stretched back in to the times of Bede, but they could also invoke their Norman past, their Norman founders, and look to the king as a founder (although, seemingly unsuccessfully). Thomas Tonge, the Norroy king of Arms between 1522-1533, visited the abbey and recorded their arms as the arms of the abbey which 'ys founded of Saynt Ylde doughter to Knyght Edwyn'.⁷⁴³ Even on the eve of the dissolution, when the Percy family were trying to advance their own prestige by emphasising how Whitby was a Percy foundation above all else, the monks were still clearly telling themselves and others that they were an ancient house which stretched as far back as any of the southern houses. I have repeatedly referred to Whitby as a Norman house, but there is a synchronism here: Whitby was Anglo-Saxon and Norman at the same time. The preservation of that pre-conquest past in the Whitby imagination, however, only survives in fragments. Selby undoubtedly remembered that they were a royal foundation, and they frequently brought charters to the king which said just as much, but they remembered, too, that they were the abbey of Germanus. It was he who had orchestrated the translation of his own finger to Selby and who had encouraged Benedict to carry out his wishes. More so than at Whitby, those two traditions can be put together and William can be brought into line with the Selby historian's story: William can be

⁷⁴³ Harley MS 1499, f. 46v.

made the 'paper founder' who took advantage of events and inserted himself into the story to rubber stamp the foundation, but there are enough suspicions, insinuations and alternative information to suggest that such a smoothing out was precisely the aim of the Selby historian. The result is that it is impossible to say where the line lay between truth and fiction and memory or invention, even when elements of the story touch on the plausible. At the very least, Matthew Paris had picked up on an alternative version of Selby's foundation story, and although it might strike as implausible, it offers a valuable pause for thought to consider why the Selby material, at this point in the twelfth century, was presented as it was. Similarly, despite the presentation of St Mary's foundation in Stephen's narrative and its dedication to St Mary there is evidence that the community was influenced by the pre-conquest aspects of their foundation. There the monks were following a Use which had come with the monks from Evesham, and they commemorated figures associated with their foundation in their liturgy: Bega, Hilda, Cedd, and Olaf all appear. St Mary's own interest in Olaf may also explain the interest of the Cistercian monks at Fountains in the saint, although this is often attributed to the foundation of Lyse Abbey, we saw a copy of Stephen's narrative survives from Fountains, and it is not difficult to imagine that those same monks took elements of St Mary's cult of Olaf with them. Stephen was simply uninterested in these aspects of the foundation story, but his failure to highlight them does not mean that they were not important to the community, just that they were not important to the story that Stephen was telling. Those saints and that understanding of the past were a part of the tapestry of the monks' understanding of the past, but it is a folly to think that that tapestry ever made complete sense. It was perfectly possible for a monastic community to entertain many divergent, different, and unwieldy ideas about the past and, in many respects, it would be odd if they did not.

As Kempshall pointed out, one of the most powerful influences on how to write history in the middle ages was the example of the Bible.⁷⁴⁴ There people could read about Christ's life in four different versions with their own emphasises, stresses, and points of difference. These differences were not problems to be worked away, but — quite literally — the gospel truth and any apparent discrepancy which arose between them was a result of the different sources of the author's that had compiled them and the purposes to which they were writing.⁷⁴⁵ History, even the history of Christ himself, did not have to neatly fit together, and nor did the history of the foundation of their church. It is in the dialogue of those various versions of the foundation story talking to each other and co-existing alongside each other that we can grasp how the monasteries of the middle ages believed they had arrived at their place in the world.

In this thesis, I have deliberately resisted the urge to smooth over and straighten out the different versions of the past each abbey produced. In some instances, these might create issues where none existed and create different traditions when in reality there was one, but — as this study has highlighted — the minor differences in form can often hide much more serious departures from the version of the story that survives. The designation of William de Percy as the 'first founder' of Whitby in a cartulary rubric, might at first glance, be dismissed as ultimately compatible with what was known about Whitby's foundation; a 'first founder', it might be argued, might not imply a second, or it might reference the fact that Alan, the second founder (as it emerges the second founder was) was involved in one of the phases of the foundation (for example the consecration of the abbey buildings), but — fortuitously — a source survives which confirms that it is none of those things. Such an approach also calls into serious question the way such examples of monastic 'memory' have previously been considered. Typically, historians have sought to bring sources into line, look for confirmation, and create order. It is a natural inclination, which speaks to the human

⁷⁴⁴ Kempshall, *Rhetoric and History*, pp. 52-57.

⁷⁴⁵ Kempshall, *Rhetoric and History*, p. 390.

desire to make sense of our world and to find order in the chaos, but it is deceptively editorial, imparting modern judgements, modern editorial approaches, and modern thinking to sift through material and make it manageable. The result is the creation of abbey identities and of community memory which never existed, which oversimplifies, and which — as historians have become increasingly more confident using the evidence of memorial traditions as evidence — distorts our understanding of the past. It reifies the accessible traditions (increasingly those available in series such as *Oxford Medieval Texts*) as those reflective of the abbey's thoughts about the past and freezes a snapshot of the community that each source preserves in time. In this thesis I have attempted to strip back those assumptions, and focus on the ways one element of that past, the foundation process, was manipulated and played with by successive generations of monks. Inevitably, we are bound by what survives, the written sources those monks produced, inevitably that survival is less than ideal, and inevitably those sources are simply proxies and not direct windows into the minds of the monks of these communities. In considering them in their contexts, viewing them as a part of the abbey's memorialisation of the past, and considering how those sources did, and did not, interplay with each other, we have arrived closer at the complex and multifaceted ways the monks of Whitby, Selby, and St Mary's York, thought about the past.

Appendix

William Rufus's diploma in favour of St Mary's York. Add MS 38816, ff. 21r-22v

Quia omnium operum nostrorum illa tantum nobis profutura sint que ex timore dei et dilectione procedencia ad honorem eius et sponse sue sancte ecclesie matris nostre operamur et scriptura testatur que nos patrem deum et matrem nostram ecclesiam in spem eternitatis honorare precipit et moyses insinuat qui tanta mentis submissione obedientie tabernacularis edificiū applicatur.

Quem dei et ecclesie honorem pertractans salomon cogitationem de edificio templi domini quam pater suus dauid animo conceperat superuacuum non dimisit dicens pater meus cogitavit edificare templum domino sed quia ille preliis domini occupatus hoc complere nequirit ego cui non est occursus neque sathan cogitationem illam templum edificans domino complebo.⁷⁴⁶

Unde ab ipso domino postea audire meruit se pro predicti templi completionem omnibus bonis maxime esse fulciendum; siquidem huic adderet ceterorum custodiam mandatorum.

Quia ergo pater meus Willelmus rex ecclesiam eboracensis cenobii in honorem sanctę dei genetricis Marie construere confirmare honorare animo concepit verbo promisit partim scripto ostendit ego filius suus Willelmus in regnum sibi succedens predictis rationibus instructus auctoritatibus instigatus quin immo obtentu pietatis inductus ad predictum exemplum patris mei de predicta ecclesia complere disposui votum ut et illi deus retribuatur dispositionem pie cogitationis et mei rependat completionem sue pie dispositionis.

Notum ergo fieri volo tam presentibus quam affuturis tam audientibus quam audituris quod ego Willelmus anglorum rex filius Willelmi anglorum regis et Normannorum ducis pro salute anime mee pro salute quoque animarum Edwardi regis et Willelmi regis patris mei matrisque mee Matildis regine necnon pro statu regni mei consilio et assensu archiepiscoporum episcoporum comitum ducum et ceterorum primatum meorum auctorizo prelibatam sancte Marie Eboracensis cenobii ecclesiam. Et concedo illi in perpetuam possessionem, terras sibi datas ab omni consuetudine liberas que scribuntur hic.

Willelmus itaque pater meus dedit abbacie supradicte in apeltona iiii carrucatas terre, in normanbi iiii, in aespantona ii, in lestingeham iii, in eboraco ecclesiam sancti michaelis et iiii mansuras terre.

⁷⁴⁶ This is a reference to 1 Kings 5:4-5. The aside reads 'occursus malus' in the Bible.

Et quod aernegrinus monachus tenuit hoc est iiii carrucatas terre et vi bovatas⁷⁴⁷ et in Eboraco ii mansuras terre et ecclesiam sancti salbatoris.

Ego quoque in augmentum possessionis prescripte⁷⁴⁸ ecclesie ex dono meo addidi in grimestona iiii carrucatas terre et dimidiam.

Comes autem Alanus post me et patrem meum huius abbacie inceptor et institutor pro requie animarum tam domini sui patris mei Willelmi regis et matris mee Matildis regine quam patris sui Eudonis brintannorum⁷⁴⁹ comitis necnon matris et sue ipsius ecclesiam sancti olavi in qua caput abbacie in honore sancte marie melius constitutum est et burgum in quo ecclesia sita est. In hoilanda ecclesiam sancti botulfi et quod ei pertinet et i carrucatam terre et sedem molendini ecclesiam catrici et decimas de dominio castellarie sue quam tenet in eboraci siria⁷⁵⁰ preter partem ecclesiarum necnon terciam partem decimarum francigenarum suorum de illis terris quas sub eo tenent in prescripta castellaria.

Berengerius de todeni in lestingham i carrucatam terre in espantona; vi in mispentona chechebi viii et dimidiam in dalbi iii in scacledena; vi bovatis in lindisimbec i carrucatam terre in binebroc iiii vinz acras. Hugo baldrici filii in hotona viii carucatas terre in normabi iii in mispentona cherchebi iii. Osberti de archis in popletona iii carrucatas terre et dimidiam in appletona in apletona iii et sedem mollendinum in heselesi ii et dimidiam in eboraco ii mansuras terre. Odo balistarius in grimstona iiii carucatas terre et dimidiam et decimas eius. Gislebertus de gant in ferebi x bovatas terre. Gislebertus Tisum in torp iii carucatas terre. Normannus dearreci in brona iii carucatas terre in nochetona ecclesiam et ii carucatas terre. Lewinus monachus in iapum xiiii bovatas terre in eboraco i mansura, terre. Wlstanus presbiter in chauda i bovatom terre. Willelmus de eschoeis in batneham ecclesiam et i carrucatam terre. Ostret in mideltone i carrucatam terre et in dic i. Baret filius Carli in semar i carrucatam terre. Ilbert de Laci in stratona et in gereford v carucatas terre et dimidiam

Cui ecclesie et cuncte eius possessioni talem libertatem et tales leges quales habet sanctus Johannis Beverlacensis preter episcopales leges que archiepiscopo pertinent in perpetuum regia potestate permitto quod subsequenter dominice crucis karactere sub signo ut siquis quod absit hanc

⁷⁴⁷ Et vi bovates is a superscript addition.

⁷⁴⁸ prescripte

⁷⁴⁹ britannorum

⁷⁵⁰ eboracisiria

sanctionem aliquando resciderit in mundanum regem ut regii statuti transgressor habeatur reus in eternum regem quasi sponse sue irreverens violator sic teneatur obnoxious ut cum Dathan et Abiron Vida et Simone Mago detineatur dampnatus ipso huiusmodi mercedem precepti huius prevaricatori retribuente qui iudex vivorum et mortuorum venturus vivit et regnat et glorieatur in individua trinitate per omnia secula seculorum. Amen

Signum Lanfranci Cantuariensis archiepiscopi

Signum Thome Eboracensis archiepiscopi

Signum Wilelmi Dunelmensis episcopi

Signum Hildeberti Cenomannensis episcopi

Signum Alberti cardinalis romane ecclesie

Signum Anselmi Beccensis abbatis

Signum Pauli sancti Albani abbatis

Signum Serli gloucestrie abbatis

Signum Alani Ruffi comitis Brittanie

Signum Henrici comitis de Bello Monte

Signum Wilelmi comitis de Surreia

Signa et aliorum plurimorum episcoporum abbatum comitum et baronum

Translation

Because of all of our works we profit only from those, which proceeding out of love and fear of god, are worked to honour him and his bride our holy mother church, and scripture witnesses, which orders us to honour the heavenly father and our mother church in eternal hope and Moses insinuates, who was devoted with such a great submission of the heart to the building of the tabernacle.

Solomon who contrived to honour God and the church did not dismiss the thought of building a temple to the lord, which his father David had devised in his mind, saying, 'My father thought to build a temple to the lord, but because he was occupied with the battles of the lord he was unable to complete it, I (to whom there is neither adversary or opponent) shall satisfy that idea to build a temple to the lord.'

From where afterwards he merited to listen from the lord himself that for the completion of the aforesaid temple he would be greatly supported with all good things if indeed he should add to this the observation of the other commandments.

Therefore, because my father King William promised with words and partly showed in writing that he conceived from his mind to construct, to confirm, and to honour the church of the monastery of York in honour of St Mary the mother of God.

I his son William, succeeding him in royal power, having been instructed in the aforesaid plan, having been urged on by authorities, or rather having been led by the example of my father's before placed piety to the aforesaid church, I disposed to fulfil the vow so that to him God would reward the arrangement of the pious idea and to me he would reward the completion of the pious arrangement.

Therefore, I wish to make known both to those present and those who will be present and both to those hearing and those going to hear that I William, king of the English, son of William, king of the English and duke of the Normans, for the salvation of my soul and the souls of King Edward and King William my father and Queen Matilda my mother and

for the good standing of my reign with the advice and assent of my archbishops, bishops, earls, dukes, and other nobles authorise the unconsecrated church of the monastery of St Mary of York.

And I grant to that church in perpetual possession the lands given to them with all customs and liberties which are written here.

Therefore William my father gave to the abovementioned abbey iiii carucates of land in Appelton, iii in Normanby, ii in Spaunton, iii in Lastingham, the church of St Michaels in York and iiii mansuras of land, and what Ernegrinus the monk held, that is iiii carucates of land and vi bovates and in York ii mansuras of land and the church of St Saviours.

I, also, in augmentation of the possessions of the aforesaid church add out of my gift four and a half carucates of land in Grimston.

Count Alan, who is after me and my father the founder and beginner of this abbey, for the rest of his soul and also his lord my father King William and my mother Queen Matilda and also his father Count Eudo of Brittany and also his mother and of himself [gave] the church of St Olaf's in which the head of the abbey was better set up in honour of St Mary, and the borough in which the church sits. In Holland the church of St Botulf and that which pertains to it and i carucate of land and the site of a windmill, the church of Catterick and the tithes of the lordship of the castelary which he held in Yorkshire except for the part of the churches and also a third part of the tithes of his Frenchmen of that land which they hold in the aforementioned castelary.

Berengar of Tosny in Lastingham i carucate of land, in Spanton vi, in Kirby Misperton viii and a half, in Dalby iii, in Scackleton vi bovates, in Lindisimbec i carucate of land, in Binbrook iiii vinz (?) acres. Hugh, son of Baldric, in Hoton, viii carucates of land, in Normanby iii, in Kirby Misperton iii. Osbert de Arches in Popleton iii and a half carucates of land, in Appleton iii carucates of land and the seat of the mill, ii in Heselesai and half a carrucate in York and two mansuras of land. Odo the Bowman, iiii and a half carucates of land in Grimston and his tithe. Gilbert de Gant x bovates of land in Ferreby. Gilbert Tison iii carucates of land in Thorp. Norman d'Arcy iii carucates of land in Burnham and ii carucates of land and the church in Nocton. Lewin the monk xiiii bovates of land in Yapham and one house in York. Wulstan the Priest i bovine of land in Cawood. William de Escois i carrucate of land and the church in Bantham. Oster i carucate of land in Middleton and one in Diche. Baret son of Carli i carucate of land in Seamer. Ilbert de Lacy v and a half carucates of land in Straton and in Gereford

I permit with royal authority to the church and all its possessions such liberties and such laws as St John of Beverley has, except those episcopal rights which pertain to the archbishop, which I attest here below with the sign of the cross, so that if anyone, God forbid, should ever repeal this

ordinance he shall be regarded as a guilty transgressor of the royal statute before the worldly king and so also be held guilty before the eternal king as a disrespectful violator of his bride, so that with Dathan, Abiron, Judas, Simon Magus, he shall be detained and damned, for such is the reward paid to the transgressor of this order by Him who will judge the living and the dead, and who reigns and is glorified in the indivisible trinity for now and forever more. Amen.

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