

*Herman the archdeacon and Goscelin of Saint-Bertin. Miracles of St Edmund.* Edited by Tom Licence, translated by Tom Licence and Lynda Lockyer. (Oxford Medieval Texts.) Pp. cxxxiii + 402. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2014. £125. 978 0 19 968919 4

*Bury St Edmunds and the Norman Conquest.* Edited by Tom Licence. Pp. xiii + 266 incl. 17 plates, 16 figs and 2 musical examples. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014. £60. 978 1 84383 931 6

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The great East Anglian abbey of Bury St Edmunds, allegedly founded by Cnut in 1021, has never lacked for historians in modern times. This is due not only to its size and importance, but to its splendid surviving cache of archival records and library books, together counterbalancing the substantial destruction of its buildings. Since the early nineteenth century Jocelin of Brakelond's *Chronicle* alone has brought his home to the attention of a wide readership interested in the history of medieval England. In the first half of the twentieth century, important work was done on the abbey's administrative history by V. H. Galbraith, D. C. Douglas and R. H. C. Davis; from the 1960s their work was taken up and extended by Antonia Gransden. Now it is the turn of Tom Licence to shed important new light on the abbey's history and hagiography in its heyday, the Anglo-Norman period, encompassing the formative abbacies of Baldwin (1065–97/8) and Anselm (1121–48).

In his Oxford Medieval Texts volume, Licence edits and translates two in-house hagiographical texts from the period. The first, Herman the Archdeacon's *Miracles of St Edmund*, was edited twice before, by Felix Liebermann (incompletely but critically) and Thomas Arnold (completely but uncritically). This, then, is the first critical edition of the complete text, or rather, the text as it has been transmitted, for it is not in fact complete, breaking off in a story dated to 1096. Neither Liebermann nor Arnold were able to identify Herman. An attempt by Gransden to identify him with a man named Bertrann was perhaps insecurely based. Licence bypasses Gransden's hypothesis rather than rejecting it outright, to replace it with another that gives Herman an interesting biography: monk of St Vincent, Metz, later archdeacon to Herfast, bishop of East Anglia, and finally perhaps prior of Bury. While I find Licence's argument convincing, I think it would have been a courtesy to have acknowledged, presented and refuted Gransden's argument rather than ignoring it altogether. The second text, another set of *Miracles* found uniquely in the splendid *Libellus Vitae* (Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, MS 736), is printed for the first time, and for the first time attributed to the well-known professional hagiographer Goscelin of St Bertin. The attribution is based purely on stylistic grounds. To the extent that Goscelin's style is extremely mannered and perhaps easily imitated, I find this attribution plausible but less than totally convincing.

A major problem raised by these two texts, noted and discussed by Licence, is why two sets of *Miracula*, in similar styles, covering much the same ground, were produced within some twenty years of each other. Perhaps the later *Miracula* were intended to complete the work left unfinished by Herman. Perhaps Herman's work fell into bad odour because he is recorded as having (unintentionally) disrespected Edmund's shrine. Licence believes that it was because 'Goscelin's' style was thought more fashionable than Herman's. I do not find any of these possibilities convincing. Surely the reason for its replacement was

that Herman's account was too much a history of the abbey, too little geared to the demands of the liturgy, for which it did not provide a satisfactory quarry for *lectiones*. In modern times it has indeed been treated as a chronicle, a significant witness to a lost copy of the *Anglo-Saxon chronicle*, and included by Liebermann in his collection of *Geschichtsquellen*. A parallel may be found with William of Malmesbury's historicising *Life of St Dunstan*, which survives in a single copy, never having penetrated the liturgy, compared with the popular version by Osbern of Canterbury, despised by William but definitely mainstream hagiography. The full version of Herman, too, survives in a single copy; another two preserve a shorter version shorn of all the historical context. On the other hand, it is not surprising that 'Goscelin's' *Miracula* survive in a liturgical book, even though its language was too baroque for it to achieve and hold popularity over a long period; by the second half of the twelfth century it had been revised and simplified stylistically, not least by another of Bury's most famous abbots, Samson (1182–1211).

*Bury St Edmunds and the Norman Conquest* derives from a conference held in 2012 and consists of a dozen contributions edited by Licence, focusing on the reign and achievement of Abbot Baldwin. There are chapters on the abbey's charters and how it used them (Thomas Waldman, Sarah Foot), on the women who inhabited the Bury estates and who appear in its documents and hagiography (Elisabeth van Houts), a note on Baldwin's great church (Eric Fernie), three chapters on the cult of St Edmund (Tom Licence and Henry Parkes), and no fewer than four on manuscripts from Baldwin's reign, three of them concerning medicine (Webber, Gullick, Banham, Thouroude). Among these last, the key item is Michael Gullick's, demonstrating a Bury origin and provenance for British Library, MS Sloane 1621, containing an extensive collection of medical texts, including some perhaps in Baldwin's own hand. Licence himself contributes two items, of which the first makes further significant additions to our knowledge of Herman the Archdeacon. Licence had already demonstrated that Herman was familiar with writings by Sigebert of Gembloux, who had taught at St Vincent's, Metz; now he shows that the two men actually collaborated. Hermann is thus identified as one of the many influential Lotharingian churchmen who came to England in the wake of the Conquest.

What can one make of it all? David Bates, in the opening chapter, asks whether Bury was 'an unusual case' in its reaction to the Norman Conquest. At first sight, Baldwin seems a typical post-Conquest prelate: French-born, a former monk of St-Denis and prior of its Alsatian house of Leberau. But he was atypical in having been appointed before the Conquest, by Edward the Confessor, whose physician he became. This is perhaps what gives his abbacy its Janus-like character, not to say ambiguity, from which the essays in this volume are unable to free it. MS Sloane 1621 is written in both English and Norman hands; the abbot himself apparently tried writing Old English minuscule in a 'nerveless and presumably imitative' script (Bishop and Chaplais). Baldwin does not fit the mould of reforming prelates such as William of St Calais at Durham, Osbern FitzOsbern at Exeter, or Paul at St Albans, and it is hard to give a shape to his abbacy.

The book's general index is brief; it is a pity that there is no index of manuscripts.