

Danish Ferocity and Abandoned Monasteries: The Twelfth-century View

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When, in the second half of the twelfth century, the author of the opening section of the *Liber Eliensis* got to the passage where he needed to explain how what had been a flourishing nunnery in the time of Bede had become a community of secular clerics by the middle of the tenth century, he invoked the Danes as agents of change, and accused them of having burned the monastery and slaughtered all the nuns.¹ He had access to a brief comment about the burning of the monastery of Ely and the killing of its inmates in the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* of the early twelfth century,² but this was insufficiently detailed for his purposes, and so, to set the scene, he described the arrival of the Danes in terms borrowed from John of Worcester, Abbo of Fleury and the prophet Jeremiah. The following may serve as an example:

¹ *LE* 53–6 (bk i. 39–41): ‘Mactatur, ut victima innocua, sanctimonialium caterva ... sicque monasterio quod vera Dei christicola Ædeldreda construxerat cum virginibus et ornamentis et reliquiis sanctorum sanctaruque combusto ... inimici Domini redierunt ad propria’. For translation, see *Liber Eliensis: a history of the Isle of Ely from the seventh century to the twelfth*, tr. J. Fairweather, Woodbridge 2005, 71–6; on the dating, see *ibid.* pp. xiii and xxii–xxiii: the work was completed after 1169 but perhaps before 1177.

² *LE* Appendix A (p. 396): ‘Qui locus multum erat famosus, reliquiis et miraculis celeberrimus. Sed pagani seva invasione olim irruentes eundem locum igni cremandum dederant et, sanctimonialium caterva quamplurium ibi crudeliter necata omnibusque bonis undeunde sublatis, locum cum reliquiis, quasi quoddam exterminium, reliquentes abierunt’. For translation, see *Liber Eliensis*, tr. Fairweather, 487. On the dating of the *Libellus Æthelwoldi*, see S. Keynes, ‘Ely abbey 672–1109’, in P. Meadows and N. Ramsay (eds), *A history of Ely cathedral*, Woodbridge 2003, 3–58, at 7–8, and A. Kennedy, ‘Law and litigation in the *Libellus Æthelwoldi episcopi*’, *ASE* xxiv (1995), 131–83, at 132–3. The *Libellus* (largely copied into *Liber Eliensis* as cc. 1–49 of Book II, but also surviving on its own) was written in Latin by a monk of Ely under Bishop Hervey 1109–31, but was based on an Old English text, either a set of memoranda about land transactions or a more fully worked-out narrative, of about 990; however, Kennedy suggests that the opening four chapters were the work of the early-twelfth-century author/translator himself. See also *LE* p. xxxiv and Dorothy Whitelock’s foreword to that volume, pp. ix–xviii.

All these men were persecutors of Christians, so cruel in their inborn ferocity that they did not know how to become gentle in the face of the miseries of mankind but, without any pity, they fed on people's agonies and, in accordance with the oracular statement of prophecy that 'all evil comes from the North', this same wicked race came leaping forward as the North Wind blows.³

Most of this passage just quoted was taken from Abbo's *Passion of St Edmund*, including the term 'ferocity' in connection with the northern peoples.⁴

The author of this part of the *Liber Eliensis* was only one of several twelfth-century English authors who felt moved to write descriptions of Viking destruction of monasteries in the ninth century. We find such accounts in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta pontificum*; in one of the Peterborough interpolations in the E-version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and, also at Peterborough, in Hugh Candidus' chronicle; in the Abingdon Chronicle; in the Whitby cartulary and in Symeon of Durham's *Libellus de exordio*.⁵ Orderic Vitalis makes a brief reference to the Danes burning the churches of monks and clerics in his account of how the English church declined between the days of Bede and 1066.⁶ This is by no means a comprehensive list, but it includes a work that circulated widely and was influential (*Gesta pontificum*) as well as ones whose audiences were essentially local, so it is reasonably representative. Symeon's *Libellus* forms a special case in this list, for reasons that will become clear in due course. Several twelfth-century historical works, however, say relatively little about Viking violence towards monasteries. The only account of Viking violence against monasteries in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum* is a sequence of quotations from Alcuin's letters mentioning the destruction of

³ *LE* 53–5 (bk i. 39–40), here esp. c. 39 on p. 53: 'Hi omnes persecutores christianorum erant adeo crudeles naturali ferocitate ut nesciant malis hominum mitescere. Absque ulla miseratione pascuntur hominum cruciatibus et, iuxta prophetie vaticinium, quod ab aquilone venit omne malum, flante borea ... gens eadem iniqua prosilivit'; for translation, see *Liber Eliensis*, tr. Fairweather, 71. The author of Book I also took care to include in his account of the life of St Æthelthryth a description drawn from Bede on how the monastery of Coldingham burned down not long after Æthelthryth had left it: *ibid.* 31 (i. 14); for Bede's account of Coldingham, see *HE* iv. 25.

⁴ *Three Lives of English Saints*, ed. M. Winterbottom, Toronto 1972, 72; older edition in *Memorials of St Edmund's abbey*, ed. T. Arnold (RS [xcvi], 1890–96), i. 9 (Abbo, *Passio Sancti Eadmundi*, c. 5).

⁵ Malmesbury, *GP*; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS. E*, ed. S. Irvine, Cambridge 2004 (hereafter ASC E), 48; *The chronicle of Hugh Candidus, a monk of Peterborough*, ed. W.T. Mellows, London 1949; *Historia ecclesie Abbdonensis: the history of the church of Abingdon*, ed. and tr. J. Hudson, Oxford 2002–7; *Cartularium abbatiae de Whiteby*, ed. J. C. Atkinson (SS lxix, 1879); Symeon, *LdE*.

⁶ OV ii. 240.

holy places, the despoliation of the church of St Cuthbert and the shedding of blood there.⁷ Henry of Huntingdon, following a version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle that was close to E, turns the latter's account of the 793 attack on Lindisfarne into a statement that the churches in the 'province' (presumably diocese) of Lindisfarne were destroyed:

Then there arrived the pagan people from Norway and Denmark, who first brought the Northumbrians to miserable ruin, and then on the Ides of January, in the province of Lindisfarne, they put Christ's churches to fearful destruction together with the inhabitants.⁸

Shortly after this, and again following a close relative of the E version of ASC, he narrates the sacking of *Donemuthe*: 'The pagans pillaged Northumbria, and despoiled Ecgrith's monastery at *Donemuthe*.'⁹ However, both these statements are very brief, and in the long and vivid passage about Danish savagery with which he opens Book V of his *History* he concentrates on the effects of the Vikings on the population in general, omitting any mention of monasteries. Similarly, he does not mention any attack on a monastery in the narrative of ninth-century events that follows.¹⁰ John of Worcester also makes almost no reference to Viking violence to churches: strikingly, and although he was using the DE versions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and often puts in Northumbrian annal material, he omits the accounts of the attacks on Lindisfarne and Jarrow. His only account of ninth-century Viking violence to churches is a passage copied from William's *Gesta pontificum* describing the Danish destruction of Hexham; he added this when he was enlarging his entry for 828, so that he could describe the later history of Hexham.¹¹

It is easy to dismiss twelfth-century accounts of Viking violence to monasteries as worthless; indeed, most of them are worthless. However, as examples of views from their time, or, better still, as examples of a concerted effort in the twelfth century to build accounts of Danish destruction into a history of the monastic order in medieval England, they have some significance. They are also

⁷ Malmesbury, *GR* i. 104–5 (bk i. 70).

⁸ HH 256–7 (bk iv. 26); Henry places the event in the tenth year of Brihtric, king of Wessex, i.e. 793, where, as Greenway points out, the Ides of January is an error for 8 June. See *ibid.* pp. xci–xcii for discussion of the version of the ASC that he used; this was a version related to E, but not E itself, lacking E's Peterborough insertions but with the E annals down to 1133. On ASC E's entries for 793–94, which quote Northumbrian annals of the late eighth and early ninth centuries, see n. 19 below.

⁹ HH 258–9 (bk iv. 27), dated to Brihtric's eleventh year, i.e. 794.

¹⁰ HH 272–5 (bk v. pref.), general account of Danish savagery; 274–98 (bk v. 1–13), narrative of events to Alfred's death.

¹¹ *JW Chronicle*, ii. 248, s.a. 828; Malmesbury, *GP* i. 388 (bk iii. 117).

important because they have made such a contribution, all the stronger for not having been sufficiently analysed, to general understanding of the Viking attacks in the ninth century. This contribution has not only influenced popular writing in the Christopher Dawson tradition¹² but several more serious works.¹³ An early attempt to get beyond this uncritical approach, Peter Sawyer's *The age of the Vikings*, which paid attention to when narratives were written, only made matters worse by condemning the ninth-century chroniclers out of hand for 'an easily recognisable bias against the Scandinavians', because 'they were written by churchmen.'¹⁴ More recently research has tended to argue for survival, if with change, at many monastic sites; furthermore it is often possible to see bishops, or sometimes kings, taking over eighth- and ninth-century monastic sites, with consequent changes to their function.¹⁵

While twelfth-century accounts of Viking violence towards monasteries are often highly coloured, eighth- and ninth-century accounts in England are terse and very sparse. Indeed, the principal source, the A version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, contains no records of Scandinavian destruction of English churches in the eighth, ninth or tenth centuries. Churches get mentioned in A in the eighth and ninth centuries only rarely, in the ninth century only when burials are

¹² C. Dawson, *Religion and the rise of Western culture*, London 1950, 99–103; see also R.H. Hodgkin, *A history of the Anglo-Saxons*, 3 edn, Oxford 1952, ii. 517–25, 608–17 and M. Deanesly, *The pre-Conquest Church in England*, 2 edn, London 1963, 244–75.

¹³ See, for example, D. Knowles and R.N. Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses: England and Wales*, London 1971, 10–11, 463–87; C.P. Wormald, 'Viking studies: whence and whither?' in R.T. Farrell (ed.), *The Vikings*, London and Chichester 1982, 128–53, at 137–9 and idem, 'The ninth century', in J. Campbell (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons*, Oxford 1982, 132–59, at 147–9; R. Fleming, 'Monastic lands and England's defence in the Viking Age', *EHR* c (1985), 247–65, at 247–9. Sarah Foot dismisses the twelfth-century accounts but still argues for cataclysm in 'Remembering, forgetting and inventing: attitudes to the past in England at the end of the first Viking age', *TRHS* 6 ser. ix (1999), 185–200. See also D.N. Dumville, *The churches of North Britain in the first Viking age*, Fifth Whithorn Lecture, Whithorn 1997, esp. 8–14: contemporary Irish sources make more frequent reference to Viking destruction of monasteries than do their Anglo-Saxon counterparts.

¹⁴ P. Sawyer, *The age of the Vikings*, 2 edn, London 1971, 31, justly criticised by N. Brooks, 'England in the ninth century: the crucible of defeat', *TRHS* 5 ser. xxix (1979), 1–20, at 2–7, and by Wormald, 'Viking studies', 129–31.

¹⁵ J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon society*, Oxford 2005, 291–329; D.M. Hadley, *The Vikings in England: settlement, society and culture*, Manchester 2006, 192–36; J. Barrow, 'Survival and mutation: ecclesiastical institutions in the Danelaw in the ninth and tenth centuries', in D.M. Hadley and J.D. Richards (eds), *Cultures in contact: Scandinavian settlement in England in the ninth and tenth centuries*, Turnhout 2000, 155–76; F. Tinti, *Sustaining belief: the church of Worcester from c.870 to c.1100*, Farnham 2010, 165–211.

being recorded, and not often even then.¹⁶ In some cases, further details about burials are supplied by Æthelweard, but his chronicle also makes no mention of Viking violence to churches.¹⁷ Alfred the Great in his preface to the translation of Gregory the Great's *Pastoral care* provides a fleeting reference to the churches of England being full of treasures and books 'before everything was ransacked and burned'.¹⁸ The set of Northumbrian annals running down to 806 preserved within the DE versions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and also in the twelfth-century Durham *Historia regum* records the classic accounts of the Viking raids on Lindisfarne and *Donaemuthan* (probably a monastery known as 'Ecgrifh's

¹⁶ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, a collaborative edition*, 3: MS. A, ed. J.M. Bately, Cambridge 1986 (hereafter ASC A), makes specific references to churches and monastic life in the eighth and ninth centuries as follows: s.a. 718 (p. 34) mention of Cuthburh as foundress of Wimborne minster; s.a. 738 (p. 35) mention of how later Eadberht son of Eata king of Northumbria and his brother Archbishop Egbert of York were buried in the same chapel in the city of York; s.a. 874 (p. 49): mention of how Burgred king of Mercia was eventually buried in the church of St Mary in the *scola Anglorum* at Rome. ASC A refers to several ninth-century burials without naming churches as such: s.a. 716 (p. 33): Ceolred of Mercia at Lichfield, Ethelred son of Penda at Bardney; s.a. 755, for 757, looking ahead to 786 (p. 37): Cynewulf at Winchester, Cyneheard at Axminster; s.a. 755 for 757 (p. 37): Æthelbald of Mercia at Repton; s.a. 855 for 858 (p. 45): Æthelwulf at Winchester; s.a. 860 (p. 46): Æthelbald at Sherborne and, likewise, Æthelbert (in fact d. 865); s.a. 867 (p. 47): burial of Bishop Ealhstan in the cemetery (*on tune*) of Sherborne; s.a. 871 (p. 48): burial of Alfred's brother Æthelred at Wimborne; s.a. 888 (p. 54): burial of Alfred's sister Æthelswith at Pavia. There are also some references to bishoprics, usually in the context of episcopal succession.

¹⁷ *Chronicon Æthelweardi*, ed. and tr. A. Campbell, London and Edinburgh 1962, iv. 1 (p. 35, burial of Æthelbert at Sherborne minster), iv. 2 (p. 36, burials of Bishop Ealhstan at Sherborne and of Ealdorman Eanwulf in *cenobio quod Glastingabyrig nuncupatur*, and of Edmund of East Anglia at *Beadeoricesuuyrthe*, i.e. Bury St Edmunds), iv. 2 (pp. 36–7, burial of Archbishop Ceolnoth at Canterbury), iv. 2 (p. 38, burial of Bishop Heahmund at Keynsham), iv. 2 (p. 39, burial of Æthelred in Wimborne minster), iv. 3 (p. 41, burial of Burgred in *templo Christi genetricis sanctae, quae nunc Anglorum scholae usitant nomen*), iv. 3 (p. 51, Guthfrid, king of the Northumbrians, in York minster: *Euoraca ... in urbe in basilica summa*, and Alfred in the city of Winchester).

¹⁸ *King Alfred's West-Saxon version of Gregory's Pastoral care*, ed. H. Sweet (Early English Text Society, original ser. xlv and l, 1871–72), i. 4–5 ('ærþæmþe hit eall forherogod wære & forbærned'); for the translation, see *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and other contemporary sources*, tr. S. Keynes and M. Lapidge, Harmondsworth 1983, 125. By contrast, Asser sees plenty of continuity in monastic buildings (presumably in Wessex), but no interest in the monastic rule, either because of the attacks by foreigners, or because there was too much wealth: 'plurima adhuc monasteria in illa regione constructa permaneat, nullo tamen regulam illius vitae ordinabiliter tenente, nescio quare, aut pro alienigenarum infestationibus, qui saepissime terra marique hostiliter irrumpunt, aut etiam pro nimia illius gentis in omni genere divitiarum abundantia': *Asser's Life of King Alfred*, ed. W.H. Stevenson, rev. edn, Oxford 1959, 81 (c. 93); *Alfred the Great*, tr. Keynes and Lapidge, 103.

minster', next door to Jarrow) in the 790s,¹⁹ for the former of which we possess supporting evidence in letters from Alcuin.²⁰ The Northumbrian annals clearly were interested in churches and Viking attacks on them; not so A, however. It recounts, very briefly, a series of attacks on towns and other settlements, for example London and Canterbury in 851, but, although presumably ecclesiastical establishments in these places were affected along with everything else, the authors of A felt no need to pick them out for special attention.²¹

A's lack of interest in what the Vikings could do to churches is wholly different from ninth-century continental annals, and also from the Irish and Northumbrian annals. In terse and unemotional language, the *Annals of St Bertin* quite often mention attacks on monasteries and other churches, for example in the years 859 (Saint-Valéry-sur-Somme), 861 (Saint-Vincent and Saint-Germain in Paris), 863 (Saint-Hilaire, Poitiers) and 865 (Fleury and the churches in Orléans).²² The *Annals of Fulda* mention destruction of churches less often, but this was merely because eastern Francia was less affected; when it was, as in 881, the annalist provided a list of the sites attacked.²³ The *Annals of St Vaast* make frequent reference to the destruction of monasteries in the valley of the Scheldt and its environs between 879 and 892; they are written in

¹⁹ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, a collaborative edition*, 6: MS. D, ed. G.P. Cubbin, Cambridge 1996 (hereafter ASC D), 17; ASC E, 42; HR ii. 55–6; see also Rollason, this volume. The identification of *Donemuthan* has been disputed: W. Richardson, 'The Venerable Bede and a lost Saxon monastery in Yorkshire', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* lvii (1985), 15–22, followed by Rollason in *Libellus de exordio*, 90n, and in idem, *Northumbria, 500–1100: creation and destruction of a kingdom*, Cambridge 2003, 211, argues that it must have been a site on the river Don in southern Yorkshire, but more recently Ian Wood has argued for a site on the south of the Tyne, next to Jarrow: *The origins of Jarrow: the monastery, the Slake and Ecgfrith's minster* (Bede's World Studies i), Jarrow 2008, 18–20, and see idem, 'Bede's Jarrow', in C.A. Lees and G.R. Overing (eds), *A place to believe in: locating medieval landscapes*, University Park, PA 2006, 67–84, at 71–3; idem, 'The foundation of Bede's Wearmouth-Jarrow', in S. DeGregorio (ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Bede*, Cambridge 2010, 84–96, at 91–2; idem, 'The gifts of Wearmouth and Jarrow', in W. Davies and P. Fouracre (eds), *The languages of gift in the early middle ages*, Cambridge 2010, 89–115.

²⁰ *Alcuini sive Albini epistolae*, in, *Epistolae Karolini aevi* ii, ed. E. Dümmler (MGH Epistolae iv, 1895), 42–60, nos. 16–22.

²¹ ASC A, s.a. 851 (p. 44); similarly, ASC A, s.a. 839 (*recte* 842; p. 43, slaughter in London and Rochester); ASC A, s.a. 867 (p. 47, slaughter of many Northumbrians in York). The attack on Winchester in 860 (*ibid.* 46) is entered in an addition made by a later hand, perhaps 'as late as c. 1000' (*ibid.* p. xxv).

²² *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. G. Waitz (MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum v, 1883), 52, 54, 66, 75; *The Annals of St-Bertin*, tr. J.L. Nelson, Manchester 1991, 90, 94, 111, 122.

²³ *Annales Fuldenses, sive annales regni Francorum orientalis*, ed. F. Kurze (MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum vii, 1891), 97; *The Annals of Fulda*, tr. T. Reuter, Manchester 1992, 90.

a markedly less dispassionate tone than the *Annals of St Bertin*, with fire and the sword mentioned in the very first entry on Viking attacks.²⁴

Before moving on to the twelfth-century English accounts we need to consider also those written in the tenth and eleventh centuries which in turn contributed imagery and details for later authors. Again, for England, there are few of these and some of those that exist contribute nothing to our purpose. Æthelwold's narrative of the refoundation of monasteries under Edgar tantalisingly has a gap where (if he had mentioned them) the Viking attacks could have been included.²⁵ It is tempting to think that he built a story about them into his explanation of how former monastic glories had withered (contemporary Continental sources were doing just this, for example a narrative in a tenth-century charter of Saint-Maixent)²⁶ but this can only be speculation. We have already noted that Æthelweard's *Chronicle* does include some material not in A concerning churches, but only on burials.²⁷

Much more scope for future development was provided by Abbo of Fleury in his *Passio Sancti Eadmundi*, a work which is essentially unhistorical.²⁸ When

²⁴ *Annales Vedastini*, ed. G.H. Pertz (MGH Scriptores ii, 1829), 196–209, above all 197–206 (s.a. 879–92).

²⁵ *Councils and synods, with other documents relating to the English Church, I: 871–1204*, ed. D. Whitelock, M. Brett and C.N.L. Brooke, Oxford 1981, i, 142–54; there is a gap in the text (p. 145) between the description of Augustine of Canterbury and that of King Edgar.

²⁶ A.T. Jones, 'Pitying the desolation of such a place: rebuilding religious houses and constructing memory in Aquitaine in the wake of the Viking incursions', *Viator* xxxvii (2006), 85–102, at 95 (Ademar of Chabannes developed the theme further a few decades later in the early eleventh century); for some Flemish parallels, see B. Meijns, 'Communautés de chanoines dépendant d'abbayes bénédictines pendant le haut Moyen Âge. L'exemple du comté de Flandre', *Revue bénédictine* cxiii (2003), 90–123, esp. 95; S. Vanderputten and B. Meijns, 'Gérard de Brogne en Flandre. État de la question sur les réformes monastiques du Xe siècle', *Revue du Nord* xcii (2010), 271–95.

²⁷ See above, n. 17.

²⁸ For a discussion of the literary qualities of Abbo's *Passio* and works derived from it, see esp. P. Cavill, 'Analogy and genre in the Legend of St Edmund', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* xlvii (2003), 21–45. D. Whitelock, 'Fact and fiction in the legend of St Edmund', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology* xxxi (1967–9), 217–33, at 218–22, underlined several of the fictional elements, but nevertheless was prepared to see some factual basis, for example Abbo's statement that Dunstan had, when young, heard the story from an aged man who claimed to have been Edmund's armour-bearer. On Abbo's approach to his work, see also A. Gransden, 'The legends and traditions concerning the origins of the abbey of Bury St Edmunds', *EHR* c (1985), 1–24, at 4–8, with comment on some of Abbo's possible hagiographical models on 6–8; S.J. Ridyard, *The royal saints of Anglo-Saxon England: a study of West Saxon and East Anglian cults*, Cambridge 1988, 212–14 on Abbo's general approach and 218–20 on a likely East Anglian *villa regalis* occurring in his account; P. Cavill, *Vikings: fear and faith*, Grand Rapids, MI 2001, 174–8; C. Phepstead, 'King, martyr and virgin:

he wrote this, Abbo had been invited to teach at Ramsey Abbey by its founder, Archbishop Oswald of York. His period in England, 985–7, gave him the opportunity to meet Archbishop Dunstan of Canterbury, from whom he heard accounts of Edmund's death;²⁹ the story of an English king killed by Vikings had added relevance in the 980s, since from 980 onwards England was once more threatened by Scandinavian raids. Growing up as an oblate at Fleury, Abbo would early on have become familiar with an exciting narrative about Scandinavian raids on churches in the Loire valley: chapters 33–34 of Book I of the *Miracles of St Benedict*, written in the 860s by a monk of Fleury called Adrevaldus.³⁰ Adrevaldus' account of Viking mayhem supplied Abbo with a ready-made set of images of heathen northerners and the language in which to write about them. In the *Passio* he says that the Devil, seeking to put Edmund of East Anglia to the test, sends Inguar to him. Inguar and his partner Hubba belonged to the northern races that were so cruel in their inborn ferocity that they did not know how to become gentle in the face of the miseries of mankind.³¹ Some of them were cannibals. The Danes were the northern people most involved in piracy on Christian territories because they lived nearest to them. Inguar and Hubba attacked Northumbria and then East Anglia with a mighty fleet, falling on 'a certain city' and burning it up. They killed the men in the open streets, sparing neither boys nor the elderly, and raped the women, sparing neither virgins nor matrons. Dying husbands lay sprawled over thresholds with their wives, and babies were snatched from their mothers' breasts and killed. It is a lively picture,

Imitatio Christi in Ælfric's *Life of St Edmund*, in A. Bale (ed.), *St Edmund, king and martyr: changing images of a medieval saint*, Woodbridge 2009, 27–44, at 30–33.

²⁹ M. Mostert, *The political theology of Abbo of Fleury*, Hilversum 1987, 40–45; E. Dachowski, *First amongst abbots: the career of Abbo of Fleury*, Washington, DC 2008, 74–5.

³⁰ *Les Miracles de Saint Benoît écrits par Adrevald*, Aimoin, André, Raoul Tortaire et Hugues de Sainte Marie, moines de Fleury, ed. E. de Certain, Paris 1858, 71–6. On the *De miraculis*, see A. Vidier, *L'Historiographie à Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire et les miracles de Saint-Benoît*, Paris 1965, esp. 151–64 on Adrevaldus' section (Book I), and also D.W. Rollason, 'The Miracles of St Benedict: a window on early medieval France', in H. Mayr-Harting and R.I. Moore (eds), *Studies in medieval history presented to R.H.C. Davis*, London 1985, 73–90, esp. 76–82 on Book I. The possible models for Abbo's *Passio* noted by Gransden, 'The legends and traditions', 6–8, include several Frankish saints' lives but not Adrevaldus' *De miraculis*.

³¹ Abbo seems to have been the earliest author to mention Hubba, though Inguar (Ívarr 'the Boneless') is mentioned by Asser in 878: Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, ed. Stevenson, 43 (c. 54). Byrhtferth in his *Vita Oswaldi* (c.1000); the *Annals of St Neots* pair Inguar and Hubba together, presumably following Abbo. For comment on Inguar and Hubba (Ubbe), see *Alfred the Great*, Keynes and Lapidge, 238–9; C. Downham, *Viking kings of Britain and Ireland: the dynasty of Ívarr to A.D. 1014*, Edinburgh 2007, 64–8; Byrhtferth of Ramsey, *The Lives of St Oswald and St Egwine*, ed. and tr. M. Lapidge, Oxford 2009, 16–17, n. 52. See also Bartlett in this volume.

though admittedly all made up of *topoi*, largely drawn from Adrevaldus.³² However, Abbo doesn't mention Viking destruction of monasteries in the *Passio*, presumably to avoid setting up a rival object of sympathy to his hero Edmund. Nevertheless his imagery was useful to twelfth-century authors wanting to write about what the Danes could do to religious houses, as we shall see.

The *Historia de sancto Cuthberto*, which, following Ted Johnson South, we can place somewhere in the middle of the eleventh century,³³ omits the Viking raid on Lindisfarne in 793 altogether.³⁴ Here it is the capture of York in 866, followed by the defeat of the Northumbrians in 867, which provides the starting point for the narrative of Viking violence; York was of interest to the community of St Cuthbert because it owned property in the city.³⁵ King Ælle of Northumbria stole four vills from St Cuthbert and was duly punished when Ubba, duke of the Frisians, captured York and killed him, bringing the Northumbrian line of kings to an end. 'The Scaldings slew nearly all the English in the southern and the northern part, demolished and despoiled the churches.'³⁶ Later (*Historia de sancto Cuthberto* puts the election of Guthfrith as king and Alfred's vision of Cuthbert in first), Bishop Eardwulf and Abbot Eadred carried the body of Cuthbert away from Lindisfarne and wandered for seven years,³⁷ but the community continued to acquire lands (partly from Guthfrith and his Danish army) until the time of Ragnald ('the pagan king'), who divided its estates between his followers Scula and Onlafball.³⁸

We can now turn to the twelfth-century narratives. The Durham material, because it is preserved in an almost continuous sequence of texts over a long

³² See c. 33 of Adrevaldus' *De miraculis Sancti Benedicti* (*Les Miracles*, ed. de Certain, 71–5). This section of Adrevaldus, recounting Viking raids in the Loire valley, was copied with a few tiny alterations by William of Jumièges: *The Gesta Normannorum ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis and Robert of Torigni*, ed. E. van Houts, Oxford 1992–95, i. 20–22, bk i. 6(7)–7(8).

³³ *Historia de sancto Cuthberto: a history of Saint Cuthbert and a record of his patrimony*, ed. and tr. T. Johnson South, Woodbridge 2002, 25–36.

³⁴ W.M. Aird, *St Cuthbert and the Normans: the church of Durham, 1071–1153*, Woodbridge 1998, 24, notes this omission and points out that the *Historia de sancto Cuthberto* describes a translation of Cuthbert's relics to Norham under Bishop Ecgred (830–45) without mentioning a reason for this (*HsC*, c. 9).

³⁵ *HsC*, c. 10. For the property in York, see *ibid.* c. 5, and Domesday Book i, fo. 298a; *Domesday Book*, 30: *Yorkshire*, ed. M.L. Faull and M. Stinson, Chichester 1986, C 2.

³⁶ *HsC*, cc. 10, 11.

³⁷ *HsC*, c. 20; for Guthfrith's election, see *ibid.* c. 13, and for Alfred's vision, immediately before his victory over the Danes at *Assandune*, in error for Edington in 878, *ibid.* c. 16. See also D.W. Rollason, 'The wanderings of St Cuthbert', in *idem* (ed.), *Cuthbert: saint and patron*, Durham 1987, 47–59.

³⁸ *HsC*, cc. 22–3. On Ragnald, king of York from a point before 919 until his death in 920/1, see Symeon, *LdE* p. 130, n. 91; see also Rollason, 'The wanderings of St Cuthbert', 55.

period, is distinctive, and makes a convenient starting point. In looking back to the dawn of the Viking age, Symeon in his *Libellus*, written between 1104 and 1115,³⁹ could use the Northumbrian annals of the eighth and early ninth centuries. His version of the attack on Lindisfarne is slightly more elaborate than theirs: he adds that the raiders overthrew Lindisfarne's altars, seized its treasures, took some monks prisoner, cast out others naked and drowned others. The *Historia regum* is close to Symeon here but adds a quotation from one of the verses in Boethius' *Consolation of philosophy*, including a passage about evildoers trampling underfoot holy necks. However, as Symeon adds, although the church of Lindisfarne had been laid waste, it survived with its see; a handful of monks who had escaped were able to return and remained there with the body of St Cuthbert for a long time yet to come.⁴⁰

Symeon, describing the Viking capture of York (which he dates to 1 November 867), expands on earlier sources to add that 'the heathen army ... destroyed monasteries and churches far and wide with sword and fire, and when they departed they left nothing except roofless walls, to such an extent that the present generation can recognise hardly any sign – sometimes none at all – of the ancient nobility of these places.'⁴¹ The churches are not named, but Symeon presumably meant ones in southern Northumbria, because he says that the invaders did not go north of the Tyne at this point. However, the account lacks corroborative detail; instead, it falls back on conventional remarks about the destruction of war, including, as we have seen, the reference to fire and the sword. When Halfdan did reach the Tyne a few years later, Bishop Eardwulf left Lindisfarne with the body of St Cuthbert.⁴² While the community moved around northern England in flight there was a savage slaughter of the population of Northumbria. Halfdan and his army burned monasteries and churches everywhere and killed monks and nuns after subjecting them to mockeries.⁴³ By contrast, the *Historia regum*, in both its ninth-century sections, misses out these accounts of monastic destruction, though it does mention the slaughter of the Northumbrians and the departure of the community of St Cuthbert from Lindisfarne.⁴⁴

Symeon's *Libellus* thus contains a mixture of historical account, oral tradition and twelfth-century verbal padding added for excitement. Our next author is rather more circumspect. William of Malmesbury was perhaps the only twelfth-century English historian to think seriously about which monasteries actually had been attacked by the Danes across the country as a whole; he did this in

³⁹ Symeon, *LdE* p. xlii.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 88–91 (bk ii. 5); *HR* ii. 54–6.

⁴¹ Symeon, *LdE* 96–7 (bk ii. 6).

⁴² *Ibid.* 100–101 (bk ii. 6).

⁴³ *Ibid.* 104–5 (bk ii. 6).

⁴⁴ *HR* ii. 82, 110, 105–6, 114–15.

Gesta pontificum, the first recension of which he completed in 1125.⁴⁵ William's own abbey had remained unscathed by Danish attacks, a piece of good fortune that he attributes to Aldhelm's sanctity.⁴⁶ Elsewhere in the *Gesta pontificum* he comments on the effects of the Vikings as follows. At Chertsey the Danes had 'destroyed the place like so much else, burning the church, abbot, monks and all'.⁴⁷ Barking, however, 'was never entirely destroyed' because of the prayers of its nuns.⁴⁸ The East Anglian see of Soham had been burned and razed to the ground.⁴⁹ At Abingdon the Danes had ranged around 'with barbaric petulance' and had razed the buildings to the ground.⁵⁰ Glastonbury had survived until Alfred's reign; then the Danes had arrived and had left it desolate, lacking inmates for some years.⁵¹ In the north of England, 'as for the monasteries that had shone like stars throughout the province, they had been destroyed long before this, in the time of the Danes. A few walls still stand in ruins, no pleasure to the eye, but a reminder of past sorrows.' William went on to mention Wearmouth and Whitby ('*Streneshalh* .. quod nunc Witebi dictum'), as examples, but added that many more of the northern houses were now unknown.⁵² At Hexham, 'the Danish army, which had already been an object of fear in the days of Alcuin, finally arrived; they killed or drove out the inhabitants, set fire to their houses, and laid their secret places open to the sky'.⁵³ William uses this account as an explanation for why there were no bishops at Hexham after Tidferth. For what the Danes did at Lindisfarne William could quote Alcuin's letters.⁵⁴ At Gloucester (here

⁴⁵ Malmesbury, *GP* ii. pp. xix–xxv.

⁴⁶ Malmesbury, *GP* i. 610–13 (bk v. 256) recounts how the Danes came to Malmesbury in the reign of Æthelred and how one of them tried to loot precious stones from Aldhelm's shrine, but was repulsed by the saint: 'so it came about that, while all the neighbouring monasteries were robbed and plundered, this one alone never had too serious a calamity to bewail' (ibid. 613).

⁴⁷ Malmesbury, *GP* i. 228–9 (bk ii. 73).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Malmesbury, *GP* i. 242–3 (bk ii. 74). There is also a brief reference to Ely being burned and the nuns there being put to flight, though William has more to say on Ely later, on which see n. 56 below.

⁵⁰ Malmesbury, *GP* i. 300–301 (bk ii. 88).

⁵¹ Ibid. i. 308–9 (bk ii. 91).

⁵² Ibid. i. 386–7 (bk iii. 116). On the debate over the identification of *Streneshalh* (Bede's *Streaneshalch*) with Whitby, see T. Styles, 'Whitby revisited: Bede's explanation of *Streaneshalch*', *Nomina* xxi (1998), 133–48; P. Barnwell, L.A.S. Butler and C.J. Dunn, 'Streanaeshalch, Strensall and Whitby: locating a pivotal council', in M.O.H. Carver (ed.), *The cross goes north: processes of conversion in northern Europe, AD 300–1300*, Woodbridge 2003, 311–26; C. Hough, 'Strensall, *Streaneshalch* and Stronsay', *The English Place-name Society Journal* xxxv (2003), 17–24. Overall, Whitby is the most likely identification.

⁵³ Malmesbury, *GP* i. 388–9 (bk iii. 117).

⁵⁴ Ibid. i. 406–9 (bk iii. 127–8); see also Malmesbury, *GR* i. 104 (bk i. 70).

William conflated the old monastery of St Peter's with the new foundation of Æthelred and Æthelflæd) 'the house flourished till the time of the Danes ... but the monks melted away in the face of the enemy.'⁵⁵ William found slightly more to say about Ely: the abbesses Æthelthryth, Seaxburh and Eormenhild

had in the following period many to imitate their rule and their piety, right up to the time of the Danes, who forced their way into the Fens, put the women to flight, and destroyed their buildings. One, whose brutal heart inspired him with madness, snatched away the precious cloth that covered the tomb of the virgin Æthelthryth, and struck the marble with his axe. The surface of the stone broke apart under the blow, and the fragment, ricocheting off the ground, flew straight into the blasphemer's eye, so that he fell senseless to the floor.⁵⁶

William includes rhetorical flourishes and – as in Ely – miracle stories, but he does not say that Danish destruction was global. It is noticeable, for example, that he says nothing about the history of *Medeshamstede* (Peterborough) before Æthelwold's foundation in the later tenth century.⁵⁷ He also tends to say that monks and nuns fled when the Danes arrived rather than that they were massacred.

In 1121 or just after, slightly earlier than William's *Gesta pontificum*, an anonymous historian at Peterborough was copying out the E version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and inserting materials concerning his abbey. For the year 870, after the account of the Danes defeating and killing King Edmund of East Anglia, the E interpolator added 'and they destroyed all the monasteries they came to. In this same time they came to *Medeshamstede*, burned and destroyed it, killed the abbot and monks and all they found there, and brought it to pass that it became nought that had been very mighty'.⁵⁸ Some monasteries in the Fens found that they could use the martyrdom of King Edmund as a peg on which to hang stories about their own past; the stories they wanted to tell were ones of destruction that would explain why their monastery had had to be refounded in the reign of Edgar.

⁵⁵ Malmesbury, *GP* i. 446–7 (bk iv. 155). Æthelred and Æthelflæd's foundation was also dedicated to St Peter, hence perhaps the confusion; later the dedication was changed to St Oswald: see M. Hare, 'The documentary evidence', in C. Heighway and R. Bryant (eds), *The Golden Minster: the Anglo-Saxon minster and later medieval priory of St Oswald at Gloucester* (Council for British Archaeology Research Report cxvii, 1999), 33–45, at 35–7; Hare, 39, thinks William was attributing Danish destruction to the reign of Cnut, but that 'William was inclined to ascribe all manner of ills to the Danes and it is perhaps best to regard his invocation of "the time of the Danes" as a topos.'

⁵⁶ Malmesbury, *GP* i. 488–9 (bk iv. 183).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* i. 480–83 (bk iv. 180).

⁵⁸ ASC E, s.a. 870 (p. 48).

Hugh Candidus, when writing his Peterborough Chronicle probably between 1155 and 1175,⁵⁹ based his account of what he thought had happened at Peterborough in the late ninth century on the *Passio Sancti Eadmundi*. Thus we find the killing of young and old and the dishonouring of matronly and virginal respectability and plenty of burning.⁶⁰ In addition, however, Hugh says monasteries with their male and female inmates were burned, first in Northumbria and then throughout all England. Then Inguar and Hubba reached East Anglia and martyred Edmund, and 'in that stormy time even that most renowned monastery of Medeshamstede with its monks was burned by fire just like the rest.'⁶¹ Hugh at that point breaks off to criticise those who interpret adversities as punishment for sin. Rather, God allows the elect to undergo testing, as in the case of Job, and also in the case of St Benedict's own monastery.⁶² After the servants of God had been martyred their monasteries remained deserted and in ruins for many years. Some of them were subsequently restored but many remained abandoned, with merely fragments of their walls showing how they had been laid out.⁶³

Book I of *Liber Eliensis*, written at about the same time (it was completed just after 1169), is textually even closer to Abbo's *Passio*, with more verbatim borrowings, though with large slabs of John of Worcester's *Chronicle* as well. Here too we have Inguar and Hubba, the cruel people from the chilly north and the cannibalism. The admixture of John of Worcester allowed better chronology and more interest in events in Northumbria and Mercia. Neither Abbo nor John talked about the destruction of English monasteries in the later ninth century and so the author of the *Liber Eliensis* provided his own comment to the effect that resting-places of the saints and monasteries had been burned.⁶⁴ Then the Danes got to Ely, crossing to it easily by boat; they invaded the nunnery, stretched their swords over the milk-white necks of the nuns and sacrificed them (presumably by beheading) like innocent victims. The nunnery was burned with its virgins, its ornaments and its relics and the city was sacked and burned.⁶⁵ After this the author recounts how one of the Danes rashly tried to break into St Æthelthryth's tomb with his axe, but lost his eyes in the process.⁶⁶ The hint of decapitation in this story may reflect the beheading of St Edmund in Abbo's *Passio*, but headlessness was quite a common feature of Anglo-Saxon

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. xci.

⁶⁰ *Chronicle of Hugh Candidus*, 23.

⁶¹ Ibid. 24.

⁶² Ibid. 24–6.

⁶³ Ibid. 27.

⁶⁴ *LE* 53–4 (bk i. 39).

⁶⁵ Ibid. 54–5 (bk i. 40).

⁶⁶ Ibid. 55–6 (bk i. 41); see also n. 56 above.

saints' cults and there may be several possible sources here.⁶⁷ It is worth noting that at about this time, between 1163 and 1177, William de Vere, then a canon at the Augustinian priory of St Osyth's at Chich in Essex,⁶⁸ was writing a *Life* of the seventh-century St Osyth, supposedly a granddaughter of Penda, in which he made the 'pirates' Inguar and Hubba behead her for refusing to worship idols, and despoil her nunnery. Here, too, a variety of stock elements is visible.⁶⁹

In the early 1160s the Abingdon Chronicle referred generally to the destruction of monasteries;⁷⁰ in a later version composed between the end of the twelfth and the mid-thirteenth centuries the chronicle describes the Danes moving 'from kingdom to kingdom and from people to people', finally reaching Wessex and the house of Abingdon:

⁶⁷ For Abbo, see *Three Lives of English saints*, ed. Winterbottom, 79 and 81; for Oswald of Northumbria, see A. Thacker, 'Membra disjecta: the division of the body and the diffusion of the cult', in C. Stancliffe and E. Cambridge (eds), *Oswald: Northumbrian king to European saint*, Stamford 1995, 97–127; for Kenelm, see *Three eleventh-century Anglo-Latin saints' Lives: Vita S. Birini, Vita et miracula S. Kenelmi and Vita S. Rumwoldi*, ed. R.C. Love, Oxford 1996, 49–89, at 61; for Ethelbert of East Anglia, see M.R. James, 'Two Lives of St Ethelbert, king and martyr', *EHR* xxxii (1917), 214–44; for Osyth, see n. 69 below. See also Catherine Cubitt's comments on local and oral traditions in saints' cults in her article 'Universal and local saints in Anglo-Saxon England', in A. Thacker and R. Sharpe (eds), *Local saints and local churches in the early medieval West*, Oxford 2002, 423–53.

⁶⁸ For William's career, see J. Barrow, 'A twelfth-century bishop and literary patron: William de Vere', *Viator* xviii (1987), 175–89; *English episcopal acts*, vii: *Hereford 1079–1234*, ed. J. Barrow, Oxford 1993, pp. xliii–xlv and nos. 178–242; eadem, 'Vere, William de', in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/95042> (consulted 1 September 2011).

⁶⁹ William's *Life* is now lost, but notes of its contents were made by Leland: *Leland's Itineraries*, ed. L. Toulmin Smith, Oxford 1906–10, v. 167–72. Lessons for the feast of St Osyth are to be found in the Hereford Breviary: *Hereford Breviary*, ed. W.H. Frere and L.E.G. Brown, (HBS xxvi, xl, xlv, 1904–15), ii. 361–4. On the cult of St Osyth, see C. Hohler, 'St Osyth and Aylesbury', *Records of Buckinghamshire* xviii (1966), 61–72. The Anglo-Norman *Life* of St Osyth has been edited twice: A.T. Baker, 'An Anglo-French Life of St Osith', *The Modern Language Review* vi (1911), 476–502; *La Vie sainte Osith, virge e martire*, ed. D.W. Russell, tr. Jane Dick Zatta, rev. and annotated by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Papers on Language and Literature* xli (2005), 339–444, and see also, *ibid.* J. Wogan-Browne, 'The Life of St Osith: an introduction', 300–305, and J. Dick Zatta, 'The *Vie Sainte Osith*: hagiography and politics in Anglo-Norman England', 306–38. Curiously, Zatta and Wogan-Browne overlook the possibility that the Anglo-Norman *Life* was commissioned by Bishop William de Vere at Hereford, which is the likely explanation for the inclusion of the miracle of the crippled woman of Hereford; if so, it could have been largely based on William's own Latin *Life* (now lost, but probably written while William was a canon at Chich), but with a few additions. Hereford was an important centre for Anglo-Norman literature in the later twelfth century: Simon de Freine was a canon there and Hue de Rotelande lived near by at Credenhill.

⁷⁰ *Historia ecclesie Abendonensis*, i. 28 (c. 14); for the dating, see *ii*. p. xvii.

Finally, they entirely drove out the monks and destroyed with hostile hand, leonine ferocity, and detestable greed the sacrosanct and venerable house of Abingdon ... so that nothing is reported to have remained there besides the walls. However, it was divinely provided that the relics of saints with the charters of the house ... were secretly preserved.

The Danes (still pagan) occupied the monastery and one day, when they 'were sitting like monks in the refectory and were behaving themselves in all respects in a manner both scurrilous and disorderly' a miracle occurred; the figure of Christ on a crucifix, shocked by their gluttony, tore stones out of the wall and stoned them so that they fled.⁷¹

At Whitby, a short narrative of the post-Conquest refoundation was composed before 1180, and about six decades later it was copied into the abbey cartulary, whose earliest sections were written c.1240. This recounted how the 'very energetic' knight Reinfrid, when passing through Northumbria, came to *Streoneshalc*:

When he learned that the holy place together with the province of Northumbria had been laid to waste, in a ferocious devastation (*depopulatio*) by the most cruel pirates Inguar and Ubba, leaders of the Alans and the Danes, and that thereafter the religious service of monks and nuns had ceased in that place for more than two hundred years, he was struck with compunction in his heart.⁷²

It is now time to pull some threads together. Devastated monasteries and fleeing, or slaughtered, religious tend not to feature in historical works about kings, or written for kings. This may well be the reason why the A version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle omits all accounts of devastated monasteries in the late eighth and the ninth centuries;⁷³ it would also explain why such stories are largely omitted by William of Malmesbury from his *Gesta regum* and by Henry of Huntingdon from his *Historia Anglorum*. Presumably destroyed

⁷¹ Ibid. i. 268–71; for dating of this recension (MS 'B', BL Cotton Claudius B. vi), see *ibid.* ii. p. xxxvii (s. xiii^{2/4} or s. xiii^{med}).

⁷² *Cartularium abbatiae de Whiteby*, 1; note also the description (*ibid.* 2) of walls and uncovered altars of almost forty oratories on the site. I have followed Atkinson (*ibid.* p. xxxii) on the dating of the narrative; for the dating of the cartulary, see G.R.C. Davis, *Medieval cartularies of Great Britain and Ireland*, rev. edn by C. Breay, J. Harrison and D.M. Smith, London 2010, 209.

⁷³ On Alfred's role in the commissioning and choice of material for the earliest version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, see A. Scharer, 'The writing of history at King Alfred's court', *Early Medieval Europe* v (1996), 177–206, esp. 178–85; on probable royal involvement in several later sections of various versions of the chronicle, see N.P. Brooks, 'Why is the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* about kings?', *ASE* xxxix (2010), 43–70.

monasteries did not figure prominently in the list of suitable topics for royal audiences. Ecclesiastical audiences, however, wished to hear accounts of what the Vikings had done, or could be claimed to have done, to churches in general and their own community in particular. There were several reasons why claiming a violent break in ecclesiastical continuity in the ninth century was appealing: it might serve as an explanation for changes in monastic observance, or more especially for changes from monastic to clerical observance, and it could also show why monasteries had lost property, books and relics that they might now be trying to reclaim. Elsewhere in Europe, indeed, it was not uncommon for monastic historians of the tenth to the twelfth centuries to attribute the cessation of regular life in their houses, especially the replacement of monks or nuns by clergy, to damage caused by Vikings in the ninth century, or by the Hungarians at the turn of the ninth and tenth centuries;⁷⁴ in several instances, even though houses actually had been attacked, later accounts exaggerated the impact of the invaders, in particular their effect on the internal organisation of the communities they attacked.⁷⁵

Twelfth-century English authors, too, often felt that Vikings could be used appropriately to mark a turning-point between what they saw as mid-Anglo-Saxon monastic fervour and early-tenth-century monastic decay, and in this line of thinking they may have received some of their inspiration from French historians. At least one Continental work containing a vivid account of Viking destruction, William of Jumièges' *Gesta Normannorum*, was widely circulated in England.⁷⁶ William of Malmesbury knew a large number of continental historical works.⁷⁷ However, unlike their French counterparts, who did often possess ninth-century accounts of Viking attacks on churches, English historians were faced with a shortage of material. Apart from Durham, whose monks could make use of early Northumbrian annals, their own community's summary accounts of property

⁷⁴ For examples of Viking attacks marking a caesura in the history of Norman abbeys in accounts by eleventh- and twelfth-century historians, see, for example, OV ii. 8–9, 14–17; *GND* i. 24–7.

⁷⁵ J. Nightingale, *Monasteries and patrons in the Gorze reform: Lotharingia, c.850–1000*, Oxford 2001, 66–7, 174–84; Jones, 'Pitying the desolation of such a place'. Vikings were also used by eleventh- and twelfth-century authors to explain the movement of relics in the ninth and tenth centuries: see F. Lifshitz, 'The migration of Neustrian relics in the Viking age: the myth of voluntary exodus, the reality of coercion and theft', *Early Medieval Europe* iv (1995), 175–92.

⁷⁶ William of Jumièges' copy of part of Adrevaldus was fairly well known in twelfth- and thirteenth-century England: *GND* i. pp. xcvi–cxix on the surviving manuscripts, many of which are of English origin and provenance. Even so, twelfth-century monastic historians in eastern England seem to have preferred Abbo's *Passio Sancti Edmundi*, since it provided an East Anglian context for events.

⁷⁷ R.M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, 2 edn, Woodbridge 2003, 67–9.

transactions and the eleventh-century *Historia de sancto Cuthberto*, English monastic communities were starved of sources about the ninth century. They could use the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, or (more readily) works derived from it, such as John of Worcester's *Chronicle* and its dependent compilations, and they could draw on Abbo's *Passio Sancti Eadmundi* for colourful martyrdom imagery. Some had access to the accounts of the destruction of Lindisfarne preserved in the DE versions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, more fully elaborated by William of Malmesbury and by the Durham historians. But all in all there was little to go on. Abbo's *Passio* was very widely used, as we see from the frequent occurrences of Inguar and Hubba in our stories. The 793 attack on Lindisfarne may have supplied the main mental image of destruction and of the slaughter of monks, but perhaps equally potent images were supplied by some Anglo-Saxon saints' *Lives*, or even by stories of early Christian martyrs. Bede's narrative of the late-seventh-century burning of the monastery of Coldingham in the *Historia ecclesiastica* seems to have had a particular appeal: the story of how Æthelthryth had taken the veil at Coldingham and how it had burned down shortly after she had left is retold with enthusiasm in the *Liber Eliensis*.⁷⁸ The burning of Coldingham may also have influenced the author of the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* and Hugh Candidus in their accounts of ninth-century destruction. Indeed, in the thirteenth century Roger of Wendover was to turn Bede's Coldingham story into a gripping account of a Viking attack on defenceless nuns, who managed to protect themselves from rape by cutting off their noses and lips, but who could not protect themselves from fire.⁷⁹ Overall, a very limited repertoire of narrative elements was reshuffled again and again to produce stories that answered what seems to have been a desire for excitement combined with a need for validation. Ecclesiastical communities, especially, but not only, Benedictine ones, may have felt that ninth-century fire and the sword, preferably inflicted by Inguar and Hubba, would help to justify their subsequent refoundation and thus their continuing existence.

⁷⁸ LE 31 (bk i. 14); *Liber Eliensis*, tr. Fairweather, 40–41.

⁷⁹ Matthew Paris, *Chronica majora*, ed. H.R. Luard (RS [lvii], 1872–83), i. 391–2.