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HISTORY AND THE MONKS
OF NORWICH CATHEDRAL PRIORY

In the early twelfth century the cathedral priory at Norwich was, for a new foundation, probably well supplied with books. The first bishop, Herbert de Losinga, was a scholar of note who, as his letters reveal, encouraged younger men of ability to study Latin literature. Yet he founded no 'school' and so far as is known the Norwich monks of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries did not form an academic community of any standing. The monks were certainly literate in the technical sense of the word but, as with most other monasteries, scholarship was not their main objective. As Dom David Knowles reminded us forty years ago, there were many calls on their time. More than half the total number of the monks might be engaged, either as chiefs or subordinates, in administration of some kind.¹ As the thirteenth century progressed the task of running their estates and of organising the various departments within the house (to say nothing of commitments in the outside world) tended to increase rather than diminish. The seniors could be fully occupied in this way, while at the lower end of the scale, much of the time of the novices would be spent in learning the services and monastic routine. Beyond this, although not necessarily involving every individual, the daily routine of services had to be maintained. For the community as a whole the first duty was to provide the services and to run the departments and their estates.

An interest in Latin literature may not have been maintained but an interest in the past and more particularly in the past of their own house existed from an early stage and grew in spite of increasing burdens. It was, of course, not to be the only intellectual activity. The cultural pursuits and educational policy of any monastery depended to a great extent on the circumstances of the time. The black monks were conservative and it was a long time before it was considered necessary for English Benedictines to leave their houses for educational purposes. In 1247, when the Cistercians had already begun to send monks to university, the chapter of English Benedictines allowed, but did not command, a daily lecture in theology or canon law to a selected few. It was not until some forty years later that they evolved a method of sending monks to the university at Oxford. The men who made that first decision had, as monks, themselves no university experience. The priors of cathedral monasteries were possibly in an advantageous position, in that their titular heads, the bishops, had often been through the schools. Of the thirteenth-century bishops of Norwich, four were 'masters', starting with Walter Suffield (a canonist from Paris who held office 1244-1257) and ending with Ralph of Walpole (1288-1299) whose appointment followed closely on his inception in theology at Cambridge. Although changed since the early days of the twelfth century, relations between bishop and cathedral priory remained

close. If Walter Suffield did not bequeath his books to the monks but gave instead his great cup and the furniture of his chapel and certain relics, we must remember that he had been responsible for the building of the new Lady Chapel.² Nor should it be assumed that the Norwich monks were uninterested in learning. Payments to poor scholars occur in the early obedientiary rolls and in one of the earliest, probably for 1265, there is record of a payment of one mark to dom. William le parcheminier when he *incept artem*.³ The decision taken in 1278 that manual work should be replaced by study and the growing pressure for the provision of a house for monks at Oxford is reflected in the sums paid towards the schools at Oxford.⁴ As soon as Gloucester college was thrown open to all black monks payments are recorded for 'our brothers', or 'our scholars' (the terms seem interchangeable) at Oxford. Unfortunately it was not normal at first to name the men, nor even to supply the number. From the stray references that do survive, two would seem to have been the usual allocation, although occasionally, as in 1307, three men received allowances.⁵

Not unnaturally, it is only those who made considerable progress in their studies whose names occur with any frequency in the obedientiary rolls. For example, Hervey of Swaffham took the full sixteen years and incepted in theology in 1313-1314 and John de Mari reached the same high level some fourteen years later.⁶ But these men and the more famous Adam of Easton who left England for service in the papal curia were untypical. Monks were not sent to study at universities in order to provide those institutions with a scholarly élite, nor yet supply the papal curia with officials. The object was to educate men for the service of the parent house so a stay at Oxford was often limited to a few years. Few monks aimed at the exalted rank of Doctor of Divinity. They had been sent to be trained in preaching⁷ and at Oxford they received an official vocational training, based on a thorough knowledge of the scriptures, plus some philosophy which included 'Aristotle' and the Arabic scholars. The other subject to be studied was canon law. This too had a practical basis. For every ecclesiastical institution a knowledge of canon law had become essential for what one might term business purposes. During the thirteenth century, heads of houses had been increasingly called upon to act as papal judges-delegate and every house was involved in ecclesiastical dispute at some time or other.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to tell how well prepared the priory was to deal with such academic ventures, or what changes were necessary in the monastic stock of books. Bibles (the basic text for the study of theology) would certainly be available but, apart from this, the main holdings were likely to be in the field of homiletic literature and in works - some elementary - intended for the teaching of Latin. No thirteenth-century catalogue of books exists, if indeed one was ever made, nor does

the catalogue which appears to have been compiled around 1315. Surviving information is fragmentary and not easy to interpret. From Herbert de Losinga's letters we know that the young men used Donatus and Sedulius and were recommended to read Ovid for his style but whether these books remained in the monastery in the mid-thirteenth century is another matter. The only written indication of what works might have been available at Norwich before 1270 comes from the flyleaf of the Norwich customary. Here is inscribed what M.R. James called a collection of *dicta*, written at different times. Named authors include Seneca, St. Augustine, with one extract expressly from the *City of God*, St. Bernard and St. Anselm. The page on which the excerpts are written has been cut from a larger manuscript. Though the leaf carries the name of a one-time owner and a Norwich press-mark, the original book need not have emanated from the cathedral priory.⁸ Even if it did, the *dicta* might have been taken from a florilegium and not from the individual works. But any speculation is rendered almost useless by the damage inflicted in the course of an attack on the priory by the Norwich citizens in 1272. Buildings appear to have been gutted by fire and valuables carried off. Not all was lost. When the monks asked for confirmation of charters they gave as their reason damage to the seals, not to the documents.⁹ Some books certainly survived. Those still extant are, however, few in number and limited in range. Three, belonging to the twelfth century, are homilies and include the sermons of Herbert de Losinga.¹⁰ Their press-marks, A vii, viii and ix, were probably assigned to them in the fourteenth century and are no guide even to the holdings of homilies. Herbert's letters possibly survived the fire although the only copy now known is one of the seventeenth century. At least two early chronicles survived. The losses, however, may have been heavy and it would be easy to view the riot of 1272 as a major disaster. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that some of the stock would be regarded as old-fashioned, either in content or format and that higher education (together with political and legal changes) was to create new demands.

Prior William of Kirby, who took office immediately after the outrage, was an able man, devoting his energies to the acquisition of land and to rebuilding and refurbishing which led to the great dedication service attended by the king in 1278. Yet service books would have to have been replaced with speed. It is possible that the Lambeth Psalter is one of these;¹¹ the elegant and ornate Ormesby Psalter is a much later piece and perhaps a sign of more settled times. Legal works can be seen under two headings. The *Decretum* of Gratian, the *Decretals* of Gregory IX and the *Sext* of Boniface VIII were necessary texts for the canon law course and essential reference works for the community. Although none with Norwich press-marks are now extant there are references in the obedientary rolls to payments to professional scribes for copies of these works. They were almost certainly required for official use and possibly each major department had its own set.

Between 1297 and 1308 Robert of Brooke, the then *magister celarii* was paying for the *Decretum*, *Decretals* and *Sext*; within seven years not only was a later master of the cellar adding to the collection but the almoner was also buying parchment for his own copy of the *Sext*.¹² If William of Kirby does not come through to us as a bookish man, some of his contemporaries were interested in acquiring books which later passed into the general collection and, thanks to the new custom of inscribing the name of the late owner together with a press-mark, we can catch a glimpse of the process. Moreover, from 1291 the Oxford scholars were in constant need of written works. Some they could borrow (either in their entirety, or in parts), from some they could make extracts of important passages, some they bought or themselves copied in full. However acquired and in whatever form, books formed an essential part of their equipment, to be carried to and from as they travelled between Norwich and Oxford. In 1302-1303 the communal paid 14s. 10d. towards the expenses of John de Strumhast *apud Oxoniam cum libris* and 3s. for the carriage of books and clothing of Geoffrey of Tottington from Oxford.¹³

Curiously, we know very little about those books. One of the earliest of the monk scholars, Roger of Booton, possessed a book which included a glossary of legal terms as well as works by Isidore of Seville.¹⁴ Only one volume (containing works of St. Augustine and Boethius) is recognisably that of Alexander of Sprowston and again only one (showing an interest in the works of Anselm) was owned by the more famous Hervey of Swaffham.¹⁵ No books now extant bear the name of John de Mari although what may have been his compulsory lectures on the Sentences of Peter Lombard remained at Norwich and were allegedly seen by Bale in the sixteenth century.¹⁶ By contrast there survive four books which bear the name of Henry of Lakenham, who was the Norwich prior attending the chapter concerned with the opening of Gloucester college to all black monks.¹⁷ Henry, who had held the office of sacrist, succeeded William of Kirby as prior in 1289. His books reflect different interests. Not for him Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*, but the sermons of Bonaventura, the *Liber eruditionis religiosorum*, extracts from the works of St. Bernard and - copied into the same volume and in the same hand - Bede's *De Natura Rerum*, explaining the properties of the elements.¹⁸ While it is not possible to tell how many books he held, the press-marks F xxxi, xxxv, xli, and xlvi allow for an estimate of at least eighteen. Although the sample is small and possibly unrepresentative, the surviving works are those of an intelligent head of a religious house and a man concerned with his vocation. The interests of his contemporaries are generally represented by a single volume whose contents might, however, show considerable diversity. To take but two examples, John of Rainham owned a volume which included such items as a life of St. Helen, an exposition of the Rule of St. Benedict and a *Liber de stimulo amoris divini*.¹⁹ Ralph of Frettenham, although obviously interested in penitential works, included in

his volume verses and prayers concerning Simon de Montfort and ended with notes on when a bishop might be disobeyed. It was written by several hands and the later parts may not have been included in the volume when it belonged to Ralph.

Penitence was only one of the interests of Ralph of Frettenham. He possessed two other works of an entirely different nature - historical works.²⁰ The opening of the university schools, while it provided new interests and made new demands, did not eradicate an interest in the past. On the contrary it seems to have stimulated it. The monks acquired books on history and above all produced original works of their own. The first ten years or so after 1291 was the period of greatest output. This looking to the past was, of course, not confined to any one period, nor to any one class. It was common among the laity and many a monk would have grown up against this background. Once professed, a monk would have become interested in the past of his particular house. This interest could show itself in various guises. It could be strongly antiquarian, an account of the resting places of past bishops; it could become a chronicle relating to the particular monastery and supplying information for the acquisition of rights and properties, even to the extent of citing the privileges and grants in full. At the national level it could be a set of annals, some meagre, some extremely detailed, and as an offshoot could extend into genealogy. It often took the form of the copying or reworking of existing material, sometimes taken from much earlier writers such as Bede or William of Malmesbury, or, if the chronicle were to be concerned with purely local matters, it might draw on earlier accounts within the monastery's own archive. If few large monasteries could approach the tradition of historical writing of the abbey of St. Albans, few were without some kind of chronicle, be it local or national. Dissemination, however, was sometimes limited. Although the *Flores Historiarum* became extremely popular, Professor Vaughan has remarked that the *Chronica Majora* of Matthew Paris, 'the fullest and most detailed of all medieval English chronicles was virtually unknown outside St. Albans in the later Middle Ages'.²¹ Fortunately, the Norwich monks had access to the chronicles being produced in East Anglia and had close links with the important library at Bury St. Edmunds.

Although Norwich cathedral priory is generally associated with the chronicle of Bartholomew Cotton of the late thirteenth century, its historical writing began much earlier, and most obviously with Thomas of Monmouth's *Life of St William*, the story of the miracles worked at the tomb of the boy martyr, allegedly killed by the Jews. The copy from which James and Jessop printed the text (Cambridge University Library, Add. MS 3037) is in a twelfth-century hand and still in a medieval binding. James was of the opinion that this was not the original text but a near descendant.²² It carries no press-mark and therefore is not included in Ker's lists of medieval

library holdings. It was probably not a Norwich book, for although the fly-leaf is missing and the second folio lost, the text is complete and the Norwich press-mark was generally written on the first page of the text. Yet both Leland and Bale report the presence of a copy at Norwich in the sixteenth century. Bale's citing of detail not present in the extant copy seems to clinch the argument that Add.MS. 3037 was not a Norwich book²³ but it raises another problem. If Norwich possessed a copy, either it survived the fire of 1272, or - a more intriguing possibility - the monks were sufficiently interested in the work to acquire a replacement.

The life of St. William stands alone, a piece belonging to its period and not likely to be repeated. The other works fall into three groups: (1) those concerning the bishops and their relationship with the priory, (2) topographical and genealogical works (together with lists of the kings of England and short annals), (3) a chronicle associated with the name of Cotton, all capable of repetition and extension. The *Historia Anglicana*, divided into three disparate books,²⁴ cannot, however, be regarded as a single piece of historical writing. Only the central part falls into the category of chronicle and the last book (containing *inter alia* a purely local section) must be considered under more than one head. The first of the groups consists of three interrelated accounts. One is contained in book three of the *Historia Anglicana*, written according to the colophon in 1292,²⁵ another is part of *Registrum Primum* compiled in the early fourteenth century and the third an account written in the fifteenth century but based in part on earlier records. The first two differ in intent and in degree of detail. Bartholomew Cotton had a limited objective. Book 3 contains (with occasional details) the names of bishops of the different dioceses; only for two of them, Canterbury and Norwich, does this detail extend into the thirteenth century. So far as the diocese of Norwich is concerned, it relates to the bishops as individuals. It is Cotton who tells us that William Turbe had been a monk and prior of Norwich, that Walter Suffield was a canonist from Paris, or that Pandulf had presented relics to the priory. With Norwich, too, he was also concerned with one particular aspect: to tell the reader where the bishop was buried (before the high altar), or in the case of William of Middleton who died in 1288, 'sepultus est in capella Walteri episcopi ad caput eiusdem'.²⁶ His information concerning the first may have come from a list already in existence and the second from his personal knowledge of the cathedral. The compiler of the chronicle of *Registrum Primum* was using the chronicle form as a vehicle for the presentation of charters which he transcribed in full.²⁷ In the prologue he refers to the doings (*gesta*) of bishops, to royal grants, to fines and chirographs and to the donations of benefactors in general. The fines and chirographs which figure as a separate section in the Register are not part of the chronicle which, apart from an account of the foundation, amounts to a mere collection of episcopal grants. As to the background and

personalities of these men, he is generally uninterested, using standard phrases such as 'performed many good things' or 'loving his monks gave'.²⁸ There is, however, strong disapproval of John of Oxford, as the promoter of discord and there is strong approval for his successor, John de Grey, whose long list of appropriations of churches made him, next to Herbert, the most gracious of bishops.²⁹ He had some knowledge of the general development of the building programme and of its twelfth-century setbacks. On the other hand, he deliberately ignored the attack of 1272 and had nothing to say about the rebuilding that it necessitated. Apart from the founder, he is not concerned to say where the bishops were buried.

This compiler and Bartholomew Cotton told the story of the foundation of the cathedral priory and in both cases the style and detail mark this section off from the rest.³⁰ Further, their brief account of Herbert's career (including a detail not found elsewhere - the place of his birth) is given in identical words. Thereafter there are differences. On the one hand, the chronicler of *Primum* cites not only Herbert's charters to the priory but also some of the early writs together with other *acta* such as papal and lay grants with which Cotton was not concerned. On the other hand, the two writers dealt with Herbert's character in different ways. The author of *Primum* shows Herbert in the most favourable light, for there is no mention of simony nor of deprivation of office. Not so Bartholomew Cotton. He includes a long passage dealing with Herbert's simony which he tries to excuse. This, since it occurs in a curious position, has the appearance of an insertion.³¹ It is not in its proper chronological order but follows the announcement of Herbert's death. These two men were, I suggest, making use of a very early story of the foundation, possibly belonging to the first half of the twelfth century. That it was early may be inferred from the title given, or rather not given, to Henry, brother of William Rufus. Throughout, William is described as William II. Henry, a notable benefactor, is called simply king Henry, or Henry the brother of William. At the time of writing there was, it seems, no need to specify which king Henry this was. With one exception the later writers merely copied what was before them; that exception is Bartholomew Cotton, who, when he gave the date of Herbert's death wrote incorrectly 1109, but correctly 'sub rege Henrico primo'.³²

The third document which is outside our period requires only brief mention.³³ In some ways it resembles the chronicle of *Primum* in that it reports episcopal support for the cathedral, not now so much in grants of property as in monetary gifts towards reconstruction after disaster. On the other hand, so far as the mid-thirteenth century is concerned, it might be no more than a copy of Cotton. In the two accounts the entries relating to three bishops, Walter Suffield, Simon of Walton and William of Middleton, whose episcopates spanned some fifty years, are almost identical. The later

document does, however, include one item of interest not in Cotton: that after the fire of 1272 the bishop helped to rebuild the refectory. Unfortunately, the opening passages are lost so that it is not possible to tell if the resemblance goes back to the time of Herbert de Losinga. While this version is probably an amplified copy of Cotton, it is just possible that Cotton himself was using an existing account which was continued and expanded in later centuries.

If the surviving books are a fair sample, the monks became interested in historical events at a national level about 1270. One monk acquired a brief set of annals to which had been added a list of the bishops of the diocese. It was probably compiled before 1272 for the last political event to be recorded was the battle of Evesham under 1265 and the last bishop to be mentioned was Simon of Walton, without notice of his death in 1266. This contained a topographical but non-British element for it opened with an account of Rome.³⁴ Ralph of Frettenham owned a roll which combined topographical information of England with a genealogy of the kings of Wessex and later of England.³⁵ Headed Topographia Insule Anglicane it presented in diagrammatic form the divisions of England. A large circle marked with four points of the compass contained within it smaller circles. Those on the outside describe the counties and the kingdoms to which they belonged while that in the centre informed the reader that England was 800 miles long and 300 wide.³⁶ Below, the text divided the country into five regions. Having completed the topographical section, the writer then concentrated on the kings. The information is extremely factual, essentially the name of the king, how long he ruled and who were his offspring. It ends with the children of Henry III but does not report his death. The Norwich 'Bartholomew Cotton', which the same Ralph of Frettenham also owned, ends with a final section consisting of lists, first of kings, starting with William I, then of archbishops of Canterbury, starting with Lanfranc and finally the bishops and priors of Norwich. This belongs to about the same period. The death of Henry III was possibly an addition by the main scribe and the coronation of Edward I in 1274 is certainly an addition as is the date of the consecration of Robert of Kilwardby in 1273. The main run of priors ends with William of Burnham who resigned in September 1272.³⁷

This desire for a record, if only of lists of names, would seem to be part of the development that brought into being the Historia Anglicana, a chronicle whose main section ran from 1066 to 1298. A topographical account of England and a genealogical table of its kings, even brief annals could be acquired without much difficulty. Even reports on bishops based in part on written records, in part on tradition and in part on personal knowledge were relatively easily pieced together. The preparation and continuation of a general chronicle was a more weighty matter. Compilation would

be protracted, requiring sustained, if sporadic, interest over several generations of monks. Such was the case with the main section of the *Historia Anglicana*. The manuscript, now preserved in two parts in the *British Library*, is a fine copy of the finished product.³⁸ Another copy at the cathedral at Norwich is an earlier version, written at different periods and thereby revealing something of the process of chronicle-making at that house. This is no place for a detailed analysis of the work but the following tentative suggestions may be offered. The main section of the Norwich manuscript may have been written up soon after 1284 by two scribes, the one taking the work to 1272, the other to 1284. This does not, however, necessarily reproduce the manner of compilation. According to the monks a small chronicle survived the fire³⁹ and the decision to compile a chronicle might have been taken in the 1260s. The first compiler began by using works we know to have been available locally. For the period 1066-1258 he used the chronicle of John of Wallingford, itself an abridgement of the work of Matthew Paris. John of Wallingford, a St. Albans monk, had retired to one of the cells of that house, Wymondham, some ten miles west of Norwich. For the years 1066-1109 the Norwich chronicle is amplified from another document connected with St. Albans. Professor Vaughan has identified that as 'similar, if not identical with' a chronicle in Cotton Vit. A. xx'.⁴⁰ That manuscript had belonged to Tynemouth, another of the cells of St. Albans and to a prior who was a contemporary of John of Wallingford.⁴¹ When Wallingford's chronicle came to an end in 1258, the Norwich monk turned to one being compiled at Bury St. Edmunds, some forty miles to the south of Norwich and used this for the period to 1263.⁴² Up to this point very little information relating to the cathedral has been inserted. From 1263 the work is original. The author is writing from his own experiences and is keeping to his brief that this should be a general history of England. That policy is abandoned in 1272 for which year the annal is much longer and is almost entirely concerned with the attack on the priory. Although the pages for this year were later excised from the chronicle now at Norwich, it was not before they had been copied, and the account of the fire occurs both in a manuscript now in Bodley and in the fine copy in the *British Library*.

Although the next section was not written into the Norwich manuscript until after 1284, the work as far as 1279 is still original and still very much concerned with the aftermath of the revolt. It is as though a draft existed and was then entered neatly into the book. The whole was then brought up to date by making use of the chronicle of yet another local monastery, that of St. Benet of Holme,⁴³ some twenty miles to the north-east of Norwich. For the next few years the entries are short and written in a number of hands. A decision had been taken to continue the chronicle but there was no enthusiastic collector of material. The Norwich manuscript breaks off after a brief entry for 1291 and does not continue with the story of

events. But if this particular version of the chronicle comes to an abrupt end, the chronicle itself was continued and took on an entirely different character. In the fine copy a new element is introduced in the copious transcribing of official documents. The idea might have emanated from the request of Edward I that the text of the submission of the claimants to the Scottish throne be noted in the chronicles of the religious institutions to which it was sent. It is duly copied into the Bury chronicle but the Bury chronicler did not continue the practice. At Norwich, however, from this point until the end of 1295 the original material is plentiful and especially so for the years 1294-1295. It is a very mixed collection. Royal writs and letters, papal bulls, letters from foreign potentates, articles to be discussed at a synod of clergy - all these have been copied. The compiler is, moreover, well-informed of events concerning the papacy and the movements of cardinals concerned with papal taxation. Questions immediately spring to mind. Who decided to incorporate this mass of material and how was it obtained? The second question may be easier to answer than the first. Some of the documents, such as that summoning the prior to attend Parliament, would have arrived at the priory in the normal course of royal administration. Some, from king or pope, were addressed to the bishop and could easily have become known to senior monks. Others, such as a royal writ ordering the sheriff to seize the land and property of lay aliens, have no such obvious connection. ⁴⁴ Luard, the editor of the *Historia Anglicana*, optimistically assumed that royal letters addressed to the sheriff would be automatically available. ⁴⁵ What he did not know, and what makes availability much more of a possibility, was that the current steward to the priory was Sir Thomas of Hackford, a man of considerable importance in local administration. Sir Thomas had been elected as one of the county representatives in 1290, in 1294 he was appointed a justice for the delivery of gaols in Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, and at the end of November 1295 sheriff of Norfolk. ⁴⁶ He died in office in the first half of 1296 and it is noticeable that very little original material is incorporated into the chronicle for 1296-1297. Sir Thomas was, I suspect, an important conveyor of documents but the source of information regarding the papacy must be sought elsewhere. The chronicle came to an end in 1298 and for the last two years, although bereft of most of the source material, even of writs addressed to the prior, the annals are still fairly full and the interest as much national as local.

There remains the problem of the compiler and, more particularly, of the men responsible for the period after 1291. The fine copy consists of three books which, according to the colophon, were put together by Bartholomew Cotton in 1292. The first book, an unacknowledged copy of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* need not detain us. ⁴⁷ The third, the *Tractatus* concerning the bishops of England, opens with a sketch of the early history of Christianity in this island, followed by topographical

information consisting of a list of shires in which the location of episcopal seats was noted, then accounts (often only bare lists) of the bishops and finally the boundaries of the dioceses. This book was very probably put together in or before 1292 for the few entries that run after that date appear to be later additions.⁴⁸ The problem is the part Bartholomew Cotton played in the main section, whether he was responsible for the revived interest in 1285 when he was already a person of importance, having held the office of magister celarii for 1282-4, or whether his contribution came later with the longer annals of 1290 and 1291. If, however, he were to be the enthusiastic collector of transcripts, his contribution to the chronicle would have continued beyond 1292. While this is not impossible, the change after 1292 is so great that it is conceivable that the chronicle was continued by a different man and one with a keen interest in the Holy Land and in political events both in England and abroad.

Whoever he was he had no successor. Thereafter the monks were not concerned to record national events for posterity. Nor did they keep up to date the lists of kings in the genealogical roll, though provision had been made for additions. Similarly, the lists in the Norwich version of the chronicle came to an end. Only for the priors is the list continued, and the writing-up of these was done only sporadically.⁴⁹ This does not necessarily mean that they were no longer interested in accounts of the past. The monastic collection contained some general historical works. Book three of the Historia Anglicana shows a knowledge of Bede and of the works of William of Malmesbury, Book one is a transcript of Geoffrey of Monmouth's History and Cotton's knowledge and use of that book is emphasised by his grammatical compilation concerning the words used in the Liber Britonis, said to have been compiled in 1291.⁵⁰ He was probably not the only monk to have a copy of Monmouth's History. There survives a volume bearing the name of Roger of Blickling and the press-mark of G lvii. It consists of two works, a Summa Ricardi and bound with it the Liber Britonum of Geoffrey of Monmouth.⁵¹ By chance an entry in an obediatory roll, that of the magister celarii (W. de Castre) for 1294-1295, links together the same works. A single payment is entered for the texts of a Summa Ricardi and a Liber Britonis.⁵² There may even have been another copy of the second, for later in the same roll comes a reference to another Liber Britonis. Another general history to survive from this period is Book 4 of Vincent of Beauvais' Speculum historiale which deals, *inter alia*, with English kings, such as Alfred, Athelstan and Ethelred, and includes accounts of Dunstan and the miracles of St. James.⁵³ This was owned by John of Cawston who followed Bartholomew Cotton as magister celarii and held the office of chamberlain in the early 1290s. In the early fourteenth century there was sufficient interest for the making of a copy of the full Historia Anglicana (including that part running up to 1298) by a professional scribe and a skilled

illuminator. It is not just a fair copy, but a fine one. Prior Robert of Langley (1310-1320) was a purchaser of books, the most expensive of which was Cassiodorus, although which work is not specified. It cost 4s.2d. for the vellum and 50s. for the transcription.⁵⁴ From the extant books it would seem nevertheless that the peak period for the interest in history had passed.

It is not easy, however, to assess the interests, historical or otherwise, for much of the first half of the fourteenth century. Monks continued to be sent to Oxford but even for those who did well the single volume, which may be all that survives, may not do justice either to the depth or breadth of their reading. It is only with the book list and with the volumes still extant, of Simon Bozoun, prior between 1344 and 1352, that any judgement is possible.⁵⁵ His interests were anything but narrow. Some of the works were, as would be natural, theological, some such as an exposition of the Rule of St. Benedict, legal works and commentaries thereon may have a connection with his administrative office. Others provided reading of a very different kind. Bozoun had a keen interest in the East. His book list includes a copy of the Koran and a series of travel works, which ranged from the itineraries of the friars who went to Tartary to the longer journey of Marco Polo.⁵⁶ He possessed an account of the wonders of the Holy Land. He also collected books relating to England's past. There were two chronicles. One was the early section, from the creation to 635, of the most popular of thirteenth-century chronicles, the *Flores Historiarum* of Matthew Paris.⁵⁷ There are also short extracts from the work of Wendover. The other chronicle was one of the latest to appear: Higden's *Polychronicon*, in its 1327 version.⁵⁸ There is Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, under the title accorded it by Higden - *De Gestis Anglorum*.⁵⁹ His library also included another of Higden's sources, the *Historia Ecclesiastica tripartita*, which Higden enters as *Historia ecclesiastica tripartita, cuius tres sunt auctores, Eusebius, Hieronymus et Theodorus episcopus*.⁶⁰ The work cost Simon Bozoun 20s. and curiously it appears twice, each time at 10s.4d. in the expenditure of the hostilar just before and during Simon's priorate.⁶¹ The list also gives a work, unspecified, of William of Malmesbury, which cost 12s. Among the survivals there is the *Expugnatio Hibernica* of Gerald of Wales and, perhaps showing a particularly scholarly interest, a collection of prefaces to historical works. The range of authors is wide, running from Julius Caesar, Josephus and Eusebius to Hugh of St. Victor and Robert of Torigny.⁶² Occasionally works were duplicated, that of Gerald of Wales being copied into Bodley Fairfax MS. 20 as well as into B. L. MS. Royal 14 C 13. The British Library manuscript which is in a single hand also duplicates some, but not all, of the itineraries in Corpus Christi Cambridge MS. 407.

This investigation, brief as it is, has revealed two facets of monastic book collection in the period 1250 to 1350. One is the interdependence of

neighbouring religious houses. For his beginning the Norwich chronicler owed much to Wymondham, as indeed did John of Oxnead at St. Benet of Holme. But the main link seems to have been with Bury St. Edmunds and its related house, St. Benet of Holme. First, there are the annals for 1259-1263, and then for the period 1279-1284 it was to the continuator of that chronicle, John of Oxnead, that Norwich turned. There is a further connection with St. Benet, and possibly with John himself. The Egerton MS of the Oxnead chronicle, apparently written at Holme contained, although not in the main hand, an acknowledged version of Geoffrey of Monmouth's history. It even included a description of England, naming its shires and bishoprics. This, coming in second place, is much less detailed than Cotton's Book three and gives a brief list of abbeys and priories instead of Cotton's section on the bishops.⁶³ In the next century there was recourse again to Bury. The Corpus Cambridge copy of Bozoun's itineraries of friars was probably taken directly from a similar one at Bury. The first of these, the journey of Simeon and Hugh, was left unfinished, the writing ending mid-page with the rest of the gathering left blank. The second of the itineraries, that of William of Rubruc, contains evidence of a series of omissions. This too is unfinished and ends with the note 'Hic deficit multum: vide apud Sanctum Edmundum residuum'.⁶⁴ Bury St. Edmunds had an excellent library in the Middle Ages and was probably a centre for dissemination.⁶⁵

The second point to emerge from this study is dependence on the professional scribe. By the last quarter of the thirteenth century Norwich was both rich and populous. It was becoming a minor intellectual centre in its own right. The friars were there in force with their own schools and these not all of an elementary nature. In 1336 the Franciscans had seven centres for the higher study of theology and one of these was at Norwich. The city was becoming an artistic centre of some importance where professional scribes and illuminators, the latter not necessarily trained in East Anglia, produced illuminated books of high quality. The best were, not unnaturally, especially commissioned and expensive. The Ormesby Psalter, thought to originate in a lay commission, was probably an exceptional possession for the cathedral. Some of the other work was attractive enough. The diagram at the head of the first membrane of the genealogical roll is coloured in blue and gold and the space between the roundels filled with interlace. The fair copy of the *Historia Anglicana* is not just a well-written copy of the chronicle, it is a fine copy. Most of the work of the workshop or individual was, however, much more mundane in appearance. The priory employed flourishers as well as 'scriptors', their function seems to have been to provide the important decorated initials and the scroll work of the first page of a work and some are well executed. The monks still had their own scriptorium and the monks in administrative positions had their

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own scribes for the clerical work required of their office. They themselves rarely found time to copy scholarly works and the inscription 'Liber fratris Johannis de Reynham monachi Norwici quem ipse in parte scripsit et in parte scribi fecit' probably represented an unusual case.⁶⁶ Yet if the monks rarely found time to copy works that interested them, they managed in spite of their administrative duties to own, and one hopes, to read books.

In particular, they collected books that dealt with the past or, to use the words of the chronicler of *Registrum Primum*, recorded events of their own time for the instruction of present and future generations. History was something that all monks could appreciate. It did not need the stimulus of higher education. Even after university education had come to monks historical works were to be read both by those who had benefited from a stay at Oxford and by those who had not. The men who wrote for the instruction of present and future generations and the men whose names appear on historical books are to be found among the office holders of the house. Ralph of Frettenham, Bartholomew Cotton and Simon Bozoun bear witness to the abiding interest in works of an historical nature.

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NOTES

1. D. Knowles, The Monastic Order in England, 2nd edn., Cambridge 1949, p.438.
2. He also gave the monks 2 marks for a pittance and a pipe of his best wine. His will was printed in translation by Francis Blomefield, An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk, Vol.3, London 1806, pp.488, 492.
3. Norfolk Record Office [= N.R.O.], DCM obed. roll 1.
4. Contributions were levied on the departments. In 1287-8 the almoner paid 4s. 2 3/4d. as his contribution for 2 years. N.R.O., DCM obed. roll 488.
5. N.R.O., DCM obed. roll 225.
6. The roll of the magister celarii for 1313-1314 records payment of £5 before his inception and of £20 15s. 8d. towards the expenses of inception. In 1329-1330 the communar contributed £1 to the expenses of the inception of John de Mari. N.R.O., DCM obed. roll 23, 1043.
7. B. Smalley, English Friars and Antiquity in the Early Fourteenth Century, Oxford 1960, p.33.
8. M.R. James, A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, 1912, no.465. Tolhurst, who edited the customary, regarded this as a book list and thought that it had been written in the early thirteenth century. The Customary of the Cathedral Priory Church of Norwich, ed., J.B.L. Tolhurst, Henry Bradshaw Society, 82, 1948, p.v.
9. Norwich Cathedral Charters, Part One, ed., B. Dodwell, Pipe Roll Society, NS 40, 1974, p.xij.
10. N.R. Ker, 'Medieval Manuscripts from Norwich Cathedral Priory', Trans. of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society, 1, 1948, p.6, thought that they were saved because, being lectionaries, they were kept in a separate place.
11. Lambeth Palace Library, MS. 368. It was probably a provincial work.

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12. N.R.O., DCM obed. rolls, 13-18, 23, 489.
13. N.R.O., DCM obed. roll 1038.
14. Cambridge University Library Kk.2.13. It is written in a single hand.
15. Alexander of Sprowston's name is on Cambridge University Library Kk.4.11. He is probably the Alexander for whom part of the Summa of Aquinas, once belonging to Richard of Bromwich, was available on loan. J.K. Floyer and S.G. Hamilton, A Catalogue of Manuscripts preserved in the Chapter Library of Worcester Cathedral, Worcs. Historical Society, 1906, p.50, F 101. Hervey of Swaffham's book is now Cambridge University Library Kk.4.12.
16. J. Bale, Index Britanniae Scriptorum, ed., R. Lane-Poole, Oxford 1902, p.233. Bale also credits him with a collection of sermons.
17. General and Provincial Chapters of the English Black Monks, ed., W.A. Pantin, Vol.1, Camden Society (3rd Series) XLV, 1931, 130.
18. They are now all in Cambridge University Library. MSS. li.1.32, li.4.15, li.4.2, li.4.35.
19. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS. 252.
20. The first is Cambridge University Library Kk.4.20. The first piece is the Penitentia of Raymond de Pennefort. Among the other penitential works is one by Robert Grosseteste. The historical works are British Library, Add. MS.30079 and a volume now in Norwich Cathedral. The press-marks, C iii, C xi and C xii allow for the possibility of a wider range of interests.
21. R. Vaughan, Matthew Paris, Cambridge, 1958, p.154.
22. The Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich, ed., A. Jessopp and M.R. James, Cambridge, 1896, p.liiii.
23. Ibid., p.lviii, where the matter is fully discussed.
24. Books two and three were edited by H.R. Luard, Bartholomei de Cotton Historia Anglicana, Rolls Series, 1859.
25. Ibid., p.418.

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55. The list is printed in The Works of Giraldus Cambrensis, ed., J.C. Brewer, Vol.V, Rolls Series, 1867, xxxix-xl.
56. Corpus Christi Coll. Cambr., MS. 407, and British Library, MS. Royal 14 C 13.
57. Bodley Fairfax, MS. 20.
58. It is the first item in MS. Royal 14 C 13.
59. Corpus Christi Coll. Cambr., MS. 264.
60. Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden, ed., C. Babington, Rolls Series, 1865, pp.20-22.
61. N.R.O., DCM obed. roll 621, 623.
62. They are both in MS. Royal 14 C 13.
63. Described in Chronica Johannis de Oxenedes, ed., H. Ellis, Rolls Series, 1859, p.xxxvi; and Additions to the Manuscripts in the British Museum, 1936-1945, London, 1970, Egerton MS. 3142.
64. The Bury chronicle was copied for Peterborough abbey and later for Colchester. It was also known to the compiler of the chronicle of Spalding priory. A. Gransden, op.cit., p.xxviii.
65. Corpus Christi Coll. Cambr., MS. 407.
66. Corpus Christi Coll. Cambr., MS. 252. It is written at the end of the volume.