

OXFORD MEDIEVAL TEXTS

*General Editors*

J. W. BINNS

D. d'AVRAY

M. S. KEMPSHALL

R. C. LOVE

# Byrhtferth of Ramsey

The Lives of St Oswald  
and St Ecgwine

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EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY  
MICHAEL LAPIDGE



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CLARENDON PRESS · OXFORD

# OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.  
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Published in the United States  
by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

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First published 2009

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data  
Data available

Typeset by Anne Joshua, Oxford  
Printed in Great Britain  
on acid-free paper by  
Biddles Ltd., King's Lynn, Norfolk

ISBN 978-0-19-955078-4

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

## PREFACE

I BEGAN work on the two texts printed in this volume in the early 1970s. Since they are both preserved in a single manuscript, my first task was to make an accurate transcription and then to translate what I had transcribed. At some time in the late 1970s I sent my transcription and translation of the *Vita S. Ecgwini* to Michael Winterbottom for comment and, after a delay of some fifteen years or so, the *Vita S. Oswaldi* (1994). On each occasion he returned the text to me within a few days, enriched with the kind of precise annotation and query that only those scholars who have had the privilege of collaborating with him will understand. He taught me by the example of his meticulous attention to detail what high standards of accuracy should be aimed at in the scholarly edition of Latin texts, and my first (and most pleasurable) task is to record my immense debt to all the help I have received from him over thirty and more years (and not only on the two occasions referred to here). Users of the present edition who are in the habit of reading *apparatus critici* will see at a glance how greatly it has been improved by his intervention. I learned much about the workings of Byrhtferth's mind from collaboration with Peter Baker during the fifteen years in which we were preparing our edition of Byrhtferth's *Enchiridion*; although the edition was published in 1995, our discussions of Byrhtferth have continued, always to my profit. I have also received much help, again over many years, from three Cambridge colleagues: from Neil Wright, who first drew my attention to the poetic aspects of Byrhtferth's prose; to Rosalind Love, who long ago initiated me into the mysteries of electronic databases and provided much help in the identification of biblical citations; and to Simon Keynes, who has always placed his unmatched expertise in Anglo-Saxon historical sources at my disposal. Many other scholars have provided indispensable help in fields distant from my own: Malcolm Godden and Rohini Jayatilaka on glosses to Boethius; Susan Kelly on formulas in Anglo-Saxon charters; David Cox on the topography of Evesham; and Stephen Macaulay on the trial excavation at Ramsey. Three close friends—Mechthild Gretsch, Helmut Gneuss, and Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe—have provided helpful comment on matters of Old

English philology and much else. I also learned much about Byrhtferth from discussions over many years with the late Patrick Wormald, and it is a matter of regret that he cannot comment on the final form this edition has taken.

After the book went into production, I received invaluable help from Bonnie Blackburn and Leofranc Holford-Strevens, especially on the text of the Abbonian acrostics quoted by Byrhtferth, but also on many liturgical and musical matters. The editors of OMT, especially Jim Binns and Rosalind Love, gave much help with the proofs. Finally, Anne Joshua worked her usual magic in typesetting a difficult typescript.

M.L.

*April 2007*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AB</i>	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
<i>Abingdon</i>	<i>Charters of Abingdon Abbey</i> , ed. S. E. Kelly (2 vols.; Anglo-Saxon Charters, vii–viii; London, 2000–1)
<i>Acta SS.</i>	<i>Acta Sanctorum</i> , ed. J. Bolland <i>et al.</i> (67 vols.; Antwerp and Brussels, 1643– )
Aldhelm, <i>CdV</i>	Aldhelm, <i>Carmen de uirginitate</i> , ed. R. Ehwald (MGH, AA xv; Berlin, 1919), pp. 350–471
— <i>CE</i>	Aldhelm, <i>Carmina ecclesiastica</i> , ed. Ehwald, <i>ibid.</i> pp. 11–32
— <i>Enigm.</i>	Aldhelm, <i>Enigmata</i> , ed. Ehwald, <i>ibid.</i> pp. 97–149
— <i>prDV</i>	Aldhelm, prose <i>De uirginitate</i> , ed. Ehwald, <i>ibid.</i> pp. 228–323
Arator, <i>HA</i>	Arator, <i>Historia apostolica</i> , ed. A. P. McKinlay (CSEL lxxii; Vienna, 1951)
<i>ASC</i>	<i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> , ed. C. Plummer and J. Earle, <i>Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel</i> (2 vols.; Oxford, 1892–9); <i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Revised Translation</i> , trans. D. Whitelock <i>et al.</i> (London, 1961)
<i>ASE</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
<i>ASSAH</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History</i>
BAV	Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Vatican City)
BCS	W. de G. Birch, <i>Cartularium Saxonicum</i> (3 vols. and index; London, 1885–93)
<i>BEASE</i>	<i>The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England</i> , ed. M. Lapidge, J. Blair, S. Keynes, and D. Scragg (Oxford, 1999)
Bede, <i>DAM</i>	Bede, <i>De arte metrica</i> , ed. C. B. Kendall (CCSL cxxiiiA; Turnhout, 1975), pp. 59–141
— <i>DNR</i>	— <i>De natura rerum</i> , ed. C. W. Jones (CCSL cxxiiiA; Turnhout, 1975), pp. 173–234
— <i>DTR</i>	— <i>De temporum ratione</i> , ed. C. W. Jones (CCSL cxxiiiB; Turnhout, 1977)

- *DST* — *De schematibus et tropis*, ed. C. B. Kendall (CCSL cxxiiiA; Turnhout, 1975), pp. 142–71
- *HE* — *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, ed. C. Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica* (2 vols.; Oxford, 1896); ed. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (OMT, 1969; rev. repr. 1991)
- *VCM* — *Vita S. Cudbercti metrica*, ed. W. Jaeger, *Bedas metrische Vita sancti Cuthberti* (Palaestra, cxcviii; Leipzig, 1935)
- BHL* [Bollandists], *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina* (2 vols.; Brussels, 1899–1901, with supplements, 1911, 1986) [cited by item number]
- BL* The British Library (London)
- BM* Bibliothèque municipale
- BNF* Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Paris)
- BodL* The Bodleian Library (Oxford)
- Brooks, Canterbury* N. Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury* (Leicester, 1984)
- Burton* *Charters of Burton Abbey*, ed. P. H. Sawyer (Anglo-Saxon Charters, ii; London, 1979)
- Caelius Sedulius, CP* Caelius Sedulius, *Carmen paschale*, ed. J. Huemer (CSEL x; Vienna, 1885), pp. 1–146
- CCC* Corpus Christi College (Cambridge or Oxford)
- CCCM* *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio mediaevalis* (Turnhout, 1966– )
- CCM* *Corpus consuetudinum monasticarum*, ed. K. Hallinger (Siegburg, 1963– )
- CCSL* *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina* (Turnhout, 1953– )
- Chron. Evesham* *Chronicon Abbatiae de Evesham*, ed. W. D. Macray (RS; London, 1863); *Thomas of Marlborough: History of the Abbey of Evesham*, ed. J. Sayers and L. Watkiss (OMT, 2003)
- Chron. Rames.* *Chronicon Abbatiae Ramesiensis*, ed. W. D. Macray (RS; London, 1886)
- CLA* *Codices Latini Antiquiores*, ed. E. A. Lowe (11 vols. and Supplement; Oxford, 1934–71; 2nd edn. of vol. ii, 1972) [cited by volume and item number]
- Councils & Synods* *Councils & Synods with other Documents Relating to*

- the English Church*, i: *A.D. 871–1204*, ed. D. Whitelock, M. Brett, and C. N. L. Brooke (2 vols.; Oxford, 1981)
- CPL* *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*, ed. E. Dekkers and A. Gaar (3rd edn., Steenbrugge, 1995) [cited by item number]
- CSASE* Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England (Cambridge, 1990– )
- CSEL* *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (Vienna, 1866– )
- DACL* *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, ed. F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq (15 vols. in 30; Paris, 1907–53)
- DHGE* *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques*, ed. A. Baudrillart *et al.* (Paris, 1912– )
- DMLBS* *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, ed. R. E. Latham, D. R. Howlett *et al.* (London, 1975– )
- EETS* Early English Text Society
- o.s. — original series
- s.s. — supplementary series
- EHD* i, ii *English Historical Documents*, i: *c.500–1042*, ed. D. Whitelock (2nd edn., London, 1979) [i]; *English Historical Documents*, ii: *1042–1189*, ed. D. C. Douglas (London, 1953) [ii]
- EHR* *English Historical Review*
- Ekwall, *DEPN* E. Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names* (4th edn., Oxford, 1960)
- EPNS* *English Place-Name Society*
- GCS* *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte* (Leipzig, 1897–1941; Berlin, 1954– )
- Gneuss H. Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A List of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100* (Tempe, AZ, 2001) [cited by item number]
- Haddan & Stubbs *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, ed. A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs (3 vols.; Oxford, 1869–78)

- Hagiographies* *Hagiographies*, ed. G. Philippart (*Corpus Christianorum*; Turnhout, 1994- )
- Hart, *ECNENM* C. R. Hart, *The Early Charters of Northern England and the North Midlands* (Leicester, 1975)
- HBC* *Handbook of British Chronology*, ed. E. B. Fryde, D. E. Greenway, S. Porter, and I. Roy (3rd edn., London, 1986)
- HBS Henry Bradshaw Society Publications
- HCY* *Historians of the Church of York*, ed. J. Raine (3 vols.; RS; London, 1879-94)
- HE* *Historia ecclesiastica*
- Heads* *The Heads of Religious Houses, England and Wales, 940-1216*, ed. D. Knowles, C. N. L. Brooke and V. C. M. London (2nd edn., Cambridge, 2001)
- Hesbert, *CAO* R.-J. Hesbert, *Corpus Antiphonalium Officii* (6 vols.; *Rerum ecclesiasticarum documenta, Series maior: Fontes*, vii-xii; Rome, 1963-79)
- HexLexikon* *Lateinisches Hexameter-Lexikon*, ed. O. Schumann (6 vols.; Munich, 1979-82)
- HR* Byrhtferth of Ramsey, *Historia regum*, ed. T. Arnold, in *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia* (2 vols.; RS; London, 1882-5), ii. 3-91
- ICL* D. Schaller and E. Könsgen, *Initia Carminum Latinorum saeculo undecimo Antiquiorum* (Göttingen, 1977) [cited by item number]
- Isidore, *Etym.* Isidore, *Etymologiae*, ed. W. M. Lindsay (2 vols.; Oxford, 1911)
- JEH* *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
- JMLat* *Journal of Medieval Latin*
- JW* *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, ed. R. R. Darlington and P. McGurk (2 vols.; OMT, 1995-8)
- KCD J. M. Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici* (6 vols.; London, 1839-48)
- Knowles, *MO* D. Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England: A History of its Development from the Times of St Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council, 940-1216* (2nd edn., Cambridge, 1963)
- Lapidge, *ALL* i, ii M. Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600-899*

- (London, 1996) [i]; *Anglo-Latin Literature 900–1066* (London, 1993) [ii]
- LHS M. Leumann, J. B. Hofmann, and A. Szantyr, *Lateinische Grammatik* (2 vols.; Munich, 1965–77)
- LMA *Lexikon des Mittelalters* (9 vols.; Munich and Zurich, 1980–99)
- LLT *Library of Latin Texts* (Brepols Publishers Online; Turnhout, 2003–4)
- Malmesbury *Charters of Malmesbury Abbey*, ed. S. E. Kelly (Anglo-Saxon Charters, xi; London, 2005)
- MCR the ‘Metrical Calendar of Ramsey’, ed. in Lapidge, ‘A tenth-century metrical calendar’, pp. 363–6 [repr. *ALL* ii. 380–3]
- MGH *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*
- *AA* — *Auctores Antiquissimi*
- *Epist.* — *Epistolae (in Quarto)*
- *Epist. sel.* — *Epistolae selectae*
- *PLAC* — *Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini*
- *SS* — *Scriptores (in folio)*
- *SS rer. Langobard.* — *Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum*
- *SS rer. Meroving.* — *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*
- MLatWb *Mittellateinisches Wörterbuch*, ed. O. Prinz *et al.* (Munich, 1967– )
- MS *Mediaeval Studies*
- NA *Neues Archiv*
- ODNB *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison (60 vols.; Oxford, 2004)
- OE Old English
- OLD *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P. G. W. Glare *et al.* (Oxford, 1968–82)
- OMT Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford)
- ON Old Norse
- ÖNB Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Vienna)
- PG *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 162 vols. (Paris, 1857–66)
- PL *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844–64)

- PLD *Patrologia Latina Database*, ed. Chadwyck-Healey Ltd. (Cambridge, 1995)
- Plummer, *VBOH* *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. C. Plummer (2 vols.; Oxford, 1896)
- Poetria Nova* *Poetria Nova: A CD-ROM of Latin Medieval Poetry (650–1250 A.D.), with a Gateway to Classical and Late Antiquity Texts*, ed. P. Mastandrea and L. Tessarolo (Florence, 2001)
- Ramsley Cartulary* *Cartularium Monasterii de Rameseia*, ed. W. H. Hart and P. A. Lyons (3 vols.; RS; London, 1884–93)
- Ramsley Obituary* *Libellus de anniversariis in ecclesia Ramesiensi observatis*, ed. Leland, *Collectanea*, ii. 587–8; ed. Gerchow, *Gedenküberlieferung*, pp. 342–3
- RB *Revue bénédictine*
- Reg. conc.* *Regularis concordia*: ed. T. Symons (London, 1953); ed. T. Symons and S. Spath (*CCM* vii/3. 61–147); ed. L. Kornexl, *Die Regularis Concordia und ihre altenglische Interlinear-version* (Munich, 1993)
- RGP the *Romano-German Pontifical*, ed. C. Vogel and R. Elze (3 vols.; *Studi e testi*, ccxxvi–ccxxvii, ccxxix; Rome, 1963–72)
- RS Rolls Series (London, 1858–96)
- RSB *Regula S. Benedicti*, ed. R. Hanslik, *Benedicti Regula* (*CSEL* lxxv; 2nd edn., Vienna, 1977); ed. A. de Vogüé, *La Règle de Saint Benoît* (7 vols.; *SChr* clxxxi–clxxxviA; Paris, 1972–7)
- S P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography* (London, 1968) [cited by item number]
- SChr* *Sources chrétiennes* (Paris, 1941– )
- Selsey* *Charters of Selsey*, ed. S. E. Kelly (*Anglo-Saxon Charters*, vi; London, 1998)
- Settimane* *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo* (Spoleto)
- Shaftesbury* *Charters of Shaftesbury Abbey*, ed. S. E. Kelly (*Anglo-Saxon Charters*, v; London, 1996)
- St Augustine's* *Charters of St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury and Minster-in-Thamet*, ed. S. E. Kelly (*Anglo-Saxon Charters*, iv; London, 1995)

<i>St Oswald</i>	<i>St Oswald of Worcester: Life and Influence</i> , ed. N. Brooks and C. Cubitt (London and New York, 1996)
Stotz, <i>Handbuch</i>	P. Stotz, <i>Handbuch zur lateinischen Sprache des Mittelalters</i> (5 vols.; Munich, 1996–2004)
TLL	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Latinae</i> (Munich, 1896– )
UL	University Library
VCH	<i>Victoria History of the Counties of England</i>
VEHSRP	<i>Vale of Evesham Historical Society Research Papers</i>
VSE	Byrhtferth of Ramsey, <i>Vita S. Ecgwini</i> (below, pp. 205–303)
VSO	Byrhtferth of Ramsey, <i>Vita S. Oswaldi</i> (below, pp. 1–203)
WMalm, <i>GP</i>	William of Malmesbury, <i>Gesta pontificum Anglorum</i> , ed. M. Winterbottom (OMT, 2007)
— <i>GR</i>	— <i>Gesta regum Anglorum</i> , ed. R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom (2 vols.; OMT, 1998–9)
WW	T. Wright, <i>Anglo-Saxon and Old English Vocabularies</i> (2nd edn. rev. R. P. Wülcker; 2 vols.; London, 1884)

# INTRODUCTION

## I. RAMSEY IN THE TIME OF BYRHTFERTH

Ramsey Abbey,<sup>1</sup> where Byrhtferth spent most of his life, lies some twenty miles north-west of Cambridge, between Peterborough and Ely, deep in the heart of the fens. As a result of the benefactions of its wealthy founders—Oswald, bishop of Worcester (961–92) and Æthelwine, ealdorman of East Anglia (962–92), and their families—Ramsey during the Anglo-Saxon period eclipsed its closest neighbour (Peterborough) in wealth and prestige, and by the time of the Domesday surveys of 1086 was the tenth richest abbey in England, with a gross annual income of £358 5s.<sup>2</sup> The story of its foundation is known principally from Byrhtferth's *Vita S. Oswaldi* (see below); but the growth of the endowment is known from the *Liber benefactorum* of Ramsey,<sup>3</sup> a cartulary-chronicle dating (as it has been preserved) from shortly after 1160, which treats the period from Ramsey's foundation until 1066, and is based on materials some of which had been assembled at Ramsey in the late tenth century, and may have been available there to Byrhtferth.<sup>4</sup> Some of the early endowments are also recorded (but briefly) in the *Ramsey Obituary*. Oddly, although it quickly became one of the richest abbeys in England, there are pitifully few surviving pre-Conquest royal diplomas pertaining to Ramsey's estates: one of King Edgar (S 798), to be discussed below, and one of Edward the Confessor (S 1030), as well as two vernacular writs of Edward the Confessor (S 1109–10).<sup>5</sup> Otherwise nothing.

<sup>1</sup> There is no satisfactory history of Ramsey Abbey. See (briefly) *VCH, Huntingdonshire*, i. 377–9, ii. 187–98, esp. 191–3, and *BEASE*, pp. 385–6. <sup>2</sup> Knowles, *MO*, p. 702.

<sup>3</sup> There is a useful modern treatment of the growth of the endowment in Raftis, *The Estates of Ramsey Abbey*, pp. 1–21.

<sup>4</sup> *Chron. Rames.*, pp. 1–180. The *Liber benefactorum* is preserved in its most authentic form in London, Public Record Office, E. 164/28 (s. xiv), fos. 132–64 (on this cartulary, see Davis, *Medieval Cartularies*, p. 90), where it is made up of three parts: pt. 1 (*Chron. Rames.*, pp. 7–45), on the foundation and early history to 974; pt. 2 (pp. 46–108), on Ramsey's benefactors; and pt. 3 (pp. 109–80), on the period 992–1066. The material pertinent to St Oswald is found in pts. 1 and 2. On 12th-c. cartulary-chronicles of pre-Conquest monastic foundations (including Ramsey), see Gransden, *Historical Writing*, i. 271–86, and, for the *Liber benefactorum* in particular, Gransden, 'Traditionalism and continuity', pp. 66–70.

<sup>5</sup> See the chapter on Ramsey in Keynes, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: Archives and Single Sheets*. Simon Keynes very kindly made this chapter available to me in advance of publication.

The abbey was built on land belonging to Ealdorman Æthelwine, and in fact it lies about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles north-east of Upwood (Cambridgeshire), where Æthelwine had his principal residence.<sup>6</sup> The value of the site—which Bishop Oswald realized as soon as he had first seen it (*VSO* iii. 16)—is that it lay only a mile's distance from the shores of both Ramsey Mere and Ugg Mere, and less than five miles from Whittlesey Mere, which, until it was drained in the mid-nineteenth century, was the second largest freshwater lake in England (after Windermere).<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the river Nene (old course) passed through these lakes, providing access upstream to the quarries of Barnack, whence would come the stone needed to construct the church at Ramsey, and downstream to the Wash and the North Sea. The site on which the monastery was built had originally been a heavily wooded island (hence its name, which derives from *Hræfnis* + *ieg*, 'Raven's Island'),<sup>8</sup> but by the time construction had got under way, a causeway connecting the island to solid ground had been built,<sup>9</sup> and the trees cut down to provide timber for the monastic out-buildings. As to the appearance of the monastery in Anglo-Saxon times, nothing whatsoever is known save what is reported by Byrhtferth, namely that the church was cruciform, having *porticus* in the east, south, and north, with an axial tower at the crossing; to this structure a second tower was added at the western end (*VSO* iv. 2), which eventually housed the massive organ described by Byrhtferth (v. 11). By Anglo-Saxon standards, the church was an elaborate structure, but it was demolished in 1116 to make way for a new church built by Abbot Reginald (1113/14–31), to which were added various conventual buildings during the course of the thirteenth century, including the Lady Chapel, built in the mid-thirteenth century, and a refectory (completed 1276). At the time of the Dissolution under Henry VIII (1539), Ramsey was reckoned as the eighth richest abbey in the country.<sup>10</sup> Following the Dissolution, the abbey was sold to building contractors, and the buildings were

<sup>6</sup> *Chron. Rames.*, p. 52: 'ibi tamen aulam suam et curiam tanti viri nobilitati in vita sua habuit congruentem', and see also *VSO* v. 11 (below, p. 178 with n. 128).

<sup>7</sup> The present-day site of Ramsey is vastly different from what it was in the 10th c., due to the drainage of the fenland lakes. For a map of 1576 showing Ramsey and the lakes before drainage, see Hill, *An Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 13; one may also usefully consult the Ordnance Survey map of 1824, sheet lxiv.

<sup>8</sup> Mawer and Stenton, *The Place-Names of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire*, pp. 212–13.

<sup>9</sup> *Chron. Rames.*, p. 7; this causeway is what is referred to as a *pons* in Abbo's poem on the site of Ramsey quoted by Byrhtferth in *VSO* iii. 18.

<sup>10</sup> Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, iii. 474.

demolished, leaving nothing but the fifteenth-century gatehouse (still more or less intact); the brick and stone were transported to Cambridge, where they were used in the construction of Trinity and Gonville and Caius colleges. The site is now occupied by a comprehensive school (in the basement of which traces of the west wall of the thirteenth-century Lady Chapel may be seen in the boys' toilets). Beyond these traces, however, nothing is known of the medieval abbey, to say nothing of its Anglo-Saxon predecessor. Exploratory excavations in 1996, consisting of ten trial pits at various points of the school grounds, revealed nothing of the monastic buildings; the pre-Conquest period yielded nothing but some pottery fragments.<sup>11</sup>

We may now return to Byrhtferth's narrative of the foundation of Ramsey. As a young man Oswald, the future bishop of Worcester, had spent a considerable period of time during the 950s at Fleury, where he learned monastic discipline according to the Benedictine Rule (*VSO* ii. 6–9), and where he nursed the intention of teaching this discipline to monks in his native land (iii. 1–2). Accordingly, after he had returned to England and been appointed to the bishopric of Worcester (961), a number of secular clerics came to Oswald, wishing to be instructed in monastic discipline according to the Benedictine Rule (these clerics included the priest Eadnoth *Senior*, subsequently to become prior of Ramsey); within a few months, their number exceeded twelve, not counting oblates (iii. 8). For the time being, Oswald housed them in temporary accommodation at Westbury on Trym (within the conurbation that is modern Bristol), but realized that he would soon have to find permanent quarters for them. In the event, they remained at Westbury for four or more years (iii. 8): that is, presumably, until some time in 965. Now it happened that King Edgar summoned a meeting of the *witan* at Easter in that year (iii. 9), and Oswald took the opportunity of raising with the king the possibility of acquiring land suitable for a permanent monastic establishment; the king agreed immediately to Oswald's proposal, and offered him the choice of three sites belonging to the royal fisc—St Albans, Ely, and Benfleet—none of which, on inspection, proved suitable for Oswald's purposes (iii. 12). However, it happened at the same meeting of the *witan* that one of the king's senior ealdormen had died, and the king commanded various members of the *witan* to accompany the ealdorman's body to its last resting-place (iii. 13)—

<sup>11</sup> See Macaulay, *Late Saxon and Medieval Archaeology at Ramsey Abbey*.

which, as we know from the *Liber benefactorum*, but not from Byrhtferth, was in Glastonbury.<sup>12</sup> Among those who took part in the cortège were Bishop Oswald and Æthelwine, ealdorman of East Anglia. The two fell into conversation, and Oswald explained to the ealdorman his plan to found a Benedictine monastery. Æthelwine immediately offered him the site of Ramsey, where, as it happened, there were already three of Æthelwine's men who were eager to learn monastic discipline (iii. 15). Oswald went straightway to inspect the site, found it eminently suitable for his purposes, and, when he returned to Worcester, ordered Eadnoth *Senior* to go to Ramsey and erect (temporary) buildings to house the Westbury monks (iii. 16). By the autumn of that year—still 965—these temporary buildings were ready, and Oswald was able to travel with his monks to Ramsey, arriving on 29 August, the feast of the Decollation of John the Baptist (iii. 17). During the course of the following winter, masons imported stone (from nearby Barnack, presumably) and made mortar, so that by the following spring—966—it was possible to lay the foundations of a more permanent, stone-built, church (iv. 2). The foundation of Ramsey, therefore, dates in effect from 966.<sup>13</sup> The community at this point consisted of the twelve or so monks from Westbury, plus the three men of Æthelwine who were already living at Ramsey. Eadnoth *Senior* was placed in charge of the community of monks as *praepositus* or prior (iv. 4). Oswald himself remained titular abbot until his death in 992.

Of course it will have taken longer than a few months to erect an elaborate stone-built church. In the event the church was not completed and consecrated until 8 November 974, as we learn from S 798 and the *Liber benefactorum*.<sup>14</sup> Byrhtferth mentions the consecration, but does not state either the day or year on which it took place, though he does mention that the rite of consecration was performed by Archbishop Oswald together with Ælfnth, who at that

<sup>12</sup> *Chron. Rames.*, p. 30. It is possible that the man in question was Æthelmund, who had been ealdorman of NW Mercia for twenty-five years; see below, p. 81 with n. 135.

<sup>13</sup> The date 969, which is normally given for the foundation (e.g. in *Heads*, p. 61), has been computed from a statement in King Edgar's confirmation charter for Ramsey (S 798), which is dated 8 Nov. 974, namely that the church was consecrated 'five years and eighteen days' (*revoluta quinquennio diebusque duodeviginti*) after Æthelwine had begun the construction of the church, following a miraculous vision of St Benedict: hence on 21 Oct. 969. Since no modern commentator is willing to accept the authenticity of Edgar's charter of confirmation (see below), it seems odd that they should nevertheless be willing to accept the date of foundation which it supplies.

<sup>14</sup> *Chron. Rames.*, pp. 43–4.

time was bishop of Dorchester, in which diocese Ramsey lay (iv. 15). It is interesting to note that there is a surviving charter (preserved in later cartularies, none earlier than the thirteenth century) which claims to be a confirmation by King Edgar of the endowments of Ramsey (S 798 = BCS 1310, 1311). The charter refers to the dedication of the church, on 8 November 974, by Archbishops Dunstan and Oswald. The mention of Dunstan immediately raises suspicions, because neither Byrhtferth nor the *Liber benefactorum* mention the presence of Dunstan at the ceremony; for this and other reasons the confirmation charter is dismissed as 'spurious',<sup>15</sup> and it has even been suggested that—in its present form—the charter was forged by Osbert of Clare in the early twelfth century.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless the charter has many features which require consideration in the context of Byrhtferth's Ramsey.<sup>17</sup> The student of Byrhtferth will notice immediately that the draftsman of the charter used many words and phrases favoured by Byrhtferth: the word *arcisterium* for 'monastery' (twice), the archaic enclitic *-ce* (*huiuscemodi* rather than *huiusmodi*), the phrase *luce clarius*, ostentatious polyptoton ('*gloriatur quippe in sanctis suis glorificari, quatinus illorum meritis glorificantes opituletur*'), etc. The draftsman's use of rare vocabulary, some of it derived from Greek, is also striking: *aforismus* used twice (from *ἀφορισμός*, used in the plural to mean simply 'words'), *angaria* (from *ἀγγαρεία*, 'duress'), *algema* (from *ἄλγημα*, 'pain'), *anquirens*, *antropus* (from *ἄνθρωπος*, 'man'), *arcisterium*, *bilius*, *catascopus* (from *κατάσκοπος*, used to mean 'bishop'), *codrus*, *compaginator* ('builder'), etc. Since similar unusual words beginning with later letters of the alphabet are not found in the charter, it would seem that the draftsman was using a glossary which was only extant for the letters A-, B-, and C-.<sup>18</sup> Two of the words require particular comment. The

<sup>15</sup> See the list of opinions cited by Sawyer in S 798.

<sup>16</sup> Chaplais, 'The original charters of Herbert and Gervase', esp. p. 94. It must be said that the evidence of vocabulary adduced by Chaplais is anything but compelling, and rests solely on the fact that the phrase *vir insignis* used to describe Æthelwine in 'the Ramsey charters' (unspecified) is also used in a letter by Osbert addressed to the monks of Ely. In other words, while there may be no reason to doubt the arguments of Chaplais concerning Osbert's involvement in forging Westminster charters, the case for similar involvement in the Ramsey charters remains to be proved.

<sup>17</sup> In what follows I cite the text of S 798 from that printed as BCS 1311 (based on BL, Add. Ch. 33658 (s. xiv)), rather than BCS 1310 (from BL, Cotton Vespasian E. ii (s. xiii)), the text of which represents a simplification of the more ambitious Latin prose style of BCS 1311.

<sup>18</sup> None of the words listed above is found in any of the Anglo-Saxon glossaries printed in WW, which suggests that the fragmentary glossary in question has not survived.

word *algema* is also used by Byrhtferth (*VSE* ii. 9), but, as far as I can determine, occurs nowhere else in a pre-Conquest Anglo-Latin text. The earliest occurrence of the word *catascopus* is found in a charter of 961 (S 690 = BCS 1066), a grant by King Edgar in favour of Abingdon, the original of which survives,<sup>19</sup> which carries the attestation of Oswald—in one of his first acts as bishop of Worcester—as follows: ‘ego Osuuold legis Dei catascopus hoc eulogium propria manu depinxit’. I have suggested elsewhere that the formula of attestation, with its ostentatious parade of the Graecisms *catascopus* and *eulogium*, was very possibly composed by Oswald himself (certainly the style is symptomatic of someone who, like Oswald, had studied with Fredegaut/Frithegod, the past master of this kind of Graecizing composition).<sup>20</sup> In any event the verbal links with Byrhtferth and Oswald are consonant with composition at Ramsey. I do not wish to suggest that Byrhtferth was the draftsman of S 798 (though he could conceivably have been), simply that the charter was confected at Ramsey, possibly in the late tenth or early eleventh century, in the attempt to provide an authentic-looking framework for an up-to-date record of the abbey’s endowments, given enhanced respectability by being linked to the ceremony of the dedication of the church on 8 November 974.

The following year King Edgar died, on 8 July 975. Edgar had been a vigorous supporter of Benedictine monasticism, on occasion using armed force to support the expulsion of secular clerics from churches where the monastic reformers—Dunstan, Æthelwold, and Oswald—wished to introduce monks,<sup>21</sup> the implication being that the clerics’ benefices would be confiscated and reassigned to the communal treasury of the Benedictine house in question. Inevitably these strong-arm tactics created dissension, and it is hardly surprising that after Edgar’s death the Benedictine monks, who had been introduced by force, were expelled, probably by force as well. The expulsions—which in sum are referred to as the ‘anti-monastic reaction’—took place in Mercia, under the auspices of Ealdorman Ælfhere (who was no friend of the monks, as Byrhtferth makes clear: *VSO* iv. 12), and involved several monasteries which had been established or refounded by Bishop Oswald, including Evesham, Pershore, and

<sup>19</sup> Illustrated in Bishop, *English Caroline Minuscule*, p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Æthelwold as scholar and teacher’, pp. 92–3 = *ALL* ii. 186–7.

<sup>21</sup> As at the Old Minster, Winchester, on 19 Feb. 964, as reported by Wulfstan of Winchester, *Vita S. Æthelwoldi*, cc. 17–18 (ed. Lapidge and Winterbottom, pp. 30–2).

Winchcombe (but not St Mary's in Worcester itself, which was under the close protection of Oswald). Ramsey was not directly affected, inasmuch as it lay in the immediate sphere of influence of Ealdorman Æthelwine, an outspoken protector of the monks; but at Peterborough, only ten miles north-west of Ramsey, a lay magnate attempted to confiscate lands (which had presumably been transferred to the ownership of the monks when Peterborough was refounded by Bishop Æthelwold *c.*970), as Byrhtferth relates (*VSO* iv. 14). In any case, although Ramsey was itself in no danger of being suppressed, the expulsions of monks from monasteries in Mercia had a significant impact on life at Ramsey, inasmuch as the monks expelled from Winchcombe were rehoused at Ramsey, presumably on the orders of Oswald, as we learn from the Ramsey *Liber benefactorum*.<sup>22</sup> With the two communities living under one roof, the number of monks at Ramsey exceeded forty.<sup>23</sup> Immediately after the expulsion Germanus, the abbot of Winchcombe, went to Fleury; but after three years (hence in 978) he was summoned by Oswald to rejoin his community at Ramsey, where he remained until the death of Ealdorman Æthelwine in 992.<sup>24</sup> One can easily imagine the tensions which such a situation provoked: the original Ramsey monks had no abbot (their titular abbot, Oswald, lived far away at either Worcester or York), and they owed obedience to their prior, Eadnoth *Senior*; the transplanted Winchcombe monks, on the other hand, owed obedience after 978 to their abbot, Germanus. The situation was kept under control as long as Ealdorman Æthelwine—who was a loyal supporter of Germanus, and whom Germanus served as a sort of personal chaplain—was alive and near at hand (at Upwood), but as soon as he died, a new home had to be found for Germanus, as Byrhtferth reports (*VSO* v. 14).<sup>25</sup> The tensions between the communities form the background to Byrhtferth's life as a monk at Ramsey.

As we have seen, Oswald as a young man had spent some time during the 950s at Fleury, where he learned monastic discipline according to the Benedictine Rule. Germanus, too, at Oswald's insistence, had studied at Fleury (*VSO* iii. 7) before he was summoned back to England to become abbot of Winchcombe in

<sup>22</sup> *Chron. Rames.*, p. 73.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*: 'sociatque duo greges quadragenarii numeri unum compleverunt'.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*: 'exacto deinceps triennio, misso Floriacum ocius nuncio, beatus Oswaldus praedictum Germanum inde Ramesiam advocavit, ubi usque ad decessum Aldermanni . . . demoratus est'.

<sup>25</sup> See Lapidge, 'Abbot Germanus', pp. 119–26 = *ALL* ii. 407–14.

966 (iv. 4); after the suppression of Winchcombe in 975, Germanus returned to Fleury for another three years, as we have seen. Fleury at this time was one of the pre-eminent centres of learning in Europe;<sup>26</sup> certainly it housed what at the time was probably the largest library in Europe.<sup>27</sup> Insofar as Ramsey was modelled on Fleury—like Fleury it was dedicated to St Benedict, uniquely among Anglo-Saxon monasteries at that time—it is reasonable to assume that care will have been taken from the outset to establish Ramsey as a centre of learning as well. The creation of a library sufficiently large to sustain a programme of studies, however, takes both wealth and time. What gave a huge impetus to the creation of Ramsey's library and school was the arrival there, in 985, of Abbo of Fleury, one of the most learned men in the Europe of his time.<sup>28</sup> Abbo's learning embraced all subjects of the trivium and quadrivium. At an early stage of his career he had studied together with Gerbert of Aurillac (later Pope Sylvester II) under the direction of the learned scholar Gerannus at Rheims, which at the time was in the vanguard of European learning in its emphasis on the scientific disciplines of the quadrivium (geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, music). Abbo's writings—especially those on arithmetic and computus,<sup>29</sup> and on astronomy<sup>30</sup>—attest to his expertise in the quadrivium, but he was also a pioneer in the study of logic,<sup>31</sup> and, as we shall see, was fully conversant with subjects of the trivium (grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric). Given his extraordinary learning, Abbo was—like his colleague Gerbert—clearly destined for high office, but his hopes for election to the vacant abbacy of Fleury in 985 were thwarted by royal intervention, which secured instead the

<sup>26</sup> On Fleury, see H. Leclercq, 'Fleury-sur-Loire', *DACL* v/2 (1923), 1709–60; J. Laporte, 'Fleury', *DHGE* xvii (1969), 441–76; *LMA* iv (1987), 547–9; *BEASE*, pp. 187–8; as well as Bautier, 'Le monastère et les églises de Fleury', and the essays collected by Louis, *Études ligériennes*.

<sup>27</sup> See *DACL* v/2. 1743–60; Vidier, *L'Historiographie à Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire*, pp. 27–70; Grémont and Hourlier, 'La plus ancienne bibliothèque de Fleury'; and esp. Mostert, *The Library of Fleury*, who lists over 1,500 surviving manuscripts which belonged to the medieval library of Fleury.

<sup>28</sup> Most of what is known of Abbo's life derives from the *Vita S. Abbonis* [*BHL* 3] by Aimoin of Fleury, in *PL* cxxxix. 387–414. There is no entirely satisfactory modern monograph on Abbo, but see Riché, *Abbon de Fleury*.

<sup>29</sup> Abbo's technical expertise in arithmetic is illustrated in his *Commentary on the Calculus of Victorius of Aquitaine*, ed. Peden, esp. pp. xvii–xxxvi. For his knowledge of computus, see *Byrhtferth's Enchiridion*, ed. Baker and Lapidge, pp. xlii–xlv.

<sup>30</sup> See Thomson, 'Two astronomical tractates of Abbo of Fleury', and id., 'Further astronomical material of Abbo of Fleury'.

<sup>31</sup> See *Abbo von Fleury: De syllogismis hypotheticis*, ed. Schupp (whose edition wholly replaces the earlier edition of Van de Vyver (1966)).

election of one Oylbold.<sup>32</sup> At this point, no doubt wishing to distance himself from these unhappy circumstances, Abbo gratefully accepted the invitation of Archbishops Dunstan and Oswald to teach at Ramsey.<sup>33</sup> Abbo had presumably known Oswald while he was at Fleury during the 950s, and, in more recent times (during the years 975–8), Germanus as well. The fact that Germanus was then resident at Ramsey may have mitigated Abbo's anxieties about travelling to a strange land. In the event, Abbo spent two years at Ramsey, from 985 to 987, before returning to Fleury, where—Oylbold having died in the meantime—in 988 he was duly elected abbot.

Abbo made an enduring contribution to the intellectual life not only at Ramsey, but in England at large, by bringing with him a number of the books needed to sustain his teaching programme at Ramsey. Although only a very few of these books survive, their presence at Ramsey is reflected in the learning of Abbo's pupil Byrhtferth. In his various writings, Byrhtferth quotes from over 100 classical and patristic writings, and if all these were available to him at Ramsey, the new foundation had apparently amassed one of the largest libraries in England within half a century of its foundation.<sup>34</sup> It is unlikely that all these books were brought to Ramsey by Abbo, but some undoubtedly were, as in cases where Byrhtferth shows first-hand knowledge of either computistical writings, such as the treatise *De computo ecclesiastico* of Helperic of Auxerre;<sup>35</sup> or of astronomical writings such as Hyginus, *De astronomia*,<sup>36</sup> the anonymous *Liber*

<sup>32</sup> See Mostert, 'Le séjour d'Abbon de Fleury à Ramsey'.

<sup>33</sup> At one point in his *Quaestiones grammaticales* (on which see below), Abbo, wishing to illustrate the use of the future active participle, composed the following sentence: 'uisitaturus fratres Anglicos, maxime Osualdum archiepiscopum, non horruī maris periculum' (c. 42; ed. Guerreau-Jalabert, p. 263). This is the only point in the work where Abbo uses a personal example. Abbo's *Passio S. Eadmundi* (see below) is dedicated to Archbishop Dunstan, and in the preface he mentions that on one occasion he visited Dunstan—in Canterbury, presumably—before returning to Ramsey: 'postquam a te . . . digressus sum cum multa alacritate cordis et ad monasterium [scil. Ramsey] quod nostri festinus rediī' (*Three Lives*, ed. Winterbottom, p. 67). Abbo also composed two acrostic poems in honour of Dunstan, which are quoted *in extenso* by Byrhtferth, *VSO* v. 8.

<sup>34</sup> See Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, pp. 266–74.

<sup>35</sup> Byrhtferth refers explicitly to Helperic in the *Epilogus* to his *Computus* (*Byrhtferth's Enchiridion*, ed. Baker and Lapidge, p. 379). The actual manuscript of Helperic brought to England by Abbo may survive as Paris, BNF, lat. 7299 (see below, n. 39). In any case a number of 12th-c. English copies of this work have in c. 23 calculations based on an *annus praesens* of AD 978, and it has been demonstrated that these copies derive from a redaction of the work made in that year by Abbo himself: McGurk, 'Computus Helperici'.

<sup>36</sup> Byrhtferth draws on Hyginus in *VSO Prol.* This treatise of Hyginus is preserved in London, BL, Harley 2506 [Gneuss 428.4], an astronomical compilation written probably at

*Nemroth*,<sup>37</sup> and various unidentified astronomical works,<sup>38</sup> or of the *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis* of Macrobius.<sup>39</sup> No doubt more such books remain to be detected. The essential point is that Ramsey's library grew quickly, and that Abbo made an important contribution to its growth.

Although Abbo referred to the two years which he spent at Ramsey as an 'exile',<sup>40</sup> the misery of the exile was mitigated by the warm hospitality of the Ramsey monks.<sup>41</sup> Abbo evidently devoted much of his energy to teaching, and his success is well reflected in the range of disciplines and books which Byrhtferth, his devoted pupil, was able to master. But Abbo also found time at Ramsey to compose several Latin works. These include the *Quaestiones grammaticales*,<sup>42</sup> a detailed

Fleury in the late 10th c. but containing drawings by an Anglo-Saxon illustrator and various annotations in Anglo-Caroline minuscule; it also contains two short astronomical treatises by Abbo (ed. Thomson, 'Two astronomical tractates'), and the two acrostic poems which flank Hyginus' treatise—one as prologue, one as epilogue—were probably composed by Abbo as well (Lapidge and Baker, 'More acrostic verse by Abbo of Fleury', pp. 24–7). This much suggests that Harley 2506 was a manuscript copied for Abbo's use at Fleury and subsequently taken by him to England: see below, p. 4 n. 15.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in *VSE Epil.* (below, p. 207 with n. 10).

<sup>38</sup> See *VSO* iii. 13 (below, p. 80 with n. 132).

<sup>39</sup> Byrhtferth quotes from this work both in his *Enchiridion* i. 1 and in *VSO Prol.* (see below, p. 2), and includes extensive excerpts from it in his *Glossae in Bedam* (these are listed Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, p. 272). The very manuscript brought from Fleury to Ramsey by Abbo and used there by Byrhtferth appears to survive as Paris, BNF, lat. 7299, a composite manuscript consisting of three parts, of which parts II (fos. 12bis–27, containing *computistica* including Helperic, *De computo ecclesiastico*, with the *annus praesens* of AD 978 given in c. 23: see above, n. 35) and III (fos. 28–71, containing Macrobius) are written in the distinctive Caroline minuscule of Fleury and date from the late 10th c. To these two parts was prefixed a liturgical kalendar (fos. 1–12), which, to judge from its script, was written in England in the late 10th c., and from its commemorations—notably of St Benedict and St Kenelm—was written at Ramsey (see Lapidge, 'Abbot Germanus', pp. 107–8 = *ALL* ii. 395–6). The implication is that parts II and III were brought to Ramsey by Abbo in 985 and, after the addition of part I, were taken back with him to Fleury in 987. It remains to be established whether a copy was made of the Macrobius while the manuscript was at Ramsey (only a handful of the 230 surviving manuscripts have ever been fully collated), but the extensive excerpts in Byrhtferth's *Glossae in Bedam* apparently derive from this manuscript. And note that Byrhtferth is the only pre-Conquest Anglo-Latin author to show knowledge of the *Comm. in Somnium Scipionis* (see Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, p. 320).

<sup>40</sup> *Quaestiones grammaticales*, c. 3: 'ad id deueni exilii' (ed. Guerreau-Jalabert, p. 211); cf. c. 2, 'infortunium oblate peregrinationis' (ibid. p. 209).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. c. 3: 'leuior fit calamitatis miseria quam tolero, quando quidem beniuolentiam eorum cum quibus habito ad id me compellit ut non solum pro posse uelim fraternis necessitatibus succurrere, sed etiam ultra uires uelle' (ed. Guerreau-Jalabert, p. 211).

<sup>42</sup> *Abbon de Fleury: Questions grammaticales*, ed. Guerreau-Jalabert, pp. 207–75. That the *Quaestiones grammaticales* were composed at Ramsey, hence 985 × 987, is clear from Abbo's use of present tenses: 'miseria quam tolero', 'eorum cum quibus habito', 'quibusdam studiorum occupationibus detineor' (ibid. p. 211).

treatment of matters fundamental to metrical composition, such as syllable length (cc. 5–13), the placing of the accent in Latin words (cc. 14–19), scansion of reduplicated participles (cc. 30–2), of perfect subjunctives (c. 33), and of Greek words (cc. 34–7), as well as various ancillary matters such as arithmology (c. 48) which have their reflex in Byrhtferth's writings; the *Passio S. Eadmundi* [BHL 2392], an account of the murder of Edmund, king of East Anglia, by the Vikings in 869;<sup>43</sup> and three poems, one on the delights of Ramsey (inc. 'O Ramesiga cohors': *ICL* 11013), which is quoted by Byrhtferth in *VSO* iii. 18, and two acrostic poems dedicated to Archbishop Dunstan (inc. 'Summe sacer te summa salus': *ICL* 15822, and 'O presul Dunstane probus': *ICL* 11987), quoted in *VSO* v. 8.

Abbo's presence at Ramsey for two years immediately put the new foundation on the intellectual map of Anglo-Saxon England. His visit was perhaps the most significant event in Ramsey's early history. The scholarly tradition which he established was continued by Byrhtferth, who at some point was appointed *magister scholae*,<sup>44</sup> and then by students taught by Byrhtferth, such as Oswald 'the Younger'.<sup>45</sup>

We may now return to our chronological survey of Ramsey's early years. One event which was deemed worthy of record was the fact that, at some time during the 980s, the western tower of the church developed a worrying crack that stretched from top to bottom and seemed to threaten the imminent collapse of the entire edifice.<sup>46</sup> It was clear that major reconstruction was necessary, and that such an undertaking would be very costly. Accordingly Germanus and Eadnoth *Senior* were deputed to travel to Ealdorman Æthelwine and to explain the seriousness of the situation to him. Æthelwine travelled at once to Ramsey to inspect the crack for himself, consulted with some masons, and—although the *Liber benefactorum* does not say so explicitly—undertook to finance the rebuilding. The tower was

<sup>43</sup> *Three Lives*, ed. Winterbottom, pp. 67–87; for discussion, see Gransden, 'Abbo of Fleury's *Passio sancti Eadmundi*'.

<sup>44</sup> The title is that used in Benedictine customaries such as the *Consuetudines Floriacenses antiquiores* (see below, p. 66 n. 64), although Byrhtferth never uses it of himself. Byrhtferth's teaching role at Ramsey is clear from many passages of his *Enchiridion*: i. 2. 323–5, i. 3. 3–11, 4. 3–15, ii. 1. 146–50, 392–4, 419–23 *et passim* (ed. Baker and Lapidge, pp. 42, 46, 52, 64, 82, 86 *et passim*).

<sup>45</sup> See *BEASE*, pp. 348–9.

<sup>46</sup> *Chron. Rames.*, pp. 85–9: 'una igitur dierum, quum mane surrexissent, ecce aspicientibus apparuit in pariete turris eminentioris fissura, dehiscens a summo usque deorsum, quae toti reliquae adhaerenti ei totius ecclesiae moli ruinae magnae casum munitari videbatur'.

taken down stone by stone and rebuilt, using more adhesive cement (*caemento tenaciori*) this time. (The building works were supervised by Eadnoth *Junior*, the future abbot of Ramsey, who makes his first appearance in the historical record at this point.) When complete, the new tower was fitted with a massive organ. The rebuilt tower was consecrated in a special service held at Ramsey in 991, which was attended not only by Archbishop Oswald, but also by Æscwig, now the bishop of Dorchester, by lay magnates from the surrounding shires (Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire, Kesteven, and even Hampshire), and also by four local abbots: Byrhtnoth of Ely, Ælfric of St Albans, Ealdwulf of Peterborough, and Godemann of Thorney. Clearly the ceremony was a memorable one for many reasons, and not least because, as Byrhtferth remarks, it was the last time that Oswald visited Ramsey (*VSO* v. 13).

However, the external events which most affected the life of the monastery were the deaths of Oswald on 29 Feb. 992, and then, two months later, that of Ealdorman Æthelwine on 24 April. Since the foundation of Ramsey Oswald had retained control of the abbey, acting as its titular abbot, and appointing Eadnoth *Senior* as prior to oversee the day-to-day administration. By 992 Eadnoth *Senior* had himself reached an advanced age, so that he was no longer eligible to become abbot; with Oswald's death the community elected another man named Eadnoth, and known in Ramsey sources as Eadnoth *Junior*, to become in effect their first regular abbot (*VSO* v. 12). As abbot of Ramsey Eadnoth *Junior* established daughter cells at St Ives and Chatteris,<sup>47</sup> and on 24 April 1002—a decade to the day of Æthelwine's death—superintended the translation of the remains of St Ivo to Ramsey.<sup>48</sup> Eadnoth held the post of abbot until he was elevated to the bishopric of Dorchester (in whose diocese Ramsey lay), possibly in 1009.<sup>49</sup> On his elevation to the bishopric, Eadnoth was succeeded as abbot by Wulfsige. The death of Æthelwine deprived Ramsey of its most generous benefactor, but it is clear that his sons (Leofwine, Eadwine, and Æthelweard) had been groomed to take over the role which their father had played.<sup>50</sup> Before his death Æthelwine had made provision for Germanus to

<sup>47</sup> See Hart, 'Eadnoth, first abbot of Ramsey', and id., *ECNENM*, p. 316.

<sup>48</sup> *Chron. Rames.*, p. 115.

<sup>49</sup> The date of Eadnoth's elevation is given as 1006 in *Heads*, p. 61, and as 1007 × 1009 in *HBC*, p. 215.

<sup>50</sup> See *VSO* v. 14, as well as *Chron. Rames.*, pp. 77–8, 82, 103, 117–18, and 143.

leave Ramsey and to take charge of a monastery at Cholsey, thereby resolving an anomalous situation which had obtained at Ramsey since 978.

It remains to mention an event which had a disastrous effect on the community of Ramsey, and nearly led to its suppression. In the turmoil which followed the deaths of the Danish king Swein Forkbeard (who in 1013 had been declared king of England) in 1014, and of Æthelred 'the Unready' (who had been dispossessed of his kingdom by Swein) in 1016, the claim to the English crown was advanced by Swein's son Cnut, but contested by Æthelred's son Edmund, known as 'Ironside' for his military prowess.<sup>51</sup> In the summer of 1015 Cnut invaded England and blockaded London, and gained thereby the submission of Wessex; but he was unable to conquer London or to gain control over the rest of England, because of the successful—but not ever decisive—campaign waged against him by Edmund Ironside. As he seemed slowly to be gaining the upper hand, Edmund and his army confronted Cnut's army at Ashingdon (Essex) on 18 October 1016, in what Sir Frank Stenton described as 'one of the many battles which in the Dark Ages unexpectedly reversed the whole drift of the campaign'.<sup>52</sup> Because of desertions from the English army, the battle ended in an overwhelming English defeat. Those killed among the English army included Eadnoth (*Iunior*), then bishop of Dorchester and formerly abbot of Ramsey; Wulfsig, the current abbot of Ramsey; and Æthelweard, the son of Ealdorman Æthelwine.<sup>53</sup> (It was not unusual at this time—even though contrary to canon law—for ecclesiastics to arm themselves and take part in battle.<sup>54</sup>) The participation of these men will have marked out Ramsey as a stronghold of opposition to Cnut, with the result that, once he had secured the entire kingdom, he determined to suppress the abbey and banish its monks.<sup>55</sup> Although Cnut was persuaded by Ælfsige, abbot of Peterborough,

<sup>51</sup> There is a lucid account of these events in Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 386–93, based principally on the C-text of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (trans. Whitelock, pp. 94–7).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* p. 392.

<sup>53</sup> See *ASC s.a. 1016* (trans. Whitelock, p. 96), and also *Chron. Rames.*, pp. 117–18.

<sup>54</sup> On the background of this practice in late antique Gaul, and its full implementation in Carolingian times, see Prinz, *Klerus und Krieg im früheren Mittelalter*, and (more briefly, in English) idem, 'King, clergy and war'.

<sup>55</sup> See *The Chronicle of Hugh Candidus*, ed. Mellows, p. 50: 'in diebus quoque illius, monachi Ramesienses pro quadam causa nimis accusati sunt apud regem ita ut coram eo monasterium destruendum, et monachos exterminandos adiudicatum sit. Rex autem iratus nimium, iussit impleri iudicium predictum'.

to relinquish this harsh plan, he attempted to establish control of Ramsey by installing a German abbot of his own choice, one Wythmann (Abbot Wulfsize having been killed at Ashingdon).<sup>56</sup> But the Ramsey monks—no doubt mindful that Ealdorman Æthelwine had granted them freedom to appoint their own abbot, as Byrhtferth reports (*VSO* v. 12)—opposed the abbacy of Wythmann (1016–20) so vigorously that within a few years he was obliged to resign, taking himself first on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and then, on returning to England, to an island retreat at *Northeya* [unidentified], said to lie within an arrow's shot of Ramsey.<sup>57</sup> Clearly the years 1016–20 were a stressful time for the monks of Ramsey.

How is Byrhtferth's career to be situated within the framework of Ramsey's early history? Byrhtferth himself provides no personal details in his writings. If we were to assume—and it can only be an assumption—that, when Abbo came to Ramsey in the years 985–7, he was a relatively young man, aged (let us say) about 20, he will have been born in the 960s. Perhaps he was an oblate who was delivered to Ramsey (aged 7), perhaps in the 970s. (According to this scenario he is too young to have been one of the oblates mentioned in *VSO* iii. 8 who were at Westbury soon after its foundation in 961.) In any event the arrival of Abbo provided a focus for young Byrhtferth's intellectual energies, and we may imagine that, under Abbo's guidance (and perhaps using materials supplied by Abbo), he began assembling and studying the vast compendium of texts of computational and astronomical interest which are represented in his *Glossae in Bedam*. It was also during the early 990s that he put together the collection of formulas, tables, and diagrams which make up his *Computus* (the outer dates are 988 × 996). Byrhtferth's *Epilogus* or 'preface' to his *Computus* contains explicit acknowledgement of the debt he owed to Abbo: 'the scholar Abbo, an alumnus of St Benedict, through whose kindness I received my understanding of this subject [the computus] as well as my knowledge of other things'.<sup>58</sup> Following Æthelwine's translation of the remains of the martyred Kentish princes Æthelberht and Æthelred from Wakering (Essex) to Ramsey c.991,<sup>59</sup> Byrhtferth composed the *Passio SS. Æthelberhti et*

<sup>56</sup> See *Heads*, p. 61, and *Chron. Rames.* p. 121.

<sup>57</sup> *Chron. Rames.*, pp. 125, 160.

<sup>58</sup> *Byrhtferth's Enchiridion*, ed. Baker and Lapidge, p. 379: 'constant Abbonis sophiste dicta, alumpni Benedicti patris, per cuius beniuolentiam percepimus huius rei intelligentiam necnon aliarum rerum peritiam'.

<sup>59</sup> *Chron. Rames.*, p. 55.

*Æthelredi* [BHL 2643], which forms the first part of his *Historia regum*.<sup>60</sup> Later in the decade he composed the *Vita S. Oswaldi* (997 × 1002). Possibly by this time he had been ordained a priest (at the canonical age of 30, hence in the 990s?),<sup>61</sup> and had been appointed *magister scholae* at Ramsey.<sup>62</sup> His duties in this post clearly involved instructing local clerics and priests as well as monks of Ramsey in the complexities of computus. But these materials are barely comprehensible without detailed explanation, and during the years 1010 × 1012 he composed his *Enchiridion*, a handbook in Latin and English designed as an accessible guide to the contents of the *Computus*. And possibly Byrhtferth would have finished his life teaching computus and following the perpetual round of Offices and prayers which are the vocation of a Benedictine monk, had not the disastrous events of 1016 befallen Ramsey. As we shall see, Byrhtferth's *Vita S. Ecgwini* was composed some years after the millennium at the request of the monks not of Ramsey but of Evesham. It is possible (but unprovable) that Byrhtferth had repaired to Evesham during the troubled years 1016–20 in order to avoid the disaster which seemed likely to strike Ramsey. During those years the abbot of Evesham was one Ælfweard (c.1014–44),<sup>63</sup> who was a relative of King Cnut and had formerly been a monk of Ramsey. If any place in Cnut's kingdom was safe from reprisals, it was presumably Evesham, and Byrhtferth may have used his former association with Ælfweard to obtain hospitality there. On this hypothesis Byrhtferth, who by then enjoyed some reputation as a hagiographer and man of letters, undertook to compose a Life of Ecgwine, the founder of Evesham, in recompense for the hospitality he received there. But whether he remained at Evesham, and where and when he died, is simply unknown.

<sup>60</sup> *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, ed. Arnold, ii. 1–8.

<sup>61</sup> See *Byrhtferth's Enchiridion*, ed. Baker and Lapidge, p. 150, where Byrhtferth describes himself as *Byrhtferð mæssepreost*.

<sup>62</sup> One wonders whether Byrhtferth was the unnamed master mentioned in the *Liber benefactorum* who, on discovering that four Ramsey schoolboys (including Oswald 'the Younger' and Æthelric, future bishop of Dorchester) had cracked a bell, flew into a rage and threatened them with a terrible beating, though they were subsequently pardoned by Abbot Eadnoth (*Chron. Rames.*, p. 113).

<sup>63</sup> *Heads*, p. 47, based on both *Chron. Rames.*, p. 148, and *Chron. Evesham* (ed. Macray, p. 83; Thomas of Marlborough, *History of the Abbey of Evesham*, ed. Sayers and Watkiss, p. 150): 'Æluuardus abbas . . . Bradewellam pro sex marcis auri redemit a consanguineo suo rege Cnutone'. It has been suggested that Ælfweard was a kinsman of Ælfifu of Northampton: Williams, "'Cockles amongst the wheat'", p. 8.

## II. THE WRITINGS OF BYRHTFERTH

Byrhtferth of Ramsey was one of the most prolific authors, in Latin and English, of the late Anglo-Saxon period. The corpus of writings which are either transmitted under his name, or can with confidence be ascribed to him, embraces computus, hagiography, and history (and, probably, poetry as well). It is appropriate to describe these writings, beginning with those which carry his name.

I. *Computus*

Byrhtferth's *Enchiridion* (see below, no. 2) was composed as an explanatory commentary on a computus—by which is meant a collection of formulae, tables, and diagrams, not for the most part in connected prose, which are used in calculating the date of Easter—which Byrhtferth had himself compiled. Although no manuscript of Byrhtferth's *Computus* survives that dates from his lifetime—indeed there is no contemporary manuscript of any of his writings—three twelfth-century English manuscripts preserve a *computus* which is closely similar, if not identical, to that which underlies the *Enchiridion*. (It is the nature of computistical manuscripts that they invite interpolation and revision in accordance with each scribe's sense of what is essential; with the result that, like liturgical manuscripts, no two computistical manuscripts are ever wholly identical.) The three manuscripts in question are: Oxford, St John's College 17, written at Thorney by two scribes in the years 1110–11; London, BL, Cotton Tiberius C. i, fos. 2–17 + Harley 3667, written at Peterborough c.1120; and London, BL, Cotton Tiberius E. iv, written at Winchcombe in the latter part of the twelfth century.<sup>64</sup> (It will be noted that each of these monasteries either had direct contact with Ramsey, as in the case of Winchcombe, or lay in its immediate vicinity, as do Thorney and Peterborough.) From these three twelfth-century witnesses it is possible to reconstruct the contents of Byrhtferth's *Computus*.<sup>65</sup> It is clear in the first instance that Byrhtferth's *Computus* was modelled on a similar work compiled by Abbo, and presumably left behind at Ramsey when Abbo returned to Fleury in 987. From various annotations and calculations involving the Golden Number

<sup>64</sup> The computistical contents of the three manuscripts are listed by Baker and Lapidge in *Byrhtferth's Enchiridion*, pp. lii–lv, lv–lvii, and lvii–lviii respectively.

<sup>65</sup> A reconstruction, with detailed listing of contents, is printed by Baker and Lapidge, *ibid.* pp. 373–427. Further diagrams which pertain to the work were identified by Baker, 'More diagrams by Byrhtferth of Ramsey'.

and concurrents, and occurrences of the *bissexus lunae* (which occur in leap years), it can be determined that Byrhtferth's *Computus* was compiled during the years 988–96.<sup>66</sup>

The copy of Byrhtferth's *Computus* in Oxford, St John's 17 is prefaced by a complex 'diagram of the physical and physiological fours', which bears the rubric: 'hanc figuram edidit Bryhtferð monachus Ramesiensis cenobii de concordia mensium atque elementorum' (fo. 7<sup>v</sup>).<sup>67</sup> Byrhtferth's name is also encoded in some pictograms and ogams placed at the centre of this diagram.<sup>68</sup> The diagram is then followed in this manuscript by a 'preface' or (what Byrhtferth calls) *Epilogus*,<sup>69</sup> in which Byrhtferth's authorship is explicitly stated once again: 'Proemium Brihtferthi Ramesiensis cenobii monachi super Bedam de temporibus' (fo. 12<sup>v</sup>).<sup>70</sup> The *Epilogus* is intended not simply as the preface to Byrhtferth's own *Computus*, which follows on fos. 13<sup>v</sup>–41<sup>r</sup>, but also to the collection of scientific writings which follow it in both St John's 17 and in Cotton Tiberius E. iv: Bede, *De temporibus* [CPL 2318], *De natura rerum* [CPL 1343], and *De temporum ratione* [CPL 2320]; Heleric of Auxerre, *De computo ecclesiastico*; and two computistical letters of Dionysius Exiguus [CPL 2284, 2286]. Significantly, two of these works—Bede's *De natura rerum* and *De temporum ratione*—supplied the framework for the extensive *collectaneum* of quotations from cosmological, computistical, and exegetical writings which make up Byrhtferth's *Glossae in Bedam* (see below, no. 3).

## 2. *Enchiridion*

As stated above, Byrhtferth's *Enchiridion* was devised as an explanatory commentary, partly in English (for the benefit of country priests who did not know Latin well), and partly in Latin (for monks who did), on Byrhtferth's own *Computus* (above, no. 1). Byrhtferth names himself six times in the *Enchiridion*,<sup>71</sup> and refers explicitly to his schooling at Ramsey.<sup>72</sup> The *Enchiridion* was evidently composed later than the *Computus* (988 × 996), and later than the murder of Abbo at

<sup>66</sup> *Byrhtferth's Enchiridion*, ed. Baker and Lapidge, p. lix.

<sup>67</sup> Printed *ibid.* p. 374; a less complex version of the same diagram was also copied into the *Enchiridion* i. 1 (ed. Baker and Lapidge, *ibid.* pp. 14–15).

<sup>68</sup> See Sims-Williams, 'Byrhtferth's ogam signature', esp. pp. 284–5.

<sup>69</sup> Byrhtferth uses the same (misunderstood) Graecism to describe the preface of his *Vita S. Ecgwini: VSE Epil.* (below, p. 206 with n. 1).

<sup>70</sup> *Byrhtferth's Enchiridion*, ed. Baker and Lapidge, p. 375.

<sup>71</sup> *Enchiridion*, ii. 1. 438, 488; iii. 2. 2, 111, 198–9; and iii. 3. 95; ed. Baker and Lapidge, pp. 88, 92, 136, 142, 150, and 166 respectively.

<sup>72</sup> *Enchiridion*, i. 1. 157–8; ed. Baker and Lapidge, p. 16.

La Réole (in Aquitaine) on 13 November 1004, since Abbo is described at one point as being *digne memorie*.<sup>73</sup> On the other hand, Bishop Eadnoth of Dorchester, who was formerly abbot of Ramsey (known there as Eadnoth *Junior*), and who was killed with Edmund Ironside's army at Ashingdon (Essex) on 18 October 1016, is described at one point as living.<sup>74</sup> It is possible to narrow these outer dating limits (1004 × 1016) by attention to various computistical calculations which Byrhtferth includes in the course of the work: at one point he reports that he was writing on 5 Feb. and that 1 Feb. in that year was a Thursday (the concurrent was therefore 7: hence one of three years, 1005, 1011, or 1016),<sup>75</sup> and elsewhere, that the year in which he was writing had an epact of 14.<sup>76</sup> During the period 1004–16, only 1011 had an epact of 14. In other words, Byrhtferth was at work composing his *Enchiridion* in February 1011.

The *Enchiridion* is divided into four parts. Of these, parts i–ii, and the beginning of iii (to the end of iii. 2) are concerned with the principles of computus. Part iii. 3, however, turns to grammatical matters, and Byrhtferth describes the various kinds of poetry (basing himself on Bede, *De arte metrica*), then the various figures of speech (drawn from Bede, *De schematibus et tropis*), then accents and diacritical marks (from Isidore, *Etymologiae*), and finally, weights and measures (drawn principally from Bede, *De temporum ratione*). Part iv of the *Enchiridion* constitutes in effect a separate treatise concerned with arithmology, that is to say, the symbolic significance of numbers. In this part, Byrhtferth compiled a sort of dictionary of numbers, from 1 through to 20, then 30, 60, and 100, and finally 1,000. It is not clear that he was following a single patristic model for the structure of part iv (there is, for example, a similar work by Isidore, *Liber numerorum* [CPL 1193], but Byrhtferth seems not to have known it); rather, he draws from a wide range of reading in patristic sources in providing explanations of the significance of individual numbers. These sources include: Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei* and *De trinitate*; Bede, *De temporum ratione*; Gregory, *Homiliae .xl. in Euangelia* and *Moralia in Iob*; Haymo of Auxerre, *Homiliae de tempore*; and Jerome, *Commentarius in Matthaicum*. The concern with

<sup>73</sup> *Enchiridion*, iv. 1. 404; ed. Baker and Lapidge, p. 228.

<sup>74</sup> *Enchiridion*, iii. 2. 198: 'Byrhtferð mæssepreost stent on þam twelftan stede æfter þam biscope Eadnoðe' (ed. Baker and Lapidge, p. 150).

<sup>75</sup> *Enchiridion*, i. 2. 234–6; ed. Baker and Lapidge, p. 38.

<sup>76</sup> *Enchiridion*, iii. 2. 111–12: 'nu togeare, þa Brihtferð writere þis awrat, synd feowertyne epactas' (ed. Baker and Lapidge, p. 142).

arithmology which inspired the compilation of part iv is found throughout his Latin writings.

### 3. *Glossae in Bedam*

When Johann Herwagen (the younger) published his edition of the complete works of Bede at Basle in 1563, he included alongside his editions of Bede's scientific treatises *De natura rerum* and *De temporum ratione* three sets of explanatory glosses, drawn from earlier authorities. The most extensive set of such glosses, which Herwagen always positioned first, was the one which he attributed to *Bridfertus Ramesiensis*.<sup>77</sup> The name, and the subject matter of the glosses, point unambiguously to Byrhtferth of Ramsey as their author (or rather, compiler). Unfortunately, however, the manuscript which Herwagen used has not been preserved, and since no other manuscript of the *Glossae Bridferti* has ever come to light, various doubts have been raised about the attribution to Byrhtferth, notably by C. W. Jones, who in 1938 argued that, since some of the material in the *Glossae Bridferti* is also found in glossed manuscripts of Bede's two treatises written at Auxerre and Laon in the ninth century, the *Glossae Bridferti* must have been compiled there as well, and can have nothing to do with Byrhtferth of Ramsey.<sup>78</sup> In fact Jones's doubts were founded on a series of misapprehensions, and cannot be sustained.<sup>79</sup>

The *Glossae Bridferti* are not a commentary in the usual sense of the word (that is, with single *lemmata* from the text of Bede accompanied by brief *interpretamenta*, most often consisting of a synonym or periphrastic explanation of the *lemma*). Rather, they are a compendious *collectaneum* of extracts, often very lengthy ones, which were thought to shed light in some way on the content of single chapters of Bede's two treatises. The works which are most frequently laid under contribution are the following: Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei* and *De trinitate*; Gregory the Great, *Homiliae .xl. in*

<sup>77</sup> The *Glossae Bridferti Ramesiensis in Bedam* are edited in *Opera Bedae*, ed. Herwagen, i. 164–81 [on *De temporum ratione*, c. 1], i. 182–4 [on *De temporum ratione*, c. 4], ii. 1–49 [on *De natura rerum*, cc. 1–22, 25–7, 29–31, 36], ii. 49–173 [on *De temporum ratione*, cc. 2–3, 5–64]; the *Glossae Bridferti* printed by Herwagen are repr. *PL* xc. 186–254 [on *De natura rerum*, cc. 1–22, 25–7, 29–31, 36], 297–518 [on *De temporum ratione*, cc. 2–3, 5–64], 685–95 [on *De temporum ratione*, c. 1], 700–2 [on *De temporum ratione*, c. 4].

<sup>78</sup> Jones, 'The Byrhtferth glosses'.

<sup>79</sup> As was shown convincingly by Gorman, 'The glosses of Bede's *De temporum ratione* attributed to Byrhtferth of Ramsey'; and see now Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth of Ramsey and the *Glossae Bridferti in Bedam*'.

*Euangelia* and *Moralia in Iob*; Haymo of Auxerre, *Homiliae de tempore*; Isidore, *Etymologiae* and *De natura rerum*; and Jerome, *Commentarius in Matthaem*. In addition to these patristic writings, the compiler also quotes extensively from Macrobius, *Comm. in Somnium Scipionis*.

It will be noted that these patristic writings are precisely those which were used by Byrhtferth in part iv of his *Enchiridion* (listed above). As we have also seen, Byrhtferth was the one Anglo-Saxon author to show knowledge of Macrobius, *Comm. in Somnium Scipionis*, from which he quotes in his *Enchiridion* (as also in his *Vita S. Oswaldi*, as we shall see). It is also striking that the *Glossae Bridferti*, in their exposition of c. 1 of Bede's *De temporum ratione*, contain a sort of mini-dictionary of the arithmological significance of the numbers from 1 to 100, based principally on Augustine's *De ciuitate Dei* and Gregory's *Moralia in Iob*.<sup>80</sup> Very often the explanation of the significance of a number given in the *Glossae Bridferti* is repeated, sometimes verbatim, in part iv of Byrhtferth's *Enchiridion*, often with amplifications drawn from Bede's *De temporum ratione* and from Haymo's *Homiliae de tempore*. The similarities can most economically be explained by supposing that the mini-dictionary of arithmology contained in the *Glossae Bridferti* is a preliminary draft of the more substantial work on the same subject which forms part iv of the *Enchiridion*.

Clear links between the *Glossae Bridferti* and Byrhtferth (and Ramsey) are also established by textual evidence. For example, the Latin text of Bede's *De temporum ratione* as printed by Herwagen has its closest relative, among the many manuscripts collated by C. W. Jones, in BL, Cotton Tiberius E. iv:<sup>81</sup> that is to say, the aforementioned twelfth-century manuscript from Winchcombe which contains Bede's scientific treatises alongside Byrhtferth's own *Computus*. By the same token, the Latin text of Bede's *De temporibus* as printed by Herwagen has its closest relative, among the manuscripts collated by Jones, in Oxford, St John's College 17,<sup>82</sup> the aforementioned early twelfth-century manuscript from Thorney containing Bede's scientific treatises alongside Byrhtferth's *Computus* and *Epilogus*. Finally, the Latin text of Bede's *De natura rerum* as printed by Herwagen has its closest relative in a manuscript now in London, BL, Royal 13. A. XI, a twelfth-century manuscript thought by Jones to be 'a transcript of material brought to England with Abbo of Fleury'.<sup>83</sup> That is to say,

<sup>80</sup> *PL* xc. 693-5.

<sup>81</sup> Jones, 'The Byrhtferth glosses', p. 82.

<sup>82</sup> *Beda's Opera de Temporibus*, ed. Jones, p. 165.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* p. 153.

the Latin texts of Bede's scientific writings printed by Herwagen, to which were appended the *Glossae Bridfertii*, are all closely related to manuscripts associated with Abbo, Byrhtferth, and Ramsey.

In sum, the textual evidence suggests that Abbo of Fleury brought with him to Ramsey texts of various scientific writings—Bede's *De natura rerum*, *De temporibus*, and *De temporum ratione*, along with Helperic's *De computo ecclesiastico*—and that these formed the core of a computistical collection to which Byrhtferth subsequently prefixed his own *Computus*, and which, as we have seen, is preserved in three twelfth-century manuscripts: Oxford, St John's College, 17 and London, BL, Cotton Tiberius C. i and E. iv. Alongside two of these texts—Bede's *De natura rerum* and *De temporum ratione*—Byrhtferth assembled the florilegium of excerpts from earlier writers which was to be printed, perhaps from a twelfth-century English manuscript from Ramsey or its environs, by Herwagen as the *Glossae Bridfertii in Bedam*. Because the *Glossae Bridfertii* also include lengthy excerpts from Carolingian commentators on Bede's treatises, such as Martin of Laon and Heiric of Auxerre, it is reasonable to assume that these, too, were brought to Ramsey by Abbo, perhaps already attached to the texts of Bede they were designed to explicate. During Abbo's sojourn at Ramsey Byrhtferth also availed himself of the opportunity of copying out long passages of Macrobius, *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis* from the manuscript of Macrobius which Abbo had brought with him to Ramsey (Paris, BNF, lat. 7299) and which he took back with him to Fleury in 987.<sup>84</sup> We may assume that Byrhtferth's reading in cosmological and patristic sources continued after Abbo's departure, and that he continued to add relevant passages to his *Glossae Bridfertii* whenever he found them. How long the process continued is impossible to say, but it is perhaps significant that at one point in the materials assembled to illustrate c. 45 of Bede's *De temporum ratione* (on embolisms and 'common years'), the *Glossae* contain a reference to the *annus praesens* as being in the sixth or seventh year of the decennovenal (nineteen-year) cycle.<sup>85</sup> The

<sup>84</sup> Trial collation of some of the passages of Macrobius included in the *Glossae Bridfertii* indicates that the text quoted by Byrhtferth is indistinguishable from that in BNF, lat. 7299; but the matter is complicated by the fact that, out of some 230 surviving manuscripts of Macrobius' work, only five were thoroughly collated by the most recent editor of that text (J. Willis, in 1970). Without a fuller record of collation, it is impossible to evaluate the significance of individual variant readings.

<sup>85</sup> *PL* xc. 485: 'Verbi gratia, praesenti anno, qui est septimus circuli decennovenalis, finis erit embolismi in accensione lunae Aprilis, quoniam anno praeterito, id est sexto decennovenalis ab accensione lunae Aprilis initium sumpsit.'

sixth and seventh years of the decennovenal cycle relevant to Byrhtferth's scholarly activity are 993 and 994, implying that he was still at work on his *Glossae in Bedam* in those years.

Much work remains to be done on the *Glossae in Bedam*, particularly in identifying the sources on which Byrhtferth drew.<sup>86</sup> The subsequent step would be to collate all the passages identified against surviving manuscripts (or against full *apparatus critici*, where these are available), in the attempt to determine either the affiliations of the manuscripts, or perhaps even the very manuscripts themselves, which were used by Byrhtferth. Only then would a clear picture emerge of Byrhtferth's working methods, and the resources of the Ramsey library in which he worked.

These three works are transmitted in Byrhtferth's name, and leave no doubt about his authorship. Two of these writings—the *Epilogus* to his *Computus*, and the Latin sections of the *Enchiridion*—are composed in a highly distinctive, idiosyncratic even, Latin style. The remaining works to be discussed are attributed to Byrhtferth on the grounds that they share this distinctive style.

#### 4. *Vita S. Oswaldi*

The *Vita S. Oswaldi* first appeared in print in 1879. Since the sole manuscript which preserves it (our N) carries no indication of authorship, the work was necessarily considered anonymous by its first editor, James Raine; but Raine rightly deduced that the author 'must have been a monk of Ramsey',<sup>87</sup> and that the work was composed during the archbishopric of Ælfric (995 × 1005), who is mentioned as a living witness to the miracles performed at the shrine of Edward, king and martyr (*VSO* iv. 21). It fell to S. J. Crawford, then of the University of Southampton, who during the 1920s was preparing an edition of the *Enchiridion* for the series EETS, to recognize the similarities between the Latin style of the anonymous 'monk of Ramsey', who was active during the decade 995–1005, and

<sup>86</sup> A complete record of the sources which I have been able to identify thus far (using electronic databases) is found in *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, pp. 266–74; but the work of identification is impeded by the fact that a number of the sources in question—notably the glosses on Bede by Heiric of Auxerre (as preserved in Melk, Stiftsbibliothek, 412)—are as yet unprinted. For a full listing of the sources (including unprinted ones) used by Byrhtferth in one chapter of his *Glossae*—those for c. 5 of Bede's *De temporum ratione*—see Gorman, 'The glosses on Bede's *De temporum ratione*', pp. 226–31.

<sup>87</sup> *HCV* i, p. lxx; this much is clear from the narration of Oswald's final visit to Ramsey (*VSO* v. 13).

Byrhtferth, a monk of Ramsey who was at work on his *Enchiridion* only a few years later (1011). In an important article published in 1929 Crawford set out in impressive detail the verbal links between the *Vita S. Oswaldi* and the *Enchiridion*, beginning with the identical phrasing borrowed from Macrobius, *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis*, continuing through a list of some sixty-five indisputable verbal parallels, and concluding with a lengthy list (nearly ninety words) of the vocabulary, often unusual, shared by both works.<sup>88</sup> The quantity of evidence presented by Crawford is overwhelming, and does not need to be rehearsed here; suffice it to say that his case for identifying the anonymous monk of Ramsey with Byrhtferth is a very powerful one. So it seemed to Crawford's contemporaries, although one scholar—J. Armitage Robinson—injected a note of mild scepticism.<sup>89</sup> Later scholars pointed to inconsistencies in presentation (especially in the account of the so-called 'anti-monastic reaction') and to errors of fact (in the membership of Ealdorman Æthelwine's family, for example) in the *Vita S. Oswaldi*, and D. J. V. Fisher concluded in 1952 that the construction of the Life 'seems too clumsy to be the work of Byrhtferth';<sup>90</sup> he suggested that the *Vita S. Oswaldi* 'in its present form is based upon a *Life* written by Byrhtferth of Ramsey which has been interpolated by a later writer probably resident in one of the Mercian monasteries'.<sup>91</sup> But Fisher exaggerated the amount of inconsistency and error in the Life, as Eric John pointed out in 1966, and John went on to suggest—rightly, in my view—that the inconsistency and error is to be charged to the scribe of the unique manuscript.<sup>92</sup> One important point which Fisher did make, however, is that 'before this vexed problem of authorship is finally settled another work, the *Vita Ecgwini*, will have to be taken into account'.<sup>93</sup> With these various discussions in mind, I attempted

<sup>88</sup> Crawford, 'Byrhtferth of Ramsey and the anonymous Life of St Oswald', pp. 103–8.

<sup>89</sup> 'Byrhtferth and the Life of St Oswald'. Robinson argued that 'a judgement based on style must take account of other elements than vocabulary and phraseology' (p. 41), and pointed to the loose use in *VSO* of the relative pronoun *qui* (for which he could find no parallel in the *Enchiridion*), and the confusion of passive and active infinitives in *VSO* (which, again, he could not parallel in the *Enchiridion*); but in fact both these features are found throughout Byrhtferth's Latin, the *Enchiridion* included (see below, pp. lxii, lxxv). In any case Robinson concluded positively: 'If the reader will look at Mr Crawford's table of parallels, he will see how much there is to be set in the balance against these tentative objections. It is quite possible, as indeed it is to be hoped, that the decision will go in his favour. Be that as it may, he has earned our gratitude by calling fresh attention to a biography which deserves to be re-edited' (pp. 41–2).

<sup>90</sup> 'The anti-monastic reaction', p. 258.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* p. 259.

<sup>92</sup> *Orbis Britanniae*, pp. 290–1.

<sup>93</sup> 'The anti-monastic reaction', p. 259 n. 18.

in 1975 to reassess Crawford's arguments in favour of Byrhtferth's authorship of the *Vita S. Oswaldi*, while taking into account the evidence of the *Vita S. Ecgwini*.<sup>94</sup> It seemed to me then, as it seems to me now, that the evidence in favour of Byrhtferth's authorship of the two saints' Lives is overwhelming. It can be corroborated (if corroboration is needed) by the discussion of Byrhtferth's Latinity in the following section of the Introduction, and by the many notes (too numerous to list) accompanying the editions printed below, which draw attention to verbal parallels between all of Byrhtferth's writings.

As we have seen, the outer dating *termini* for the composition of the *Vita S. Oswaldi* are the dates of the archbishopric of Ælfric of Canterbury (995–1005). However, it is possible to narrow these outer limits. On the one hand, Byrhtferth at one point (*VSO* iii. 11) refers explicitly to the *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* by Wulfstan of Winchester; since this work was issued only after the translation of St Æthelwold on 10 September 996,<sup>95</sup> it is unlikely that a copy would have been available at Ramsey before the beginning of 997. On the other hand, the *Vita S. Oswaldi* concludes abruptly with the deaths of Oswald (29 February 992) and Ealdorman Æthelwine (24 April 992), and describes no event thereafter; accordingly, the fact that Byrhtferth makes no mention whatsoever of the translation of St Oswald's remains at Worcester on 15 April 1002 indicates fairly strongly that his *Vita S. Oswaldi* had been completed before the translation.<sup>96</sup> In other words, the outer dating limits for the composition of the *Vita S. Oswaldi* are 997 × 1002.

### 5. *Vita S. Ecgwini*

Immediately following the *Vita S. Oswaldi* in the only manuscript which preserves it (London, BL, Cotton Nero E. i, pt. 1) is the unique copy of a *Vita S. Ecgwini*, an account of an early eighth-century bishop of Worcester who was also the founder of the monastery of Evesham. Like its companion, the *Vita S. Ecgwini* carries no indication of authorship. From internal evidence it is clear that the Life of St Ecgwine was composed after the turn of the millennium, for the author describes himself at one point as 'nos uero, qui in ultima millenarii sumus parte et ultra progressi' (*VSE* iv. 6).

<sup>94</sup> 'The hermeneutic style', pp. 90–4 = *ALL* ii. 128–32.

<sup>95</sup> See *Wulfstan of Winchester*, ed. Lapidge and Winterbottom, pp. clxv–clxvi.

<sup>96</sup> See *JW* ii. 452 (*s.a.* 1002), and discussion below, p. lxxvii with n. 182.

Like Byrhtferth's *Enchiridion*, the *Vita S. Ecgwini* is divided into four parts (each representing one of the four stages in the life of man); also like the *Enchiridion* its discussion is underpinned with (seemingly irrelevant) arithmological interpretation of, for example, the six days which separate Christmas from the date of St Ecgwine's deposition (*VSE* iv. 5). These structural and thematic links are reinforced by a substantial number of verbal parallels between the two works; and an even larger number of such parallels links the *Vita S. Ecgwini* with the *Vita S. Oswaldi*.<sup>97</sup> When taken in combination, this evidence establishes that Byrhtferth was also the author of the *Vita S. Ecgwini*.<sup>98</sup> Unlike the *Enchiridion* and the *Vita S. Oswaldi*, which both envisage an audience at Ramsey, the *Vita S. Ecgwini* is addressed to the monks of Evesham (*VSE* iv. 12: 'haec uobis, reuerendissimi fratres Eoueshamenses, dicta sunt'). As we have seen (above, p. xxix), there is reason to think that Byrhtferth sought refuge at Evesham from the turmoil which followed the disastrous defeat of Edmund Ironside's army (which included the abbot of Ramsey and the bishop of Dorchester, himself a former abbot of Ramsey) at Ashingdon (Essex) on 18 October 1016, when Ramsey was in danger of being suppressed by the victorious King Cnut. On this hypothesis, the *Vita S. Ecgwini* will have been composed in recompense for the hospitality which Byrhtferth received at Evesham, the implication then being that it was composed in the years following 1016.

## 6. *Historia regum*

A manuscript now in Cambridge, CCC 139, fos. 1-165, represents a historical compilation of very varied content, most of it pertaining to northern England, including such works as Richard of Hexham's *De gestis regis Stephani*, a tract on the archbishops of York, and another on the siege of Durham. The manuscript was written at Durham c.1164, and was owned soon afterwards by the Cistercian abbey of Sawley (Lancashire).<sup>99</sup> Among the varied contents is a work entitled *Historia regum* (fos. 51<sup>v</sup>-129<sup>v</sup>), which is a compilation by Symeon,

<sup>97</sup> See Lapidge, 'The hermeneutic style', pp. 90-4 = *ALL* ii. 128-32.

<sup>98</sup> The evidence is set out by Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth and the *Vita S. Ecgwini*', pp. 333-41 = *ALL* ii. 295-303, and need not be repeated here. The notes accompanying the edition of the *Vita S. Ecgwini* (below) contain many references, too many to list, to parallels with other writings of Byrhtferth.

<sup>99</sup> On the Durham origin of the manuscript, see Meehan, 'Durham twelfth-century manuscripts in Cistercian houses', esp. pp. 440-2, and Norris, 'History, wisdom and illumination', esp. pp. 72-3, 101-4.

precentor of Durham, who died *c.*1129.<sup>100</sup> Symeon's compilation extends to AD 1129, and is drawn *inter alia* from various recent sources, including the *Chronica* of John of Worcester and the *Gesta regum* of William of Malmesbury.<sup>101</sup> The earliest sections of Symeon's compilation concern the history of England from the seventh century until 887.<sup>102</sup> Some years ago it was shown by Peter Hunter Blair that these early sections of the *Historia regum* are written in a highly distinctive style which indicates composition by a single author, the implication being that Symeon simply incorporated this earlier work into his own *Historia regum*.<sup>103</sup> Systematic analysis of the style indicates that the author of these early sections was Byrhtferth of Ramsey.<sup>104</sup> Byrhtferth's authorship is revealed not only by the distinctive vocabulary and phraseology, but also by recurrent use of arithmological interpretation, and above all by the quotation of two lines of Arator's *Historia apostolica* (i. 226–7: 'Spiritus alme ueni, sine te non diceris umquam; / munera da linguae qui das in munere linguas') as a sort of personal prayer, to mark the transition from one section of a work to another. In the *Enchiridion*, for example, Byrhtferth quoted these lines to mark the transition from pt. ii to pt. iii,<sup>105</sup> and again, to mark the beginning of his discussion of paschal reckoning, where he described them as 'oratio patris Byrhtferði'.<sup>106</sup> By the same token, he quotes them at the beginning of his *Vita S. Ecgwini*, and describes them there as the 'exordium meae orationis' (*VSE Epil.*). It is therefore highly significant when, in the early sections of the *Historia regum*, the transition from pt. ii to pt. iii (from the discussion of Bede's writings to the chronicle of eighth-century Northumbria) is marked by quotation of the same two lines of Arator.

In dividing his *Historia regum* into four parts,<sup>107</sup> Byrhtferth

<sup>100</sup> On Symeon, see the important collection of essays ed. Rollason, *Symeon of Durham*; on Symeon's authorship of the *Historia regum*, see Symeon of Durham, *Libellus de exordio*, ed. Rollason, pp. xlviii–xlix.

<sup>101</sup> *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, ed. Arnold, ii. 3–283.

<sup>102</sup> These early sections occupy fos. 51<sup>v</sup>–76<sup>r</sup> of Cambridge, CCC 139; they are ed. *ibid.* ii. 3–91.

<sup>103</sup> Hunter Blair, 'Some observations on the *Historia regum* attributed to Symeon of Durham', esp. pp. 78–104 (on the contents of the early sections) and 114–15 (on the style of the early sections).

<sup>104</sup> See Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth and the early sections', pp. 97–122 = *ALL* ii. 317–42.

<sup>105</sup> *Byrhtferth's Enchiridion*, ed. Baker and Lapidge, p. 120.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* p. 136.

<sup>107</sup> In the circumstances, it is impossible to be certain that the title *Historia regum*—which was used by Symeon of Durham for his compilation—is that which was used by Byrhtferth; but inasmuch as Byrhtferth's work concerns (respectively) the kings of Kent, Northumbria, and Wessex, the title *Historia regum* is wholly appropriate.

followed a procedure similar to that which he had used in his *Enchiridion*, and which he was to use again in his *Vita S. Ecgwini*. The contents of the four parts are as follows (page references are to the edition by Arnold, *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*):

pt. i. the early kings of Kent; the murder of the Kentish princes Æthelberht and Æthelred (ii. 3–13);

pt. ii. the early kings of Northumbria; the foundation of the monastery of Monkwearmouth-Jarrow by King Ecgfrith; the early history of the abbey, drawn from Bede's *Historia abbatum*; and Bede's *Versus de die iudicii*, quoted *in extenso* (ii. 13–30);

pt. iii. the kings of Northumbria continued, incorporating annals for the years 732–802 (ii. 30–3, 38–47, 50–66),<sup>108</sup>

pt. iv. the early kings of Wessex, up to 887, drawn mostly from Asser, *Vita Ælfredi* (ii. 66–91).

The account of the murder of the Kentish princes in pt. i is an independent piece of hagiography, a *Passio SS. Æthelberhti et Æthelredi* [BHL 2643]. In 991 Ealdorman Æthelwine had translated the remains of the two Kentish princes from Wakering (Essex), where they were buried, to Ramsey;<sup>109</sup> and, given that the Latin style of the *Passio SS. Æthelberhti et Æthelredi* is very much Byrhtferth's own, it would seem that Byrhtferth composed the work soon after the translation in 991, and then subsequently incorporated it entire in pt. i of his *Historia regum*. The annals for the years 732–802 have their focus of interest in York, and are frequently referred to as the 'York Annals'. In some cases the discussion which they incorporate, concerning (say) the affairs of Charlemagne, is best understood in terms of contacts between York and Alcuin. In any event, they were not composed by Byrhtferth. However, since some of their material—that pertaining, for example, to the abbots of Ripon—was known to Byrhtferth at the time he was composing the *Vita S. Oswaldi* between 997 and 1002 (*VSO* v. 9), there may be reason to think that a copy of the 'York Annals' had been brought from York to Ramsey by

<sup>108</sup> This part contains, against the years 740 and 781, lengthy interpolations which cannot have been part of Byrhtferth's original work, insofar as they were demonstrably composed after 1113 (*Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, ed. Arnold, ii. 33–8, 47–50); it was presumably Symeon of Durham who incorporated them into the framework of the earlier work (of Byrhtferth): see Hunter Blair, 'Some observations on the *Historia regum* attributed to Symeon of Durham', pp. 87–90.

<sup>109</sup> *Chron. Rames.*, p. 55.

Archbishop Oswald himself.<sup>110</sup> In sum, much work remains to be done on Byrhtferth's *Historia regum*.

With regard to the *Vita S. Oswaldi*, *Vita S. Ecgwini*, and *Historia regum* it is possible to be entirely confident about Byrhtferth's authorship. Whether these three works, together with the three previously listed which bear his name, represent the full extent of his literary estate, remains to be determined. Two possible areas which merit further research may be mentioned: Byrhtferth's contribution to a (hypothetical) Latin chronicle pertaining to tenth-century English history; and his composition of Latin poetry.

## 7. Other works

Concerning the chronicle of tenth-century history: it will be noted, in the first instance, that, immediately following the end of the Byrhtferthian 'early sections' incorporated in Symeon of Durham's *Historia regum*, there is a set of brief annals for the years 888–957.<sup>111</sup> These annals are written in a telegraphic style, and contain no trace of the distinctive (unmistakable, even) features which mark the style of Byrhtferth.<sup>112</sup> Then there are many verbal similarities (including identical sentences) between the *Vita S. Oswaldi* and the *Chronica* of John of Worcester.<sup>113</sup> Since John was writing a century later than Byrhtferth, one might assume a priori that he was simply drawing on Byrhtferth's earlier Life of Oswald; but since all John's debts to the Life are assigned to specific years, and since there is not a single date in the whole of the Life of St Oswald, it may be more economical to assume that both authors were drawing independently on a set of annals for the years 958–92, and that these annals provided the framework for the annals recorded by John.<sup>114</sup> It is also striking that at various points in these annals, for example *s.a.* 987—a passage which has no correlate in the *Vita S. Oswaldi*—John uses vocabulary which is unmistakably 'Byrhtferthian', such as the adverb

<sup>110</sup> See my discussion in *ALL* i. 429–30.

<sup>111</sup> *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, ed. Arnold, ii. 91–5; see Hunter Blair, 'Some observations on the *Historia regum* attributed to Symeon of Durham', pp. 104–6.

<sup>112</sup> Byrhtferth's composition of at least the final entry of these annals is ruled out on chronological grounds, since it refers to Edward the Confessor (who became king in 1042): *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, ed. Arnold, ii. 95. But the reference to Edward the Confessor could be a later, post-Byrhtferthian, interpolation, perhaps by Symeon of Durham.

<sup>113</sup> See Hart, 'The early section of the Worcester Chronicle', esp. pp. 258–65 and 311–12 (which presents a list of the parallel passages in question).

<sup>114</sup> See Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth and Oswald', pp. 75–80.

*inedicibiliter*.<sup>115</sup> To pile hypothesis on hypothesis, could such vocabulary indicate that Byrhtferth was the compiler of the annals which were then laid under contribution by him in his own *Vita S. Oswaldi*, and later by John of Worcester in his *Chronica*? (Note also that John's debts to this hypothetical chronicle begin in 958, the year following the termination—957—of the set of tenth-century annals included in Symeon of Durham's *Historia regum*.) Finally, there is reason to suspect that the compiler of the *Liber benefactorum* drew on this same hypothetical chronicle, particularly in his account of the dedication of the rebuilt tower at Ramsey on 8 November 991: Byrhtferth's incomplete and oblique account of this event (*VSO* v. 11–13) cannot have been the source of the prosaic, but readily comprehensible, account in the *Liber benefactorum*.<sup>116</sup> Once again, the most plausible hypothesis is that both authors—Byrhtferth and the anonymous author of the *Liber benefactorum*—were drawing on a lost, common source, possibly one composed by Byrhtferth himself.

Finally, the question of whether Byrhtferth composed Latin poetry. It is reasonable to suspect that he will have received some training in verse composition from Abbo, inasmuch as Abbo's *Quaestiones grammaticales*—which are principally concerned with matters of scansion—are addressed to the monks of Ramsey, as we have seen. That he did on occasion compose Latin verse is clear from the end of the *Vita S. Oswaldi* where he quotes a twelve-line epitaph of St Oswald (inc. 'Conspicuum retinet bustum memoranda per aeuum': *ICL* 2655) which, according to the preceding rubric, he had composed himself: 'de epitaphio a nobis edicto' (*VSO* v. 19). It is also likely that various verses scattered throughout his *Computus* were composed by him. The poem 'Me legat annales' (*ICL* 9480) is prefaced in the *Computus* by the following distich:<sup>117</sup>

Hos claros uersus uenerabilis edidit auctor  
Beda sacer, multum nitido sermone coruscans.

Interestingly, when the poem 'Me legat annales' is quoted in Byrhtferth's *Historia regum*, it is prefaced by the very same distich.<sup>118</sup> The diction of this distich is closely paralleled in other Latin verse incorporated in Byrhtferth's *Computus*:

<sup>115</sup> JW ii. 436. For Byrhtferth's use of the word *inedicibiliter*, see below, p. xlviii.

<sup>116</sup> *Chron. Rames.*, pp. 90–101.

<sup>117</sup> See *Byrhtferth's Enchiridion*, ed. Baker and Lapidge, pp. xxxi, 384.

<sup>118</sup> *HR* ii. 15 (ed. Arnold, ii. 23).

Edidit hos famulus gnaro meditamine uersus  
 Perspicuos summi Beda sacer Domini,<sup>119</sup>

and

Hanc sententiolam uenerabilis edidit auctor  
 Beda sacer, multum nitido sermone coruscans,  
 Zodiaci ratione super cicli manifesta  
 quatinus hunc quisque scrutans cognoscere possit.<sup>120</sup>

The shared diction in these verses (*uenerabilis edidit auctor, Beda sacer, multum nitido sermone coruscans*) indicate that they are the work of one author; given the context, the author in question would seem to be Byrhtferth. And if Byrhtferth composed these computistical verses, then there may be reason to suspect that he also composed the 'Metrical Calendar of Ramsey', which is interpolated into the liturgical kalendar in his *Computus*,<sup>121</sup> and which is quoted by him both in his *Vita S. Oswaldi* and in the early sections of the *Historia regum*.<sup>122</sup> Possibly more Byrhtferthian verse such as this awaits detection.

### III. BYRHTFERTH'S LATINITY

As we have seen, the attribution of several Latin writings to Byrhtferth depends on the fact that the distinctive and idiosyncratic style found in two of the Latin works which are transmitted in his name (the *Epilogus* or 'preface' to his *Computus* and the *Enchiridion*) is also found in the two Latin saints' Lives which are edited in the present volume. It is therefore appropriate to describe the features of Byrhtferth's Latinity in some detail.

Byrhtferth was a very ambitious prose stylist, and was clearly attempting to achieve throughout his Latin prose an elevated register of expression. The attempt is seen most obviously in his choice of vocabulary, but is also present to a marked degree in his syntax. In aiming for an elevated style, however, he frequently overreached the resources of his Latin training, and any description of his Latin style must include discussion of his frequent solecism. In what follows I describe in turn Byrhtferth's vocabulary, syntax, and solecism.

<sup>119</sup> *Byrhtferth's Enchiridion*, ed. Baker and Lapidge, p. 384.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.* p. 417.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 391–415; also printed Lapidge, 'A tenth-century metrical calendar', pp. 363–6 = *ALL* ii. 380–3.

<sup>122</sup> *VSO* iii. 17, v. 11, and v. 17; *HR* iii. 24 (ed. Arnold, ii. 58).

## Vocabulary

The choice of (what Byrhtferth evidently regarded as) elevated vocabulary may be classified under four headings: archaism, polysyllabicity, Graecism, and poeticism.

1. Archaism. Although it is difficult to estimate what chronological understanding of classical (and medieval) Latin literature Byrhtferth possessed, he must have been aware to some degree that certain expressions which had passed out of common use by the time of Vergil and Horace were reintroduced by late antique (and patristic) authors. (He could have learned this much from study of late antique grammarians, even if he had never read archaic Latin authors such as Plautus and Terence for himself.)<sup>123</sup> Among archaisms, Byrhtferth had a particular taste for adverbs: *affatim*, 'amply' (*VSE* iv. 11); *hac illac*, 'here and there' (*VSO* iv. 8; *VSE* ii. 9, ii. 11, iv. 9);<sup>124</sup> *iosum* and *susum*, 'downwards' and 'upwards' (*VSO* ii. 10); *opipare*, 'splendidly' (*VSE* iv. 15);<sup>125</sup> and *oppido*, 'utterly' (*VSO* ii. 1). Related to this taste for archaic adverbs is his use of the archaic enclitic *-ce*,<sup>126</sup> which he attaches promiscuously to demonstrative pronouns declined in the genitive case, such as *huius* (*VSO* iii. 5, iii. 13, iv. 18; *VSE* ii. 2), *illius* (*VSO* v. 9), and *istius* (*VSO* v. 12), apparently to impart greater emphasis.<sup>127</sup>

2. Polysyllabicity. Byrhtferth obviously took great pleasure in using long, polysyllabic vocabulary, particularly adjectives and adverbs. It is difficult to measure such usage accurately,<sup>128</sup> and, as far as I am aware, it is not a stylistic phenomenon that has ever attracted systematic,

<sup>123</sup> The late antique grammarians do not treat 'archaism' as a distinct category of Latin expression. What we recognize as archaisms are described by Donatus, *Ars maior*, as examples of 'barbarolexis' (see discussion by Holtz, *Donat et la tradition*, pp. 151–3).

<sup>124</sup> Discussed below, under 'poeticism' (p. lvii). This is an instance where the archaic nature of the phrase could have been learned from Donatus, *Ars maior* (ed. Holtz, *Donat et la tradition*, p. 642).

<sup>125</sup> The word *opipare* is also used in the *Enchiridion*, iv. 1 (ed. Baker and Lapidge, p. 220); and cf. the gloss to *perhucide* in *VSE* i. 2: 'i. opipare uel ualde splendide' (below, p. 312).

<sup>126</sup> See LHS i. 468–9.

<sup>127</sup> In a gloss to *huiusce* in *VSE* ii. 2, Byrhtferth explains the enclitic simply as 'an extra syllable': 'huiusce: istiusce, sillabica adiectio' (below, p. 317).

<sup>128</sup> One would be obliged to count individually all the words and all the syllables they contain in substantial extracts of text by various Latin authors, and then compare the resulting ratios. Preliminary trials suggest that the average length of Latin words—in texts of any period—was between two and three syllables; but it would be interesting to know, for example, whether words in prose were on average longer than those in poetry, or vice versa, which authors preferred longer words on average, and so on.

statistical study.<sup>129</sup> Nevertheless, one's impression is that Byrhtferth used polysyllabic words as a matter of choice, and did so significantly more often than did his contemporaries.<sup>130</sup> This impression can be confirmed by looking at several kinds of polysyllabic words used—excessively, it would seem—by Byrhtferth, namely adjectives construed in the superlative case; adjectives terminating in *-bilis*; adverbs terminating in *-iter*; and compound adverbs. Byrhtferth uses the following adjectives in the superlative case:

altissimus (*VSO* iii. 2, iii. 11; *VSE* ii. 4), amantissimus (*VSO* v. 13), beatissimus (*VSO* i. 3, ii. 1, ii. 2, ii. 4, iv. 8, iv. 14, iv. 21, v. 16, v. 22; *VSE* iii. 1), benignissimus (*VSO* iii. 12, v. 12; *VSE* i. 13, iii. 5), castissimus (*VSO* i. 1; *VSE* ii. 1), celeberrimus (*VSO* i. 4, v. 9, v. 11), celerrimus (*VSO* ii. 4 [*bis*]), certissimus (*VSE* iv. 10), clementissimus (*VSO* iv. 16; *VSE* iv. 8, iv. 10), densissimus (*VSO* ii. 3), dignissimus (*VSO Prol.* [*bis*], i. 8, ii. 2, ii. 4, ii. 5, iii. 5, iii. 11, iv. 6, iv. 8 [*bis*], v. 7, v. 8, v. 11 [*ter*], v. 16, v. 18; *VSE* ii. 2; iii. 3, iii. 4), dilectissimus (*VSO* ii. 5, iv. 9, v. 18, v. 21; *VSE* iii. 3, iv. 5), diutissimus (*VSO* iii. 7), dulcissimus (*VSO* i. 7, iii. 13, iv. 10, v. 7), durissimus (*VSO* i. 4, iv. 10, v. 4; *VSE* ii. 4), facundissimus (*VSO* iv. 3; *VSE* i. 2), famosissimus (*VSE* iii. 3, iv. 11), ferocissimus (*VSE* iv. 2), firmissimus (*VSO* iv. 4), fortissimus (*VSO* ii. 8, v. 5; *VSE* iv. 1), frigidissimus (*VSO* iv. 1), gratissimus (*VSE* iv. 10), honestissimus (*VSO* v. 11), honorificentissimus (*VSO* ii. 5), humillimus (*VSO* v. 12), iocundissimus (*VSO* v. 16; *VSE* iv. 8), iustissimus (*VSO* iv. 21), limpidissimus (*VSO* ii. 3), luculentissimus (*VSO* i. 6, ii. 4), mansuetissimus (*VSO* v. 12), misericordissimus (*VSE* iv. 10), mitissimus (*VSO* v. 12; *VSE* iv. 8), nefandissimus (*VSE* iv. 3), nequissimus (*VSO* v. 11; *VSE* iv. 1), omnipotentissimus (*VSO* iii. 15), perfectissimus (*VSO* ii. 4), peritissimus (*VSO* ii. 3), pessimus (*VSO* ii. 3, iii. 2), püssimus (*VSO* ii. 2, ii. 3, iii. 12), prepotentissimus (*VSO* iii. 5, iii. 14, iv. 3; *VSE* iv. 8), prestantissimus (*VSO* ii. 3, iii. 2, iv. 7; *VSE* iv. 8), probatissimus (*VSO* iii. 5, iv. 6; *VSE* i. 6), pulcherrimus (*VSO* ii. 3), rectissimus (*VSO* ii. 8), reuerendissimus (*VSE* iv. 12), reuerentissimus (*VSO Prol.*, iii. 5, iv. 6, v. 9; *VSE* iii. 3, iii. 4, iv. 5, iv. 6), sanctissimus (*VSO* i. 3, iii. 11, iv. 2, iv. 12, iv. 16, v. 14; *VSE* iii.

<sup>129</sup> Marouzeau, as always, has a few interesting pages on the subject: *Traité de stylistique latine*, pp. 96–103. But in the absence of a full-scale statistical analysis, even Marouzeau's observations are necessarily impressionistic.

<sup>130</sup> See also Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth of Ramsey and the early sections', p. 102 = *ALL* ii. 322.