

Seksogtyvende tværfaglige VIKINGESYMPORIUM

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Beretning fra seksogtyvende tværfaglige vikingesymposium

Redigeret

af

Niels Lund

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Stirrup decorated in the Ringerike style from Romsey, Hants., England.
See p. 22, fig. 8.

CONTENTS

Preface	4
Niels Lund	
Hans Bekker-Nielsen 1933-2007	5
Else Roesdahl	
Danmark-England in the eleventh century: The growing archaeological evidence for contacts across the North Sea	7
Simon Keynes	
The Massacre of St Brice's Day (13 November 1002)	32
Julia Barrow	
Bishop Brictius – Saint Brice	67

PREFACE

The twenty-sixth interdisciplinary viking symposium was held by rotation in the University of Copenhagen on the 21st of May 2007. Two of the lectures were devoted to King Æthelred the Unready's massacre of the Danes in England on St Brice's day, 13 November, 1002, and all three of them had been delivered previously at a conference in the University of Nottingham on the 13th of November 2002, and were revised for this occasion.

The printing of this book is made possible by a gift to the University of Cambridge in memory of Dorothea Coke, Skjaeret, 1951.

Hans Bekker-Nielsen

1933-2007

A SHORT TIME before the twenty-sixth interdisciplinary viking symposium was held, Hans Bekker-Nielsen, emeritus professor of Norse philology in the University of Odense, died.

Hans was probably the best rector that Odense University never got, an academic to the backbone. He realized that research is a current discussion and was always involved in discussion. The most important thing about congresses and symposia was not the papers but all the talk and discussions you could have in between, and Hans always contributed to the life of congresses between sessions. In Odense also he put a lot of effort into getting people together and always made sure discussions enjoyed good and comfortable conditions. When I was a very young man and thought I was going to have a crack at Peter Sawyer in a discussion in *Medieval Scandinavia*, Hans made sure we met and got talking over a handsome supply of Else's food and Hans' favourite stout.

Hans' services to scholarship included the editing of *Bibliography of Old Norse Studies* as well as *Medieval Scandinavia* and many anthologies. He was a founding father of the Interdisciplinary Viking Symposia and co-organized all those held in Odense, often including an excursion into the lovely countryside of Fyn.

In his retirement ailments of age stopped him from spending as much time in university as he would have liked. Friends, however, knew that on the day his house was being cleaned, he was available at lunch-time in his favourite pub in Odense.

Niels Lund



DENMARK-ENGLAND IN THE ELEVENTH CENTURY

The growing archaeological evidence for contacts across the North Sea

Else Roesdahl

IN THIS ARTICLE I wish to present a brief summary of the growing archaeological evidence for connections between Denmark and England in the eleventh century – during England's 'second Viking Age' and beyond – and during Denmark's late Viking Age. I shall concentrate on the Danish archaeological evidence, while also drawing attention to information in Danish written sources concerning Englishmen in Denmark during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Due to the abundance of English written sources and of the number of coins found, the late Viking Age has traditionally been the domain of historians, philologists and numismatists – while archaeology has generally merely provided pretty illustrations. I wish to show that the main characteristics and development of the contacts can be traced as well from archaeological evidence (including numismatics), as from written sources. Archaeological evidence, however, also provides new insights on the period, and I hope to initiate a discussion of the value of such evidence on the basis of which I wish to pose some questions. The time is now ripe for an increased amount of interdisciplinary work, of the kind which has proved so constructive for the earlier part of the Viking period.¹

The archaeological evidence for connections across the North Sea has grown enormously both in Denmark and England, partly thanks to metal-detectorists working with museums (a co-operation which means that such finds are recorded),² and to new identifications of artefacts. David Williams's work is particularly important, in that he has shown that a variety of fragments and small mounts, some of them formerly thought to be book-mounts, are actually parts of riding tackle (which

¹ This article (and the lecture delivered in May 2007) is an adapted version of a lecture delivered at Nottingham University on St Brice's day, 2002. I am grateful to David M. Wilson for discussions and for adjustments to my English.

² See, for example, Leahy & Paterson 2001; Pedersen 2005.

sadly means that estimates of contemporary literacy has decreased considerably!). There are also comprehensive studies on select groups of the archaeological material (old and new), such as James Graham-Campbell's 1992 article on Anglo-Scandinavian equestrian equipment in eleventh-century England, Anne Pedersen's 1996-97 article on riding-gear in Denmark, Olwyn Owen's 2001 article on the Urnes style in England, while Anne Pedersen's 2004 article on archaeological evidence for contact across the North Sea also draws attention to wider perspectives.³

These articles and others demonstrate the amount of new material found since we made the 'The Vikings in England' exhibition and catalogue in 1981.⁴ Then we trawled museums and the knowledge of everybody working on the subject in order to include all, or most of, the known material. Material from the eleventh century was, however, sparse at the time.

POLITICAL BACKGROUND AS SEEN IN THE WRITTEN SOURCES A BRIEF SURVEY

England's so-called second Viking Age started around 980, and Denmark was seriously involved in it by 991. More than two decades of Danish/Scandinavian raids and the extortion of Danegeld in England followed. In 1013 King Sven Forkbeard conquered the entire country, the population of which included many people of Scandinavian ancestry who had settled after the earlier conquest of much of England in the late ninth century; but Sven died in February 1014, and the Danish fleet returned home. In the following year, however, a huge new fleet, led by Sven's son Knut, returned to harass the English. By 1016 the country was re-conquered and Knut had become king. He reigned with considerable success until his death in 1035, supported by a formidable military contingent of Danish/Scandinavian men, some of whom held high office. After his brother's death, c. 1018, he also became king of Denmark, and in 1028 conquered Norway. Knut was succeeded in England by his illegitimate son, Harald Harefoot, and in Denmark by his son by Queen Emma, Harthacnut. After the death of his half-

³ Williams 1997; Graham-Campbell 1992; Pedersen 1996-97; Owen 2001; Williams 2002; Pedersen 2004.

⁴ *The Vikings in England*, 1981. See also Roesdahl 1982, 220f. with refs.

brother in 1040 Harthacnut also became king of England, but died without heirs in 1042. Thus ended Danish rule in England.

Harthacnut was succeeded in England by his half-brother, Edward the Confessor, the son of Emma by the English king Æthelred (who had died in 1016). Edward had been brought up in Normandy, and from now on Norman influence prevailed in England and Scandinavian influence waned – the king's Scandinavian 'thinglith', for example, was dissolved and paid off with much silver. Many Danes would have returned to their homeland.

But the dream of English wealth lived on in Denmark and Norway – and also in Normandy. After Edward the Confessor's death in 1066 (he had no heirs) the English magnate Harold Godwinsson (who was partly of Scandinavian extraction) was elected king. The king of Norway, Harald Hardrada, led a huge fleet to England in an attempt to conquer the country, but was defeated by Harold Godwinsson and killed at Stamford Bridge near York. Less than three weeks later Harold was defeated and killed in battle at Hastings in southern England by William of Normandy.

From a strong military base William and his successors consolidated their hold on the English crown, despite heavy opposition and a serious Danish/Scandinavian revolt in the North which was suppressed in a particularly vicious fashion. Several times during the 1070s the Danish king Sven Estridsen sent fleets to England, but to no effect. In 1085, however, the Danish king Knut (the Holy) gathered a vast fleet in order to conquer England as Knut the Great had done seventy years before. The attack was well planned and probably comprised alliances with the king of Norway, the count of Flanders and some of the Scandinavians in England. But Knut was delayed by problems on his southern border and the fleet never sailed. Next year he was killed in a rebellion. This was the last time a Danish king tried to conquer England. Throughout the eleventh century and into the twelfth century, however, there is ample written evidence of Anglo-Danish contacts, particularly in the ecclesiastical sphere.

The aristocracy – swords and riding-tackle

Had England been plundered and conquered while Denmark was still a pagan country with pagan burial customs, there would surely have been many English objects in the graves of the aristocracy. But by 990

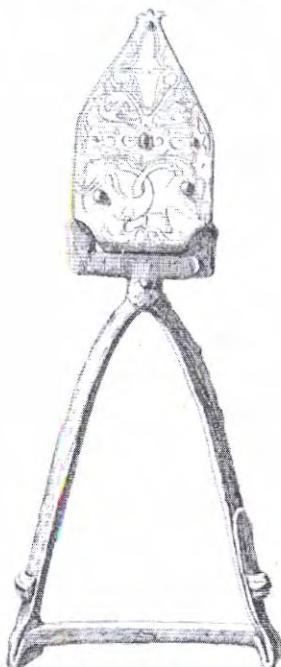


Fig 1. Stirrup from Velds. After Worsaae 1859, 116.

Denmark had been officially Christian for about twenty-five years, and accompanied burial was extremely rare. By 1016 it would have been abandoned altogether. However, remains of two extremely splendid swords from around the year 1000 have been found in rivers in Skåne. One is a heavily ornamented sword pommel of gilt silver from Vrångabäck, while the other is the upper part of a sword and its scabbard mount from Dybäck with a hilt and mount of gilt silver with niello and gold wire and the grip itself bound with gold wire. The mounts of both swords were produced in England by English craftsmen, while the scabbard mount of the Dybäck sword is of Scandinavian workmanship.⁵ The swords were presumably owned by members of the top aristocracy from the inner circles around Sven Forkbeard or Knut the Great, probably Danes who had spent time in England. A further sword of English type, probably of similar date is known in Denmark; unprovenanced, it has a silver inlaid hilt and is now in the Moesgaard Museum.⁶

A set of fine horse-trappings from Velds, in North Jutland,⁷ would also have belonged to a member of the aristocracy (fig. 1). The bit and

⁵ Strömberg 1961, 138ff; Graham-Campbell 1980, no. 250; Roesdahl & Wilson (eds.) 1992, no. 414; Pedersen 2004, 47-49. On the find circumstances, see also J. Lund 2004.

⁶ *The Vikings in England*, 1981, 177 (K2); Pedersen 2004, 47f. and fig. 1.

⁷ Brøndsted 1936 no. 33; Backhouse, Turner & Webster (eds.) 1984, no. 98; Pedersen 2004, 48-51.

stirrups are of iron and the series of strap-mounts are of copper alloy. Finely ornamented, they are thought to have been produced in southern England by an English craftsman for one of Knut's Scandinavian men, or by a Danish craftsman inspired by Anglo-Saxon ornament. The trappings probably came from a grave found in 1851 together with a now lost axe and skeleton. If it really is of early eleventh-century date (and not from the late tenth century), and if the objects really come from a grave, it would be the latest grave of pagan character known from Denmark. It may also be noted that stirrups were not common in England before c. 1000, and that they may well have been introduced there from Denmark.⁸

Memorials of the aristocracy

Four Danish rune-stones mention contacts between Denmark and England within the period c. 1000–1025 (one of them is probably of somewhat later date). The runes are of the so-called 'post-Jellinge' type and one stone is decorated with eleventh-century ornament. Two of the stones are from Hedeby-Schleswig (DR 3 and DR 6, fig. 2) and two are from Skåne (Uppåkra, DR 266; Valleberga, DR 337). They mention men who had taken part in expeditions to England or 'the West', or men who 'lie' there, meaning they were buried there.⁹ Four Danish rune-stones may seem paltry when compared with the number of Swedish stones commemorating Swedes in England, but this must be seen against the fact that in Denmark the fashion of raising rune-stones ceased c. 1025; in central Sweden, on the other hand, from where the majority of the Swedish stones come, the raising of rune-stone is generally later, and was in full flow when the men who had been to England would have died.¹⁰

8 Seaby & Woodfield 1980, 102–03; Graham-Campbell 1992, 79.

9 DR nos. 3, 6, 266, 337; Moltke 1985, 196, 238, 262–3, and Table of inscriptions p. 526, 540, 545. Carelli (2004) has suggested that the place-name on the Valleberga rune-stone might mean Lund (in Skåne) and not London, in which case the two men were buried not far from where their memorial was raised. However, this would hardly have been worth while to write on a stone memorial, and there are also linguistic reasons to prefer the traditional interpretation as London.

10 Jansson 1965; 1987.

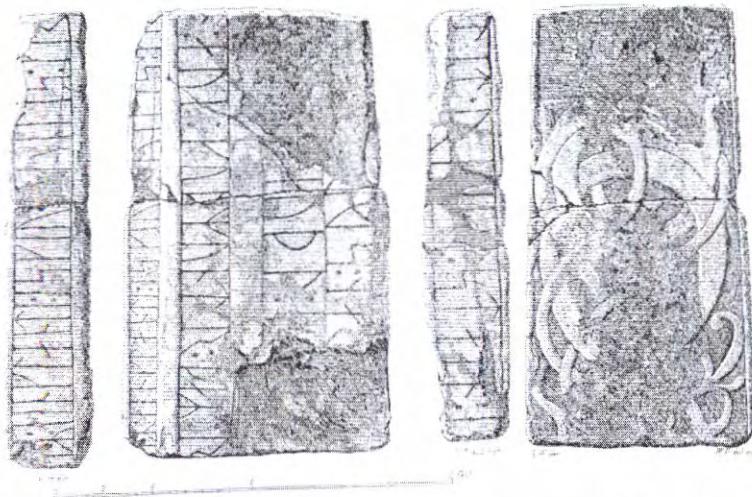


Fig. 2. Rune-stone from Schleswig (DR 6), recovered from the masonry of the Cathedral. Top and bottom are missing. It is of limestone and is unusual by being flat and rectangular, with script on three sides and ornament on the fourth. Remnants of red colour in the runes were observed when the stone was discovered. The text says: '... had the stone erected in memory of ... (he) died ... N.N. and Gudmund, they (carved the runes). He rests in Skia in England ...'. After Wimmer 1893–1908.

It is also interesting, as has been pointed out by Katherine Holman, that stone grave monuments of the first part of the eleventh century are unknown in Denmark, although they were used for Scandinavian men in England, for example in Winchester and Rochester, and at St Paul's in London. Danish graves of the period were largely anonymous – rune-stones were normally not associated with burials.¹¹

Silver from England

Written sources tell of massive Danegeld payments from 991 until the final conquest of England in 1016. In addition, silver was also paid to those who at the same time were mercenaries of king Æthelred, under the leadership of Torkil the Tall. Huge payments were later given to Knut's Danish men, including those dismissed in 1018 (they were paid from a geld of 82,500 pounds of silver) and to the contingent of men

¹¹ Wilson 1974; Graham-Campbell 1980, no. 499; *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture* 4, 1995, *passim*; Holman 1998; Roesdahl 2006, 178–9.

remaining with Knut – the excuse being that they could prevent further attacks on England from Scandinavia. A vast quantity of English silver, then, came directly to Denmark from c. 1000, and during most of the next half century. Such coins are frequently found in archaeological contexts, but more typically in hoards.¹²



Fig. 3. Coin of Æthelred II, 'Crux' type, c. 991-97, found in Denmark (left). This type was the model for Sven Forkbeard's coinage of c. 995 (right). Not to scale. After Roesdahl & Wilson (eds.) 1992, cat. nos. 422b and 423a.

Coin of Æthelred are common in Denmark (fig. 3) and have traditionally been interpreted as remains of Danegelds. But in hoards they often appear together with other coins, including many from Germany, and for some time all these coins have frequently been interpreted as the result of mainly trade.¹³ Recently, however, it seems that many numismatists have returned to the traditional explanation for the presence of many of the English coins, i.e. that individual Danes' part of a Danegeld went into general circulation and became mixed with other coins before they were (sometimes) hidden in the ground, later to be found as hoards.¹⁴ Some newly found 'Danegeld hoards' on Bornholm (from Tyskegaard and Store Frigaard) support the explanation of English coins as mainly resulting from Danegeld. These hoards, published by Jens Christian Moesgaard, consisted almost entirely of English coins of the same type from the 990s, which must have been hidden shortly after they were acquired without having been mixed with other coins.¹⁵

¹² Jensen (ed.) 1995.

¹³ Blackburn & Jonsson 1981.

¹⁴ Survey of discussion in Moesgaard 2006, 289-96, 412-19.

¹⁵ Moesgaard 2006.

Economy: Danish coinages and the use of coins

Against this background, and that of the military and political links between England and Denmark, it is hardly surprising that the Danish coinage was entirely modernised

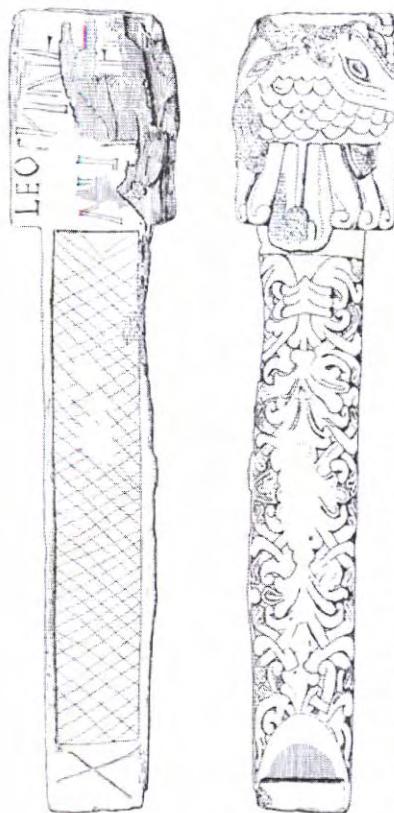


Fig. 4. Pen-case lid from Lund in Skåne, c. 1020-1050. Length 33.4 cm. Made of maple. The decoration on the upper side is in the English Winchester style. The flat underside has a recessed area for wax (to be written on) and an incised inscription in Latin letters. After Blomqvist & Mårtensson 1963, fig. 241.

¹⁶ Jensen (ed.) 1995, 22-25.

¹⁷ Jensen (ed.) 1995, with refs. On personal names, see also Lerche Nielsen 1997.

on the basis of English designs, and that the first coins of this type (bearing the king's portrait and name) were struck for Sven Forkbeard c. 995 (fig. 3). They were struck a few years after the first huge Danegeld payment by an English moneyer, Godwine, whose name also appears on contemporary coins of English type struck for the Norwegian and Swedish kings.¹⁶

The complicated story of English influence on Danish coinage during the first half of the eleventh century has been much discussed in recent years. Here I would only say that during Knut's Danish reign it became normal for the first time to record the name of the mint, as well as names of the king and moneyer, on the coin. Further, the names of the moneyers of this period were, not surprisingly, often English, indicating that a number of high-status Englishmen worked in Denmark.¹⁷ Indeed, it has been suggested that the lid of a fine pen-case found in Lund (an important mint) and decorated in the English Winchester style, once belonged to one of these; its in-

scription probably records the name LEOFWINE, while another badly preserved word on the case possibly means 'moneyer' (fig. 4).¹⁸

The strong English influence on Danish coinage was not continuous during Knut's later years, and it disappeared entirely during the second half of the eleventh century when the joint kingship of Denmark and England had come to an end. Silver hoards of the eleventh century, however, indicate that at the beginning of the century the old economic system of payment with silver by weight was replaced by payment in coin. From now on the hoards include little hack-silver or ingots, but largely, as in England, are made up of coins. The contacts with England, then, also meant a widespread monetary economy in Denmark.¹⁹

Towns, crafts and trade, and a new taste for 'the English'

For many years there has been much discussion as to what extent the close contact between England and Denmark at the time of the joint kings (1016-1042) influenced the structure and 'life' of the new Danish towns founded around AD 1000, and to what extent these contacts were instrumental in the founding of such towns.²⁰

It is still impossible to answer the questions raised in these discussions, partly because written sources on Denmark at this period are so few, and partly because archaeology has shown that there was so much development in Denmark during the second part of the tenth century.²¹ The town of Lund, for example, was founded (or some of its important functions were moved there from near-by Uppåkra) by 990, which is just before the English adventures started. It seems self-evident, however, that, as the Scandinavians soon after this date learnt much more about the English towns and their structure, such knowledge would at least have contributed to the development of Danish towns. Further, it must be assumed that the huge amounts of English silver pouring into Denmark contributed considerably to trade and exchange within this country.

¹⁸ Blomqvist & Mårtensson 1963, 213-16; Andrén 1980; Roesdahl & Wilson (eds.) 1992, no. 419.

¹⁹ Skovmand 1942; Pedersen 2004, 62-4; Moesgaard 2006, 413-19.

²⁰ For example Roesdahl 1982, 86; Hill 1994.

²¹ On written information, see for example N. Lund 1994; on the archaeology, see for example Roesdahl 2002.

Recent excavations at Viborg Søndersø strongly support this suggestion, while meetings of the main assembly, the *landsting*, of Jutland, at Viborg, was also of great importance for this town's history.²² Important and long-ranging decisions would have been made here at this time, particularly after the death of Sven Forkbeard in 1014 – although the almost complete lack of written sources for the history of Denmark itself means that we have no explicit written information concerning them. Clearly, however, a new king – the successor of Sven – must have been acknowledged at the assembly (it was to be Knut's elder brother Harald); decisions must have been taken concerning the provision of a fleet for Knut (the brother who did not succeed) to help him re-conquer England; and, later, Knut would have been acknowledged as king of Denmark after his brother's strangely anonymous death c. 1018. Other matters considered would have concerned internal political matters in Denmark at the time of joint English-Danish kingship, and so on.

English written sources record that Knut, while king of England, was in Denmark in 1019–20, in 1022–3, in 1026 or 1027, and again in 1027 on his way back to England from Rome. It is not known where he went, but he must have visited the main assemblies (at Viborg for Jutland, at Lund for Skåne, and probably Ringsted or Roskilde for Sjælland) and was presumably accompanied by a huge retinue, who would have brought their own followers. The important families of the region and their followers would meet him and each other at these assemblies, which would also provide occasions to hold markets at which merchants and craftsmen of many trades would sell goods to all levels of society. The assemblies were the scenes, for a relatively short period of time, of great and varied activity.

The latest excavations at Viborg Søndersø provide evidence of such activities, precisely dated by dendrochronology to 1018–1030, and also show that there were breaks between the various phases of activity. There was no continuity. It is very likely, therefore, that the main activities, including the production of a variety of goods, were related to thing meetings after the death of king Harald c. 1018 and following putative visits by Knut suggested above.²³

²² Bolton 2005; Hjermind et al. 2005; Roesdahl 2007. On the general history of Denmark at the time of Knut, see also N. Lund 1994.

²³ Iversen et al. (eds.) 2005, 565–9 et passim.

Excavations in Viborg, and Lund (and more particularly in Lund, which may have been a favoured royal place of residence, and which had a very important mint) have produced clear evidence of English contacts of a kind rarely found elsewhere in contemporary Denmark. Maria Cinthio and others have pointed to a number of English objects from early Lund (for example the pen case mentioned above (fig. 4), a walking-stick and an ivory strap-end), and argued that the stone church of the Holy Trinity, which was probably built during the reign of Knut the Great, has important characteristics in common with the Old Minster at Winchester. A widespread burial practice (a solid layer of charcoal at the bottom of graves), which is unusual in Denmark, also provides links with Winchester.²⁴ Further, in Viborg and Lund – as well as at other places – English moneymen were active.²⁵

Humble finds from Viborg and Lund, sherds of pottery for example, are also of particular interest. Pottery was imported from England to Denmark, where it was sometimes copied (as shown by analysis of the clay). From Viborg come glazed sherds of English Stamford ware, as well as locally produced versions of unglazed Torksey type pottery; while sherds of such Anglo-Scandinavian pottery also appears in Lund and some other places in Skåne; further, in Lund sherds of locally produced glazed pottery of English Stamford ware form were found – and similar sherds were found at the royal site of Lejre, in Sjælland.²⁶ Although this pottery must have been very attractive, glazed pottery was not produced in Denmark after this until about two hundred years later. These copies of English pottery may have been produced by English potters working in Denmark or by Danes who had learned the trade in England and returned to their homeland. Whatever the case, these finds demonstrate that craftsmen other than moneymen also travelled between the two countries and that there was a taste in Denmark at that time for functional objects in the English taste.

²⁴ Blomqvist & Mårtensson 1963, 19of., 213ff. and passim; Roesdahl & Wilson (eds.) 1992, nos. 19, 419; Cinthio 1997; 1999; 2004.

²⁵ Jensen (ed.) 1995.

²⁶ Mårtensson (ed.) 1976, 267f. (Lund); Christensen, Larsen, Larsson & Vince 1994 (Lejre and Lund); Hjermind 1998, 113f.; Hjermind 2005, 420-22 (Viborg); Brorsson 2001 (Skåne).

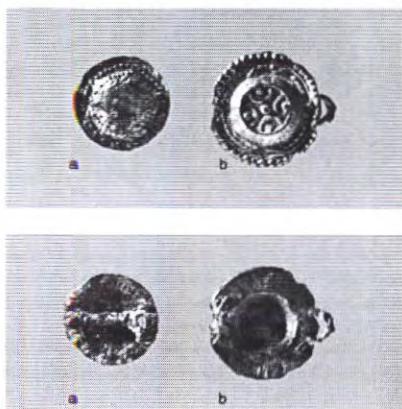


Fig. 5. Two brooches from Viborg Søndersø. Diam. 1.9 and 2.2 cm. They are of copper alloy and tin/lead alloy. Probably of English origin or inspiration. After Iversen et al. (eds.) 2005, 471.

related to brooches found in England, Ireland and Continental Western Europe, and some were produced in Lund. Those found in Denmark were presumably either imported or inspired from England and were used either by English people in Denmark, or by Danes who had acquired a taste for English fashion (fig. 6, left).²⁷ Further, another workshop found in Lund produced cheap dress-hooks in the English fashion. These were alien to Scandinavian traditions and this workshop clearly catered for a market which adhered to English fashions – supposedly anglophilic Danes, or Englishmen living in Denmark.²⁸ Importantly, these brooches and dress-hooks relate to ‘common’ people – not to members of the aristocracy. An English stave-built tub (identified by dendrochronology) and some shoes of supposedly English origin from Viborg would belong to the same group.²⁹

From Lund and Viborg also come some animal bones with carved or incised sketches of ornamental patterns. This is a type of artefact which was alien to Danish and Scandinavian traditions, but closely related to the Irish ‘motif-pieces’, a type well known in England. In the British

²⁷ Blomqvist & Mårtensson 1963, 191–5; Mårtensson (ed.) 1976, 297f.; Cinthio 1999, 41f.; Iversen et al. (eds.) 2005, 47f.; Roesdahl 2007.

²⁸ Cinthio 1999, 43; Pedersen 2004, 58f.

²⁹ Iversen et al (eds.) 2005, 153, 405, 414.

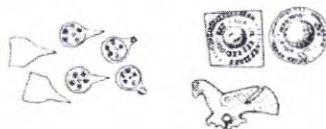


Fig. 6. Left: bronze hooked tags and rough-outs, length c. 2 cm. Right: copper brooch, diam. 2.8 cm, and rough-out, and lead model for bird-shaped brooch, length 4.2 cm. All from Lund. After Cinthio 1999, figs. 3 and 5.

There is also a group of small, unpretentious brooches of copper and tin-lead alloys, known only from Viborg and Lund (figs. 5–6); so far they do not appear among the wealth of metal-detector finds. They are closely

Isles motif-pieces were used by craftsmen and their apprentices to try out and practice ornamental details, and this may to some extent have influenced Danish craftsmen at the time. The patterns on the Viborg and Lund pieces bear no particular relationship to Irish or English ornament, and some are clearly in the Scandinavian taste.³⁰

There were, then, multi-faceted English connections at Viborg and Lund in the first half of the eleventh century, which were related not only to the aristocracy, the church and the production of coins, but also to lower levels of society. It is clear that craftsmen of various kinds found work and inspiration on the other side of the North Sea. Some may have followed travelling aristocracy, while others presumably sought market opportunities. Perhaps the names of two such craftsmen are known through two English names – Eadrinc and Hikuin – incised in runes on combs from Lund and Aarhus. Both may be dated c. 1000 or slightly later.³¹ On the other hand, the names may also express an influence in the use of English among the Danes or that the bearers of these names had their origin in mixed marriages or alliances.

Somewhat later – from the eleventh and early twelfth centuries – is a growing group of small enamelled brooches, which have now been found in many places in Denmark, as well as in Eastern England. They are almost certainly of English origin, and would, then, illustrate a rather widespread taste for English fashion at this time.³²

Ecclesiastical contacts

In 1908 Ellen Jørgensen published her classic survey of foreign influences on the early Danish Church. She emphasized the great importance of the English Church. She showed that there were many English bishops in Denmark and that English saints were venerated here (among them St Alban whose relics were stolen in England and brought to Odense, and St Bothulf, who was particularly popular in East Anglia and to whom five Danish churches are known to have been dedicated – among them one in Viborg); among other matters, she showed that English ecclesiastical terminology was introduced.³³

³⁰ Iversen et al (eds.) 2005, 485–8; Roesdahl 2007.

³¹ Moltke 1985, 359, 361f., 373, 461, 466.

³² Buckton 1989; Pedersen 2004, 56–58

³³ Jørgensen 1908. See also Christensen 1969, 266–70; N. Lund 1994.



Fig. 7. Anglo-Norman doorway, c. 1100. Lihme church, Salling, Jutland. Photo: Else Roesdahl 2007.

Olaf Olsen found English features in the earliest church at St Jørgensbjerg (originally St Clemens) in Roskilde (built c. 1030), while Maria Cinthio, as has been mentioned, found English features in the huge church of the Holy Trinity in Lund, and in burial customs in Lund. These churches are among the earliest stone churches in Denmark and must have been planned and built by English craftsmen. The same is surely true about the earliest stone church preceding the present Roskilde Cathedral, which was built in the 1020s by Estrid, sister of Knut the Great (although archaeological remains of this church have not been identified).³⁴ Some twelfth-century Danish churches also have English architectural features – particularly churches in northern Denmark, near the Limfjord which gave access to the North Sea and England (fig. 7), and in Skåne.³⁵

³⁴ Olsen 1960; Cinthio 1997, 2004.

³⁵ Mackeprang 1944, 42f. The round towers of a small number of Danish churches, in South Jutland and in Skåne (Mackeprang 1944, 52f.) may also be an English feature, inspired from East Anglia (on these, see Heywood 1988).

Hardly any church furnishing from the eleventh century is preserved in Denmark,³⁶ but some English books of this period are known. The Dalby book, a gospel from the second half of the eleventh century, and the oldest preserved book produced in Denmark – probably the monastery of Dalby in Skåne – shows English stylistic influences.³⁷ And it is also of interest that two English books from c. 1000 or shortly after are preserved in Denmark. Both are now in the Royal Library, but their early history is unknown. One of them belonged to Wulfstan, who was bishop of London 996–1002 and later archbishop of York, until his death in 1023. Wulfstan played an important role in English politics and was advisor to Knut the Great. The book has a series of different texts which include some additions by Wulfstan himself.³⁸ The other volume is a splendid gospel-book, beautifully adorned with gold and colour with pictures and ornament in the Winchester style. It is known that it once belonged to the Danish theologian Niels Hemmingsen, who died in 1600.³⁹ Could these two books have come to Denmark during the Viking Age or the following century?

Art

It is generally agreed that the Scandinavian art style of the first half of the eleventh century, the Ringerike style, was much influenced by the contemporary English Winchester style. The Ringerike style (fig. 8) was the main ornamental style of Scandinavia in the reign of Knut the Great and his sons (it is usually dated c. 1000–1060) and became quite popular in England (and Ireland) – one of the finest examples is seen on the well-known grave-stone from St Paul's in London. It also appears on many much humbler objects, including a great number found in recent years by metal detectorists (particularly from riding-gear, see below). One wonders if the style was particularly popular among Danes and other Scandinavians in England as a mark of identity; or if at least some English came to appreciate the taste of their new rulers – a taste

³⁶ The fine processional crucifix from Lundø, previously thought to be English work of c. 1100, has been re-dated by Harald Langberg to c. 1140 and attributed to a continental workshop, see Langberg 1992; cf. Roesdahl & Wilson eds. 1992, cat. no. 352.

³⁷ Roesdahl & Wilson (eds.) 1992, cat. no. 509. Cf., however, E. Petersen (ed.) 1999, *Catalogue*, no. 6 and *Essays*, 49f., 63–66.

³⁸ E. Petersen (ed.) 1999, *Catalogue*, no. 133. On Wulfstan, see e.g. Lawson 1994.

³⁹ E. Petersen (ed.) 1999, *Catalogue*, no. 5 and p. 11, *Essays*, 19f., 35f.

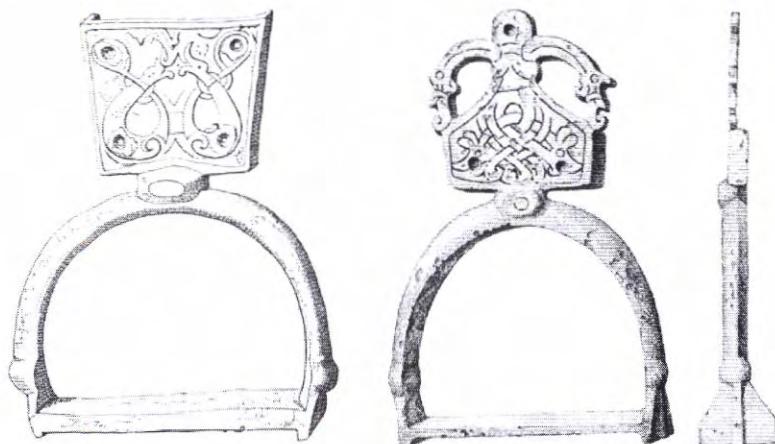


Fig. 8. Bronze stirrup decorated in the Ringerike style from Romsey, Hants., England (left) and from Hammer in north Jutland, Denmark (right). Not to scale. After Read, in *Archaeologia* 50, 1887, and Pedersen 1996-97, fig. 10a.

not so different from their own, which indeed had influenced it greatly.⁴⁰

Riding-gear (figs. 8-11)

In recent years a new and now quite large group of artefacts has appeared in Denmark and England (with a number of outlying examples in Sweden). This consists of copper-alloy mounts from riding equipment, usually ornamented in versions of eleventh-century Scandinavian styles (the Ringerike and Urnes styles). Execution is frequently not of the highest quality, although some fine examples are known. But, seen from a distance, they would have looked – if well polished – rather splendid, shining and glittering in the sun. The group includes parts of the cheek pieces of bits, of stirrups, including mounts from stirrup-leathers (once identified as book-mounts), as well as of strap-distributors, strap-pendants and spurs.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Wilson & Klindt-Jensen 1966, 134-46; Fuglesang 1980; Wilson 1995, 153-83.

⁴¹ Seaby & Woodfield 1980; Graham-Campbell 1992; Pedersen 1996-97 (with find lists); Williams 1997; Leahy & Paterson 2001; Williams 2002; Pedersen 2004, 51-55 (with find lists).

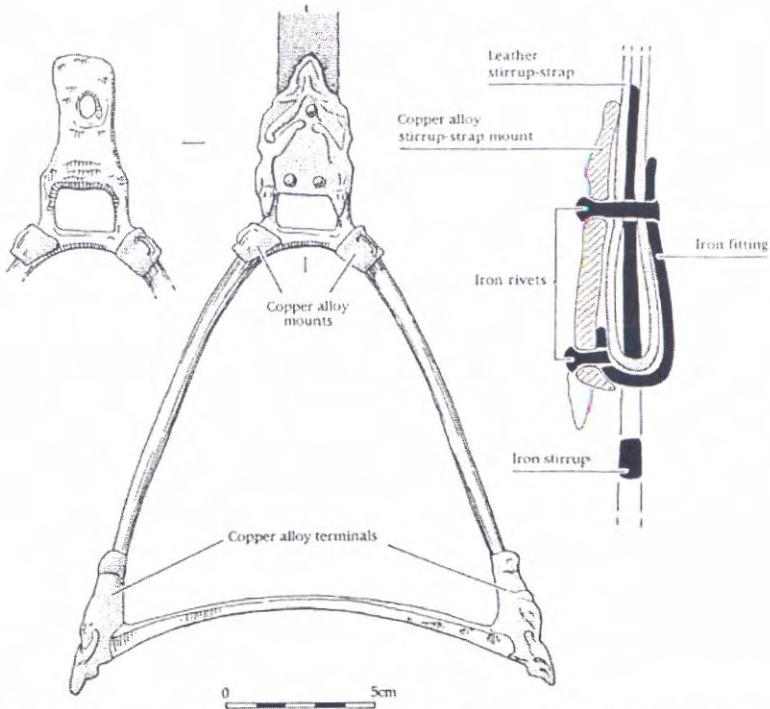


Fig. 9. Iron stirrup with copper alloy mounts and indication of details which often are found as fragments. After Williams 1997.

There seems to be general agreement that a fashion for prestigious riding-gear originated in Denmark and was extensively introduced into England c. 1000, and that such riding-gear was produced and used on both sides of the North Sea in the eleventh century.⁴² Horses were of course of great importance as a means of transport for warriors, as for civilians. It is also clear from the tenth-century pagan male graves in Denmark that sets of fine riding-gear were important symbols of aristocratic status; it is not surprising, therefore, that this fashion (and, as mentioned above, probably the general use of stirrups) was transferred to England, when the Danes took power. If the Velds set referred to above was indeed produced in England, it would have been one of the earliest made there. In this context it should also be noted that

⁴² E.g. Seaby & Woodfield 1980; Graham-Campbell 1992, 79, 84; Pedersen 2004, 66.

stirrups in Viking-Age Denmark and their introduction in England at this time is unrelated to fighting on horseback, as has sometimes been claimed.⁴³ Contemporary written descriptions tell of fighting on foot, and the earliest recorded battle in Denmark featuring men on horseback was in 1134. In England the first record of fighting on horseback is provided by the Bayeux Tapestry c. 1070), but this refers to the Normans. There is, however, ample evidence that before that date horses were ridden to battle, the men then dismounting to fight on foot, and there is also ample evidence that prestigious riding-gear was an important status symbol.

However, the numerous examples of this glittering riding-gear demonstrate that men (or perhaps a specific group of men) on both



Fig. 10. Bronze bridle mounts from Bardney, Lincolnshire, England (top) and from Lund, Skåne, Denmark (below). The Lund piece is 9.5 cm long and dated c. 1020–1050. After Leahy & Paterson 2001, Pl. 10.9, and Mårtensson (ed.) 1976, fig. 176.

⁴³ For example by Randsborg 1980, 127–29; more moderately proposed by Graham-Campbell 1992; rejected by Roesdahl 1982, 139; Pedersen 1997.



Fig. 11. Fragments of bronze cheek-pieces from Walton-on-Thames, England, with reconstruction (top) and from Dueholm Mark, Mors, Denmark (below). Not to scale. After *Medieval Archaeology* 50, 2006, 291, and Pedersen 1996-97, fig. 4a.

sides of the North Sea shared a common culture. Could this originally be traced back to Danish men who at some stage held military or administrative positions in England – the sort of people, several levels below the aristocracy, who are occasionally encountered in written sources – some of whom stayed in England when others eventually

returned home? It seems reasonable to suggest that the best quality riding-tack was developed among and for the men who became Knut's housecarls or his lithsmen,⁴⁴ while cheaper versions (of the kind most often found) were developed for those who served them – perhaps even as a mark of identity. This might eventually have become a general fashion in Denmark for Danes who had never been to England, and in England for men who had never served Knut or his followers. It should also be noted that this fashion continued on both sides of the North Sea after the end of Danish rule of England – perhaps partly as a memory and reminder of 'the good old days' of Knut the Great and his successors. This riding-gear also supports the evidence provided by other types of object mentioned above (including more humble objects), that there was in the eleventh century, a widespread Anglo-Scandinavian culture which affected all levels of society – not just the aristocracy and the church.

Examples of non-contact types

On the other hand it is interesting that certain types of object which were very popular in Denmark did not become fashionable in England. These include the eleventh-century bird-shaped brooches⁴⁵ and the openwork Urnes-style brooches of the second half of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries.⁴⁶ The few examples of those found in England (particularly the Urnes brooches) are not really comparable to the Danish ones.⁴⁷ The exact function of these brooches is unknown, as is their symbolic meanings (if they had any). Could the reason for their very limited appeal in England be that their symbolic meaning was of little interest to the population there? Or did Anglo-Scandinavian women in England quite simply not like these brooches?

44 See Hooper 1994 for discussion of these categories and the distinction between them.

45 Survey and discussion by Pedersen 1999 (in 2005 there were only five at the Castle Museum, Norwich; I am grateful to Tim Pestell for this information).

46 Survey by Bertelsen 1992. Many more have now been found.

47 Owen 2001.

CONCLUSIONS

In this survey of archaeological material I have tried to show that there is ample evidence for contact across the North Sea during the eleventh century and that such contacts affected all levels of society. Taken together, this evidence demonstrates many types of contact – some of which may also be seen in the written sources.

Contact continued, but seems to diminish after the mid-eleventh century (after the period of joint Danish-English kingship). This may, however, be misleading as the specific Scandinavian art styles and types of artefact begin to disappear at this time due to the rapidly growing internationalisation of European culture. Further, the slowly growing corpus of written sources concerning Denmark reveal continued Danish-English contact at royal and ecclesiastical levels. This is typified, for example, by the presence of an English bishop – Hubald – at Odense and by an agreement of cooperation made during his time, c. 1100, with the monastery of Evesham. It is also illustrated by the fact that the lives of the two Danish royal or princely saints Knut the Holy (killed 1086) and Knut Lavard (killed 1131) were written by Englishmen – Ælnoth from Canterbury and Robert of Ely respectively; and by the fact that an English monk, Anketil worked for seven years for king Niels in the early twelfth century as a goldsmith and was responsible for the administration of mints and the finances of the realm. Yet another Englishman, Radulf, was chancellor to Valdemar the Great and became bishop of Ribe in 1162.⁴⁸

These continued contacts also help us to understand Knut the Holy's plans for the conquest of England in 1085 – often seen as a somewhat romantic and unrealistic enterprise. There must have been a major Anglo-Scandinavian population, not only in the north of England, but also in the South-East, where William built the mighty Colchester Castle for protection and where so much new archaeological evidence for such contact has recently appeared. There was certainly also a great awareness of England in Denmark.

In summary, I hope that I have indicated some interesting possibilities for interdisciplinary work of this period in the study of Anglo-Danish relations.

48 See, e.g. Skyum-Nielsen 1971, 357, 371 (index: 'England, engelsk'; 'Udlændinge').

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THE MASSACRE OF ST BRICE'S DAY

(13 November 1002)

Simon Keynes

ON ST BRICE'S DAY (13 November) in the year 1002, Æthelred, king of the English, 'ordered to be slain all the Danish men who were in England', because he had been informed 'that they would treacherously deprive him of life, and then all his councillors, and possess this kingdom afterwards'.¹ The event is inseparable from its context in the received account of the viking raids on England during the late tenth and early eleventh centuries; and, naturally enough, any estimation of its historical significance must depend on the representation of the event in those sources most likely to be authoritative (as opposed to derivative). It is the case, however, that narratives of such events, whether told and retold orally, or in writing, have a tendency to 'improve' in each retelling. We can observe how this happened in the case of the 'Massacre of St Brice's Day', and how, during the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the event acquired additional dimensions at each stage in the process. The story continued to be told in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and may lie behind some of the ways in which the 'Danes' feature in the folk memory or popular history of the English. Inevitably, emotive labels such as 'pogrom', 'genocide' and 'ethnic cleansing' are now applied to the event; but we have to ask whether the implicit analogies are quite as helpful as might be intended.

'Massacre' is itself an emotive term. A useful sense of perspective is to be gained from comparing one such event with another, and from examining the conditions which gave rise to them, the forms they might take, their immediate impact and their longer-term consequences.² At one end of the scale, a massacre might be defined or characterised as the

¹ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, MSS CDE, s.a. 1002.

² For modern studies, see E. Carlton, *Massacres: an Historical Perspective* (Aldershot, 1994); *The Massacre in History*, ed. M. Levene and P. Roberts (New York, 1999); and L. Scales, 'Bread, Cheese and Genocide: Imagining the Destruction of Peoples in Medieval Western Europe', *History* 92 (2007), 284–300. For an instructive list, see the entry on massacres in Wikipedia.

indiscriminate and comprehensive slaughter, by exercise of overwhelming or excessive force, of one group of people by another, generally for the worst of religious, political, ethnic, or other reasons, in which the perpetrators are cast implicitly as treacherous, misguided, or cruel, and the victims contrasted with them as the minority, the powerless, the innocent, or the oppressed. At the other end of the scale, a massacre might be a localised event, involving a single perpetrator and a relatively small number of victims. The danger is that in describing an event as 'The Massacre of St Brice's Day, for example, we set it in the same category as an event described as 'The Massacre of the Innocents', 'The Massacre of Glencoe', 'The Massacre of St Bartholomew's Day', or whatever; and that in this process elements appropriate to one such event influence our perception of another. The subject is best approached, therefore, as an object-lesson, or case-study, in the development of a legend: the most authoritative accounts have to be identified and distinguished from accounts which represent no more than a literary development; and in this way the study of the event itself becomes an exercise in deconstruction, as we identify and dispose of the legendary accretions, in the hope of reaching the historical core.³

THE EARLIEST ACCOUNTS OF THE 'MASSACRE OF ST BRICE'S DAY'

The earliest and in certain respects the most detailed or circumstantial account of the 'massacre' in 1002 is provided by a charter of King Æthelred for St Frideswide's church, Oxford, issued at the royal estate at Headington (Oxon) on 7 December 1004.⁴ The original charter does not survive, but it was the source of an abbreviated and interpolated version, made probably in the twelfth or thirteenth century, itself also lost but copied in an 'Inspeximus' charter of 6 Edward II (1312–13), known from charter rolls and cartularies. The charter begins as follows:

3 E. A. Freeman, *The History of the Norman Conquest of England, its Causes and its Results*, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1867–79), I, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1870), pp. 634–8, revised in 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1877); C. E. Wright, *The Cultivation of Saga in Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1939), pp. 180–1.

4 P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: an Annotated List and Bibliography* (London, 1968), no. 909. Text: *Charters of Midland Houses*, ed. S. E. Kelly (Oxford, forthcoming). Translation: *English Historical Documents c. 500–1042*, ed. D. Whitelock, 2nd ed. (London, 1979), pp. 590–3 (no. 127). A revised edition of 'Sawyer' is available online at <www.trin.cam.ac.uk/kemble/>.

In the year of the incarnation of our Lord 1004, the second induction, in the 25th year of my reign, by the ordering of God's providence, I, Æthelred, governing the monarchy of all Albion, have made secure with the liberty of a privilege by the royal authority a certain monastery situated in the town which is called Oxford, where the body of the blessed Frideswide rests, for the love of the all-accomplishing God; and I have restored the territories which belong to the monastery of Christ with the renewal of a new title-deed; and I will relate in a few words to all who look upon this document for what reason it was done. For it is fully agreed that to all dwelling in this country it will be well known that, since a decree (*decretum*) was sent out by me with the counsel of my leading men and magnates, to the effect that all the Danes (*cuncti Dani*) who had sprung up in this island, sprouting like cockle amongst the wheat, were to be destroyed (*necarentur*) by a most just extermination (*iustissima exterminacione*), and this decree was to be put into effect even as far as death, those Danes who dwelt in the afore-mentioned town [Oxford], striving to escape death, entered this sanctuary of Christ, having broken by force the doors and bolts, and resolved to make a refuge and defence for themselves therein against the people of the town and the suburbs; but when all the people in pursuit strove, forced by necessity, to drive them out, and could not, they set fire to the planks and burnt, as it seems, this church with its ornaments and its books.

Although the text would appear to have been abbreviated, as well as interpolated, there is no reason to question the account of the circumstances which led to its production, as a replacement for charters lost in a fire, or indeed its account of the circumstances which led to the fire, arising from the implementation of a royal *decretum*. No reference is made to the day on which or to the year in which the *decretum* had been implemented; yet the statement is made with royal authority, and originated just two years after the recorded event. So what does it signify? It is apparent, in the first place, that the decision was taken at

a meeting of the king and his councillors;⁵ and if we assume that the reference is indeed to the 'massacre' implemented on St Brice's Day 1002, it should follow that the king had the support of his *witan*. We have no idea, however, what form the *decretum* might have taken: it could have been an oral instruction, or perhaps a written order.⁶ In the second place, the intended victims were 'all Danes who had sprung up in this island'. This might be taken to mean that the 'Danes' in question were the descendants of those who had settled in eastern and northern England in the late ninth century; but although it is apparent from other sources that the inhabitants of eastern England were at this time accorded a political identity as 'Danes',⁷ it need not follow that the draftsman of the charter was referring to these 'Danes', as opposed to any other group of Danes to whom the same term would have to be applied. One should add that the order would appear to have been implemented across the whole land, and that since the charter refers explicitly to the implementation of the order in *Oxford*, it seems that it had nothing in particular to do with the 'Danes' of what had come to be known as the 'Danelaw'. It is striking, in the third place, that the decree is said to have been targeted at the Danes 'who had sprung up in this island, sprouting like cockle amongst the wheat' (*qui in hac insula velut lollium inter triticum pululando emerserant*). The metaphor is derived ultimately from the biblical parable of the tares amongst the wheat.⁸

The Kingdom of Heaven is likened to a field sown with good seed, and then sown at night by tares (*zizania*) amongst the wheat (*triticum*); but since there was a danger of ruining the wheat if they rooted up the tares, it was necessary to let both grow, until harvest time, and only then to separate the two. The use of a biblical metaphor might reflect the

5 There were at least three such meetings in 1002: early in the year (between 8 January and 23 April), on 11 July (S 905), and some time later (after 11 July). The third of these meetings, which perhaps took place in the late summer or autumn of 1002, is represented by S 902 (*Abing* 131), and happens to be the first occasion on which Wulfstan attests as archbishop of York, and on which Ælfgifu (Emma of Normandy) attests as queen; it may be on this occasion that the order was given to massacre the Danes.

6 Henry of Huntingdon (below, p. 47) refers to 'secret letters'.

7 S. Keynes, 'The Vikings in England, c. 790–1016', *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings*, ed. P. Sawyer (Oxford, 1997), pp. 48–82, at 72–3.

8 Matt. XIII:24–30. For the Old English version ('mid coecle on middan þam hwæt'), see *The Old English Version of the Gospels*, ed. R. M. Liuzza, 2 vols., Early English Text Society 304 and 314 (Oxford, 1994–2000) I, pp. 27–8.

context of the discussion in which the decision had been taken, and the reference would thus have been to wicked ‘Danes’ who had grown up among or were mixed in with a larger group of the established population. It would be dangerous, however, to press the metaphor too far, since it had become a commonplace. Introducing his account of a crime, Asser remarked that the ‘foul deeds of the unrighteous are sown among the holy deeds of the righteous, like cockle and tares in the crops of wheat’ (*sicut zizania et lolium in tritici segetibus*);⁹ so the use of the metaphor in the charter need signify no more than the recognition that something noxious and nasty (*zizania*, or *lolium*) might co-exist with something pure and good (*triticum*), or, in this case, that there were some bad people living among the established population, who needed to be uprooted and removed. Fourthly, the order was implemented with enthusiasm by the people of Oxford, who would appear on this evidence to have had good reason to wish to be rid of the Danes in question. For their part, the Danes took refuge in the church of St Frideswide’s, not, perhaps, because they expected to find sanctuary within, but because they would have regarded a church as the most solid and secure place available, and one which the good people of Oxford might for their part have been reluctant to violate.

The second and more widely disseminated account of the massacre is found in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, manuscripts C, D, and E, for 1002:¹⁰

In this year the king and his councillors determined that tribute should be paid to the fleet and peace made with them on condition that they should cease their evil-doing. Then the king sent Ealdorman Leofsige to the fleet, and he then, by the command of the king and his councillors, arranged a truce with them and that they should receive provisions and tribute. And they then accepted that, and 24,000 pounds were paid to them. Then meanwhile Ealdorman Leofsige killed the king's high-reeve, Æfic, and the king then banished him from the country. And then in the spring

⁹ Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser's 'Life of King Alfred' and Other Contemporary Sources* (Harmondsworth, 1983), pp. 103–4 (ch. 95), with note on p. 272.

¹⁰ ASC, MS. C, s. a. 1002. Text: *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, MS. C*, ed. K. O'B. O'Keeffe, *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition 5* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 89. Translation: *EHD*, pp. 238–9 (no. 1).

the queen, Richard's daughter, came to the land. And in the same summer Archbishop Ealdwulf died. And in that year the king ordered to be slain (*het oſſlean*) all the Danish men (*deniscan men*) who were in England (*þe on Angelcynne wæron*) – this was done on St Brice's Day – because the king had been informed that they would treacherously deprive him of life, and then all his councillors, and possess this kingdom afterwards (*fordam þam cyninge wæs gecyd þæt hi woldan hine besyrwan æt his life 7 siððan ealle his witan 7 habban sippa nis rice*).

The annal was written several years after the event, probably c. 1020, by an anonymous chronicler who was aware that the English were conquered by the Danes in 1016, and whose intention was to explain how this had come about.¹¹ The question arises whether his reference to the killing of 'all the Danish men who were in England' might be an exaggeration. After all, readers of the chronicle would have been familiar with tales of the slaughter which had attended the conquest of land from the British in the fifth, sixth and early seventh centuries, and also with tales of the slaughter inflicted by the Vikings on the English, and vice versa, in the ninth century. Yet given the independent and more strictly contemporary evidence of the charter, there is no reason to doubt the intended severity of the measure itself, or that it was directed against 'Danes' generally; and one can but proceed on this basis.

At the risk of labouring the issues involved, it is important to dwell on the brutal reality of the historical event.¹² A large Viking force had arrived off the eastern coast of England in 991; and it seems that it was essentially this force which beset the English thereafter until its

11 S. Keynes, 'The Declining Reputation of King Æthelred the Unready' [1978], reprinted in *Anglo-Saxon History: Basic Readings*, ed. D. A. E. Pelteret (New York, 2000), pp. 157–90, at 158–68; and S. Keynes, 'A Tale of Two Kings: Alfred the Great and Æthelred the Unready', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser. 36 (1986), pp. 195–217, at 201–3 (on the annal for 1001).

12 F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1971), p. 380; J. Campbell, 'England, France, Flanders and Germany in the Reign of Ethelred II: Some Comparisons and Connections' [1978], in his *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), pp. 191–207, at 200; S. Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred the Unready (978–1016)* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 203–5; R. Lavelle, *Æthelred II, King of the English 978–1016* (Stroud, 2002), pp. 99–102; A. Williams, *Æthelred the Unready: the Ill-Counselled King* (London, 2003), pp. 52–4.

departure in 1005, and which thus provides the context for the events of 1002.¹³ In 994 King Æthelred came to terms with the leaders of the viking force; and although the leaders themselves moved on, some part of the main force appears to have entered into Æthelred's service, charged with the protection of his kingdom against other hostile armies.¹⁴ The presence of these mercenaries, probably on the Isle of Wight, seems to have had the desired effect, at least to judge from the absence of recorded activity in 995 and 996; but it seems that in 997 the mercenary force reactivated itself, remaining actively hostile until the summer of 1000, when it decided to go to Normandy. In 1001 the force returned to England; in which context a local chronicler in Winchester reports that they were joined in Devon by Pallig, apparently the leader of another mercenary force, who had decided more recently to desert the king. Further hostilities followed, until, early in 1002, the king and his councillors decided to pay 24,000 pounds of money to the fleet, as tribute (*gafol*), and with that to buy peace. It is not clear what became of the Danes who shared in this payment; but if some must have returned home to Scandinavia, others may have resumed their careers as mercenaries, or used their money to establish themselves in a different capacity. Emma of Normandy arrived in the spring; and after the death of Ealdwulf, archbishop of York, on 4 June, Wulfstan, bishop of London, was appointed his successor.¹⁵ It would appear that at some stage during the summer or autumn the king was told that the 'Danes' were hatching a plot to kill first the king himself, and then all his councillors, and in that way to take over the country. The English must have grown tired of the relentless aggression, and dismayed by yet further talk of treachery; and it may be that the revived Anglo-Norman alliance gave Æthelred the confidence to take decisive action.

¹³ S. Keynes, 'Re-reading King Æthelred the Unready', *Writing Medieval Biography 750–1250*, ed. D. Bates, et al. (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 77–97, at 80–1.

¹⁴ On mercenaries in general, see R. Abels, 'Household Men, Mercenaries and Vikings in Anglo-Saxon England', *Mercenaries and Paid Men: the Mercenary Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. J. France (Leiden, 2008), pp. 143–64, at 155–7; see also R. Abels, 'Paying the Danegeld: Anglo-Saxon Peacemaking with Vikings', *War and Peace in Ancient and Medieval History*, ed. P. de Souza and J. France (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 173–92.

¹⁵ Jonathan Wilcox, 'The St Brice's Day Massacre and Archbishop Wulfstan', *Peace and Negotiation: Strategies for Coexistence in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. D. Wolfthal (Turnhout, 2000), pp. 79–91.

The *decretum* of the king and his councillors was presumably circulated in some way to those who would be expected to implement it in the localities, perhaps to the king's reeves in shires and boroughs throughout the land. One imagines further that the order was to be implemented on 'St Brice's Day', in other words on 13 November, not because there was any intended significance in that day being the feast of St Brice, but because, in the interest of co-ordinated action,¹⁶ it would have been necessary to specify a particular day in the near future, using the standard terms of the ecclesiastical calendar.¹⁷ Yet against whom was the action taken? It is inconceivable that the order could have been directed against the descendants of the 'Danes' who had settled in the Danelaw in the late ninth century.¹⁸ It would have been well-nigh impossible to distinguish 'Danes' from 'English' in what had quite rapidly become an Anglo-Danish society, and after five generations of intermixture there can have been little reason to assume that loyalties in the Danelaw were generically suspect.¹⁹ The most natural presumption is that many of those involved in the (alleged) plot against the king in 1002, and so the principal intended victims of the massacre, had been members of the viking army which had been active in England

¹⁶ For the massacre as an indication of English administrative efficiency, see J. Campbell, 'England, France, Flanders and Germany in the Reign of Ethelred II', p. 200; see also N. Higham, *The Death of Anglo-Saxon England* (Stroud, 1997), p. 29.

¹⁷ For a tabulation of the evidence from all extant calendars, see R. Rushforth, *An Atlas of Saints in Anglo-Saxon Calendars*, ASNC Guides, Texts and Studies 6 (Cambridge, 2002). A revised edition of this work is forthcoming. For a different view, see Julia Barrow's paper, below, pp. 67–88.

¹⁸ Keynes, *Diplomas*, p. 204; P. Stafford, *Unification and Conquest: A Political and Social History of England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (London 1989), p. 66; D. M. Hadley, "Cockle Amongst the Wheat": the Scandinavian Settlement of England', in *Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain*, ed. W. O. Frazer and A. Tyrrell (London, 2000), pp. 111–35, at 117; M. Innes, 'Danelaw Identities: Ethnicity, Regionalism, and Political Allegiance', *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, ed. D. M. Hadley and J. D. Richards (Turnhout, 2000), pp. 65–88, at 65–7.

¹⁹ It is the case that Fræna, Godwine, and Frythegyst are said to have 'started the flight' in 993, 'because they were Danes on the father's side' (*The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, II: *The Annals from 450 to 1066*, ed. R. R. Darlington and P. McGurk (Oxford, 1995), p. 442); but a different impression emerges from a reading of royal legislation (*I & III Æthelred*), and from consideration of the loyalty of the East Anglians in 1004 and 1010. The pressures might have been different in 1013, when 'Danish settlers' north of Watling Street submitted to Swein's invasion force.

since 991, and were among those who had entered into the king's service in 994 (and who may or may not have become hostile again in 997), or who had just been paid and provisioned in 1002. We can but guess where in Æthelred's kingdom these 'Danes' were to be found by the first half of November in 1002, and so where the 'massacre' might have been implemented. Those who had decided to settle, perhaps to pursue a particular craft, could have been found anywhere; those who had decided to become merchants would congregate wherever there were profits to be made; and those who had chosen to enter or return into Æthelred's service as mercenaries would presumably have found themselves stationed in strategic locations, including the (as yet unidentified) viking base on the Isle of Wight, or one or other of the boroughs in shires exposed to attack from the coast (such as Dorset, Wiltshire, and Hampshire), or indeed any of the boroughs commanding movement up or down the river Thames (such as Oxford). Oxford is thought to have had something approximating to a 'Danish community' in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, which can be identified in the archaeological record;²⁰ yet it cannot have been unique in this respect, and one might expect to be able to find similar 'communities' in London, Winchester, Shaftesbury, and elsewhere.

The nature of the event might be easier to understand were it possible to detect any trace of its implementation, beyond what can be read in the charter for St Frideswide's, Oxford. It is hazardous to assume that a Scandinavian name is necessarily indicative of 'Scandinavian' origin, or indeed that an English name would signify 'English' origin, for personal names remain linguistically Scandinavian, or English, even if those who were given the names in question belonged to a mixed and integrated population. The evidence, such as it is, has to be taken for what it is worth. Thengs with Scandinavian names had been included in the witness-lists of a few charters issued during the reign of King Edgar, generally in contexts where one might have expected thengs from northern or eastern England to have taken or to have been accorded a particular role in the transaction, and affording a good impression of the mixed Anglo-Scandinavian society of those

²⁰ J. Blair, *Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire* (Stroud, 1994), pp. 167–70; to which one might add that Oxford was chosen as the place for the agreement between the Danes and the English in 1018.

regions.²¹ In Æthelred's reign, a royal assembly in the 990s is said to have been attended by thegns 'who were gathered there from far and wide, both West Saxons and Mercians, both English and Danes'.²² It is the case, however, that thegns with Scandinavian names are conspicuous only by their absence from Æthelred's charters of the 980s and 990s, and that they remain largely invisible thereafter, with the exception of two charters containing unusually long lists of witnesses.²³ One is King Æthelred's foundation charter for Eynsham Abbey, near Oxford, dated 1005, with 5 Scandinavian names found near the end of a list of 44 thegns;²⁴ the other is a charter granting land in Derbyshire to the thegn Morcar, dated 1009, with 13 Scandinavian names in a list of 29 thegns.²⁵ Taking the evidence of the king's charters as a whole, the impression we get, that the majority of the thegns who attended royal assemblies during Æthelred's reign were of 'English' origin, is probably mistaken: most of the leading thegns, including those who held office in the king's household, continued to be drawn from the 'English' element among the people, but thegns from the Danelaw might well have been present on every occasion. We must draw our own conclusions; but it is not clear that there is anything in this evidence which might bear on the events of November 1002.

King Æthelred's coinage provides an extraordinarily detailed view of a large population of moneyers, who can be associated with particular locations throughout the kingdom, and who can be seen from their occurrences in one type or another to have been active during particular

21 'Edgar, rex admirabilis', *Edgar the Peaceable, King of England 959–75: a Reevaluation*, ed. D. Scragg (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 3–59, at 13, 14 and 20, with 'A Conspectus of the Charters of King Edgar (957–75)', *ibid.*, pp. 60–80.

22 S 939 (*EHD*, ed. Whitelock, no. 121), discussed in Keynes, 'The Vikings in England', p. 73.

23 Keynes, *Diplomas*, p. 162, and *An Atlas of Attestations in Anglo-Saxon Charters, c. 670–1066*, I: Tables, ASNC Guides, Texts, and Studies 5 (Cambridge, 2002), Table XLIV.

24 S 911 (*Midland Houses*, ed. Kelly): S. Keynes, 'King Æthelred the Unready's Charter for Eynsham Abbey (1005)', *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald*, ed. Nicholas Brooks and Catherine Karkov (Aldershot, 2008).

25 S 922 (*Charters of Burton Abbey*, ed. P. H. Sawyer (Oxford, 1979), no. 32).

parts of a period of nearly forty years.²⁶ The usual problems apply; but one has at least to ask whether there was any discernible mortality among the population of 'Scandinavian' moneymen who minted *Long Cross* pennies (997–1003), reflected in any failure on their part, as a group, to re-appear among the moneymen of *Helmet* pennies (1003–9). For what it is worth, no such mortality can be detected.²⁷ It might also be supposed that the seemingly high incidence of *Long Cross* hoards found in England, when set beside the incidence of single-type hoards for Æthelred's other substantive types, reflects turmoil of a kind perhaps associated with the events of 1002; but again, unsurprisingly, there is no clear instance of a hoard which can be connected to a massacre of the Danes, as opposed to the general activities of the viking raiders themselves.²⁸ One should add that the *gafol* in 1002 was, on the face of it, collected and paid towards the end of the currency of the *Long Cross* type; and one might ask, therefore, whether there is any indication in the composition of Scandinavian hoards, particularly those found in Denmark, that of the vikings who reached home, in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, rather fewer would appear to have been paid off in *Long Cross* pennies than in *Crux*, *Helmet*, or *Last Small Cross* pennies. Unfortunately, there are too many other factors which complicate the issue.²⁹

The best hope for adding a new dimension to our understanding of the events of 1002 must lie in the archaeological record, for example in the identification of Scandinavian mercenaries in different parts of England, or in the identification of any Scandinavians, whether settlers, merchants, or mercenaries, who might have met an unpleasant end at the appropriate time. It is of course a very tall order. Evidence might be

26 V. J. Smart, 'Moneymen of the Late Anglo-Saxon Coinage 973–1016', *Commentationes de nummis saeculorum IX–XI in Suecia repertis* II (Stockholm, 1968), pp. 191–276, and K. Jonsson and G. van der Meer, 'Mints and Moneymen c. 973–1066', *Studies in Late Anglo-Saxon Coinage in Memory of Bror Emil Hildebrand*, ed. K. Jonsson, Numismatiska Meddelanden 35 (Stockholm, 1990), pp. 47–136.

27 Keynes, *Diplomas*, p. 204.

28 R. H. M. Dolley, 'The Shaftesbury Hoard of Pence of Æthelred II', *Numismatic Chronicle*, 6th ser. 16 (1956), 267–80; S. Keynes, 'History and Coinage during the Reign of King Æthelred the Unready (978–1016)', Linacre Lecture 2007, *British Numismatic Journal* (forthcoming).

29 K. Jonsson, *Viking-Age Hoards and Late Anglo-Saxon Coins: a Study in Honour of Bror Emil Hildebrand's 'Anglosachsiska mynt'* (Stockholm, 1987).

found of mass burials, regarded as burials of men killed in battle, or even of men, women and children killed in a massacre; but the danger is to succumb to the wishful thought. Results of excavations at Bran or Heydon Ditch, on the Icknield Way in Cambridgeshire, first published in the 1920s, were soon interpreted in relation to a supposed massacre of the Danes near Balsham in 1010.³⁰ Many years later, the evidence was re-interpreted in terms of cemeteries in use over a long period, providing a demonstration of the efficiency with which the authorities convicted and punished offenders in the tenth and eleventh centuries;³¹ and more recent work on these so-called ‘execution’ cemeteries has pointed in the same direction.³² One can but wait patiently for incontrovertible evidence to emerge from the ground; or not, as the case may be.

The fact that it is difficult to find corroborative evidence of the massacre does not signify that the event did not take place. The charter and the chronicle are good enough as they stand; and all one can do is proceed from that basis with due care and circumspection.

THE LEGEND OF THE ‘MASSACRE OF ST BRICE’S DAY’

It needs to be stressed how remarkable it is that the earliest account of the massacre, outside the immediate context of the early-eleventh-century English sources, is to be found in the work of a Norman chronicler, writing in the third quarter of the eleventh century. In Book V of his *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, William of Jumièges offers a

³⁰ C. Fox, *et al.*, ‘Excavations in the Cambridgeshire Dykes, V: Bran or Heydon Ditch. First Report’, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* 27 (1924–5), pp. 16–35, and T. C. Lethbridge, *et al.*, ‘Excavations in the Cambridgeshire Dykes, VI: Bran Ditch. Second Report’, *Proc. of the Cambridge Antiq. Soc.* 30 (1927–8), pp. 78–93, at 87–8 and 91–2 (citing *Jómsvíkinga saga*); A. Gray, ‘The Massacre at the Bran Ditch, A.D. 1010’, *Proc. of the Cambridge Antiq. Soc.* 31 (1931), 77–87.

³¹ B. Hope-Taylor and D. Hill, ‘The Cambridgeshire Dykes’, *PCAS* 66 (1975–6), 123–8, at 126–8 (II. Bran Ditch – the Burials Reconsidered).

³² A. Reynolds, ‘The Definition and Ideology of Anglo-Saxon Execution Sites and Cemeteries’, *Death and Burial in Medieval Europe*, ed. G. De Boe and F. Verhaeghe (Zellik, 1997), 33–41. I am grateful to Dr Reynolds for his guidance in this connection.

luridly detailed account of events leading to King Swein Forkbeard's invasion of England in 1013:³³

But while, as we learnt above, under such a famous ruler the prosperity of Normandy grew, Æthelred, king of the English, defiled a kingdom that had long flourished under the great glory of most powerful kings with such a dreadful crime that in his own reign even the heathens judged it as a detestable, shocking deed. For in a single day he had murdered, in a sudden fury and without charging them with any crime, the Danes who lived peacefully and quite harmoniously throughout the kingdom and who did not at all fear for their lives. He ordered women to be buried up to the waists and the nipples to be torn from their breasts by ferocious mastiffs set upon them. He also gave orders to crush little children against door-posts. When thus on the appointed day this outburst of violence, death and murder accumulated beyond measure, some quick and active young men took hold of a ship and fled, speedily rowing down the Thames out into the open sea. They crossed the wide sea and finally reached the harbour they sought in Denmark, and they reported the bloody fate of their people to King Svein. Thereupon the king, deeply moved by great sorrow, summoned the magnates of the realm, and told them what had happened. Carefully he asked their advice as to how he should act. They were all much distressed and bewailed the calamity of their friends and kinsmen and with one voice decreed that every effort should be made to seek vengeance for their blood.

William of Jumièges provided his information on Anglo-Norman relations 'to explain [as he put it] the origin of King Edward for those who do not know about it',³⁴ and, if Dr van Houts is right in regarding this part of the work as written in the 1050s (*before the Conquest*),³⁵ it is highly significant that he should have taken such an interest in Edward at this time – or entirely natural, given the friendship which appears to have existed between King Edward and Duke William.

33 *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert of Torigni*, ed. E. M. C. van Houts, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1992–5), II, pp. 14–16.

34 *GND*, ed. van Houts, II, p. 22.

35 *GND*, ed. van Houts, I, pp. xxxii–xxxv. The early part was finished by 1060, and revised and extended between 1067 and 1070, by which time there was more to report.

There can be little doubt that his account of a massacre of the Danes refers to the Massacre of St Brice's Day in 1002: it was directed against the Danes 'who lived peacefully ... throughout the kingdom', and it was put into effect on a single day. There is no reason to believe that William of Jumièges had access to any written source; and one can but imagine that someone like Robert of Jumièges, who was at the court of Edward the Confessor in the 1040s, took stories of English history back to Normandy, which were picked up there by William of Jumièges in the 1050s. Whatever the case, it looks as if William knew of the event by its own reputation, and turned it to his own purposes. He represented it, unsurprisingly, as a crime, and so as something which invited punishment; and there was good precedent for this train of thought in the case of the horrible diseases suffered by Herod after the Massacre of the Holy Innocents.³⁶ At the same time, the event was detached from its proper historical context (in 1002) and moved forwards ten years, in this way to provide a pretext for King Swein Forkbeard's invasion of England in 1013. Swein's own invasion was thus seen to be fully justified, and the Danish Conquest was seen to be a form of divine punishment for the massacre. It later became axiomatic in Norman propaganda that the treacherous capture and mutilation of Alfred the ætheling, in 1036, was itself a pretext for further punishment, which materialised in William's invasion of England in 1066;³⁷ and one wonders whether a connection or comparison was intended. If William of Jumièges was writing in the 1050s, he might have sought in this way – by connecting the massacre with the Danish conquest – to threaten the English with the prospect of similarly dire consequences for the events of 1036; and if he was writing in the late 1060s, the threat would be seen to have been fulfilled.³⁸

Two aspects of the story invite further comment. In the first place, we must ask how much trust can be placed in the details given by

36 E.g. Aelfric, *Natale innocentium infantum: Aelfric's Catholic Homilies: the First Series / Text*, ed. P. Clemoes, Early English Text Society, s.s. 17 (Oxford, 1997), pp. 217–23 (text); *The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, ed. B. Thorpe, 2 vols. (London, 1844–6) I, 84–6 (text and translation).

37 *GND*, ed. van Houts, II, p. 170; *The Gesta Guillelmi of William of Poitiers*, ed. R. H. C. Davis and M. Chibnall (Oxford, 1998), pp. 4–6.

38 For a later development of the Norman view of the Massacre of St Brice's Day, see G. S. Burgess and E. van Houts, *The History of the Norman People: Wace's 'Roman de Rou'* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 105 and 174.

William of Jumièges. ‘He [King Æthelred] ordered women to be buried up to the waists and the nipples to be torn from their breasts by ferocious mastiffs set upon them. He also gave orders to crush little children against door-posts.’ It is possible that biblical or other literary sources lie not too far behind this language;³⁹ and indeed that such images are to some extent also the product of artistic licence, to make the punishment seem all the more deserved. The story of the ones who got away to tell the tale may be part of the same process of literary embroidery. Secondly, we need to ask ourselves whether Swein’s invasion of England in 1013 was really connected with an event which we know to have taken place over ten years previously, in 1002. There is, of course, a possible connection between the massacre in 1002 and Swein’s recorded activities in England in 1003. We should bear in mind, however, that there is nothing about the massacre in the *Encomium Emmae* (which deals directly with Scandinavian invasions), and that Swein’s motivation in that source has more to do with his wish to punish Thorkell for his defection to the English side in 1012.⁴⁰ For his part, Adam of Bremen explains events in terms of Swein’s wish to avenge the killing, not of Danes in general, but of his brother Hiring (by the Northumbrians), and his own expulsion.⁴¹

It was not long before the English, or rather the Anglo-Normans, picked up the tale, though it is interesting to note how its treatment differed from one source to another, and how it acquired new features along the way. Two of the sources in question locate the event correctly in 1002, and appear to be largely uninfected by the ‘Norman’ propaganda. The earlier part of the Latin chronicle compiled and continued at Worcester in the late eleventh and first half of the twelfth century, associated with the monks Florence and John, is distinctive for retaining the annalistic format of its vernacular model: ‘In that same year too [1002], King Æthelred ordered all Danish settlers (*incolentes*), greater and less, and of either sex, to be killed because they tried to deprive him and his leading men of life and rule, and to subdue the whole kingdom

³⁹ Cf. in this connection, the book of Esther.

⁴⁰ *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, ed. A. Campbell (London, 1949), Camden Classic Reprints 4 (Cambridge, 1998).

⁴¹ F. J. Tschau, *Adam of Bremen: History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen* (New York, 1959), pp. 71 and 90.

to their sway'.⁴² We are already moving away from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, for the event is now represented as an indiscriminate act, directed against Danish settlers, irrespective of their social status and sex. In his *Historia Anglorum*, written towards the middle of the twelfth century, Henry of Huntingdon took the view that Æthelred had gained confidence from his marriage to Emma, and instituted general slaughter:⁴³

With her arrival, King Æthelred's pride increased and his faithlessness grew: in a treacherous plot, he ordered all the Danes who were living peacefully in England to be put to death on the same day, namely the feast of St Brice [13 November]. Concerning this crime, in my childhood I heard very old men say that the king had sent secret letters to every city, according to which the English either maimed all the unsuspecting Danes on the same day and hour with their swords, or, suddenly, at the same moment, captured them and destroyed them by fire.

Henry was born c. 1090, and could not have heard such tales from anyone likely to have been alive at the time; but he could easily have heard them, in his youth, from the aged sons or daughters of men who had been actively involved in the events of 1002. The tales themselves provide testimony, of a kind, to the degree of organisation behind the event; though clearly it was seen as a crime against people who were peacefully settled in the land. It is otherwise worth noting that while Henry provides no further details about atrocities committed in 1002, he relishes telling how the Danes tossed babies on the points of their lances, at Balsham, Cambridgeshire, in 1010.⁴⁴

Others writing about the reign of King Æthelred the Unready, from the late eleventh century onwards, were more concerned to situate the conduct of warfare against the Danes in a larger context. The invasions had been represented in the early hagiography of St Dunstan as the fulfillment of a prophecy made by Dunstan on the occasion of the

42 *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, II: *The Annals from 450 to 1066*, ed. R. R. Darlington and P. McGurk (Oxford, 1995), p. 452.

43 *Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon: Historia Anglorum (The History of the English People)*, ed. D. Greenway (Oxford, 1996), p. 340.

44 *Henry of Huntingdon*, ed. Greenway, p. 348; and for similar atrocities, see pp. 274 (Danes) and 710 (Scots).

young king's coronation, that he would be punished for his complicity in the murder of his half-brother Edward the Martyr,⁴⁵ yet by the early twelfth century the tendency was to present the invasions more generally as a form of divine punishment for the sins of the English, making it necessary at the same time to provide clear indications of their wickedness. William of Malmesbury made great play of the indolence of the king himself. He alludes on one occasion to the fact Æthelred took it out on the Danes: 'all of whom in the whole of England he had ordered, on the strength of flimsy suspicions, to be murdered on the same day (and a pitiful sight it was when every man was compelled to betray his beloved guest-friends, whom he had made even more dear by close ties of relationship, and to disrupt these embraces by the sword)'.⁴⁶ He gives no indication of date, though he must have been aware from the *Chronicle* that the event took place in 1002. It was apparently under the influence of William of Jumièges, however, that William of Malmesbury appears to have connected the event with Swein's invasion in 1013:⁴⁷

Swein was a man of blood, and needed little persuasion; so he fitted out his ships and came hastening over. The port where he landed is called Sandwich, and his chief purpose was to avenge his sister Gunnhild. Gunnhild, who was a woman of some beauty and much character, had come to England with her husband the powerful jarl Palling [*Pallingus*], adopted Christianity, and offered herself as a hostage for peace with the Danes. Eadric in his disastrous fury had ordered her to be beheaded with the other Danes [*cum ceteris Danis*], though she declared plainly that the shedding of her blood would cost all England dear. And for her part, she faced death with presence of mind; she never grew pale at the prospect, nor did she change expression after death, even when her body was drained of blood, though her husband had been killed before her eyes, and her son, a very likely child, pierced by four lances.

⁴⁵ Keynes, 'Declining Reputation', pp. 169–70.

⁴⁶ *William of Malmesbury: Gesta Regum Anglorum (The History of the English Kings)*, ed. R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1998–9), I, p. 276, with II, p. 149.

⁴⁷ *William of Malmesbury: Gesta Regum*, ed. Mynors, et al., I, pp. 300–2, with II, p. 161.

A sceptical historian might wish to express certain reservations about the interpretation of this passage. It is William who contributes the story of Gunnhild, sister of King Swein and wife of the powerful jarl 'Palling', but the exact status of the story is open to question. It is not clear where he found this information; and it would be reassuring if we could find some independent evidence of their existence. There does not appear to be any evidence in Scandinavian 'historical' tradition that Swein had a sister called Gunnhild,⁴⁸ who was the wife of a powerful jarl called Palling. A certain Pál nir, and especially his son Pál na-Toki, are known from their appearance in *Jómsvíkingasaga*,⁴⁹ and it has been suggested that Pál na-Toki might himself have had a son, called Pál nir, whose name might (or might not) have been latinised as Palling.⁵⁰ William's 'Palling' is more plausibly identified as the 'Pallig' mentioned in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, MS. A, for 1001, whose treachery in that year is indicative of the untrustworthiness of mercenaries, and might have been a pretext for the action taken against the Danes in the following year. There is no other evidence that William was familiar with MS. A of the *Chronicle*; so his statement would appear to be independent of it.⁵¹ One could argue, on the other hand, that William may not in fact have intended that the deaths of Gunnhild and Palling should be regarded as part of the events which took place on St Brice's Day in 1002, as opposed to some later occasion on which a group of Danes were killed; for the fact that he put the blame on Eadric Streona may draw the event forwards, since (as Milton pointed out in the mid-seventeenth century) there is no reason to believe that Eadric would have been in any position to exert his influence on events as early as 1002.⁵² As in the case of William of Jumièges, the question must also arise whether William might have drawn inspiration here, as elsewhere,

48 It was, however, a good choice of name: F. Uspenskij, 'Dynastic Names in Medieval Scandinavia and Russia (Rus'): Family Traditions and International Connections', *Studia Anthroponomica Scandinavica* 21 (2003), pp. 15–50, at 19.

49 N. F. Blake, *The Saga of the Jomsvikings* (London, 1962), pp. 8–11.

50 *The Crawford Collection of Early Charters and Documents*, ed. A. S. Napier and W. H. Stevenson (Oxford, 1895), p. 144, n. 1.

51 For William's use of the *Chronicle*, see *William of Malmesbury: Gesta Regum*, ed. Mynors, et al., II, pp. 12–13. It is conceivable that William might have seen MS. A at Canterbury, or MS. G at Winchester.

52 J. Milton, *The History of Britain* [1670] (Stamford, 1991), p. 291.

from his own imagination. There are doubtless some literary antecedents for the woman who offers herself up as a hostage for peace, and for the display of heroism in the face of decapitation (one thinks of the tale told at the end of *Jómsvíkingasaga*).⁵³ Indeed, it is possible that William of Malmesbury simply invented Gunnhild, and attached her to Palling, intending in this way to lend colour and verisimilitude to the story which he had found in William of Jumièges. In other words, the story was improved by William of Malmesbury for the sake of the historical rhetoric: King Æthelred was represented as an incompetent and homicidal ruler, fit only for punishment by the Danes, and personified the decline from former greatness which represented the English in general as fit only for punishment by the Normans.⁵⁴ Perhaps we should just accept William's story at face value; but to my mind these are the sort of questions which have to be addressed when dealing with a source of this nature. One should add that William had seen Æthelred's charter for St Frideswide's, Oxford, but connected it erroneously with events at Oxford of 1015.⁵⁵

The process of literary development was taken further by the monks of St Albans, who did so much in the thirteenth century to shape an English historical tradition reaching back into the Anglo-Saxon past. They had access to the works of William of Jumièges, William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon, and many others, and also to material of uncertain authority now lost; and they tended to achieve their purpose by conflating everything to hand, thereby creating the stories which passed into popular legend. Yet one has to draw the line at some point, and much of what they have to say about the Anglo-Saxon period, not found in the work of their Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman predecessors, has to be taken with the proverbial pinch of salt. An anonymous chronicle composed probably at St Albans in the second quarter of the thirteenth century, attributed (erroneously) to John of Wallingford, contains an account of the massacre which becomes no

53 Blake, *Jomsvikings*, pp. 40–3 (chs. 36–7).

54 William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum*, ed. Mynors, *et al.*, I, pp. 268, 354–6 and 456–60.

55 *William of Malmesbury: Gesta Regum*, ed. Mynors, *et al.*, I, p. 310, with II, p. 164. Cf. *William of Malmesbury: Gesta Pontificum Anglorum (The History of the English Bishops)*, ed. M. Winterbottom and R. M. Thomson, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2007), I, p. 478, with II, pp. 230–1.

more plausible however many times it is re-told.⁵⁶ According to this chronicler, the Danes had prospered in England since the days of King Æthelstan, to the extent that by Æthelred's reign they possessed the best towns (*municipia*) in the land; and since they were used by the English for military purposes, a law had been passed that every household should support one Dane:

Thus did they [the Danes] increase by degrees, till they oppressed the people of the land. During the whole of this period East Anglia [*'Estangla'*, as opposed to '*Westangla*', *sþerhaps* 'eastern England'] was especially open to them, because it is opposite to their country, and the excellence of its ports gave them easy means of access or departure; so that, if they were diminished in number either by the effects of old age, or any accident, they could at once gain fresh recruits by this ready method of approach. They had also either seized, or prepared to seize, all the best towns in the land, and caused much trouble to the natives of the land; for they were wont, after the fashion of their country, to comb their hair every day, to bathe every Saturday, to change their garments often, and set off their persons by many such frivolous devices. In this manner they laid siege to the virtue of the married women, and persuaded the daughters even of the nobles to be their concubines. For these and other like causes there arose many quarrels and wars in the realm. The king, however, smoothed the matter over, because the Danes were always in the wrong.

At length, from the constant influx of their countrymen, they had so increased in numbers and strength, that they paid but little respect to the king; so that at last he was so provoked by the numerous complaints arising from their insolence, that he gave them all up to the English to be dealt with as they might think fit. But the plot did not turn out well, for not fearing the judgement of God, and counselling but badly for their own safety, they agreed together that each province should kill the Danes at that time resident within its limits [*ut quelibet prouincia suos Dacos occideret*]; and they appointed a certain day on which they should rise up

⁵⁶ Text: 'The Chronicle Attributed to John of Wallingford', ed. R. Vaughan, *Camden Miscellany XXI*, Camden 3rd ser. (London, 1958), p. 60. Translation: J. Stevenson, *The Church Historians of England*, 5 vols. in 8 (London, 1853–8), II.2, pp. 523–64 (based on an earlier edition by Thomas Gale), at 558–9.

against them. This was on the Saturday [*sabbatum*], on which (as has been before said) the Danes are in the habit of bathing; and, accordingly, at the set time they were destroyed most ruthlessly, from the least even to the greatest. They spared neither sex nor age, destroying together with them those women of their own nation who had consented to intermix with the Danes, and the children who had sprung from that foul adultery. Some women had their breasts cut off; others were buried alive in the ground; while the children were dashed to pieces against posts and stones.

The Danes themselves were so utterly destroyed that there survived no one to tell what had been done, with the single exception of twelve young men, who escaped from the slaughter in London, and, fleeing to the Thames, threw themselves into a small boat, and, seizing the oars, quickly rowed themselves out of sight, and when they came to the sea-coast, they exchanged it for a ship, and spreading sail as quickly as they could set off for Denmark.

The obvious source here is William of Jumièges. The assumption is that the order applied to and was implemented in the Danelaw; and beyond that, it is interesting to see the stereotype of the hunky Dane attested already in the thirteenth century. One can't help feeling, however, that the whole story of the use made by the Danes of such unfairly hygenic methods (combing the hair, having a bath once a week, and even changing their clothes), in order to seduce the lovely young English women among whom they were billeted, is little more than the product of a fertile imagination.⁵⁷

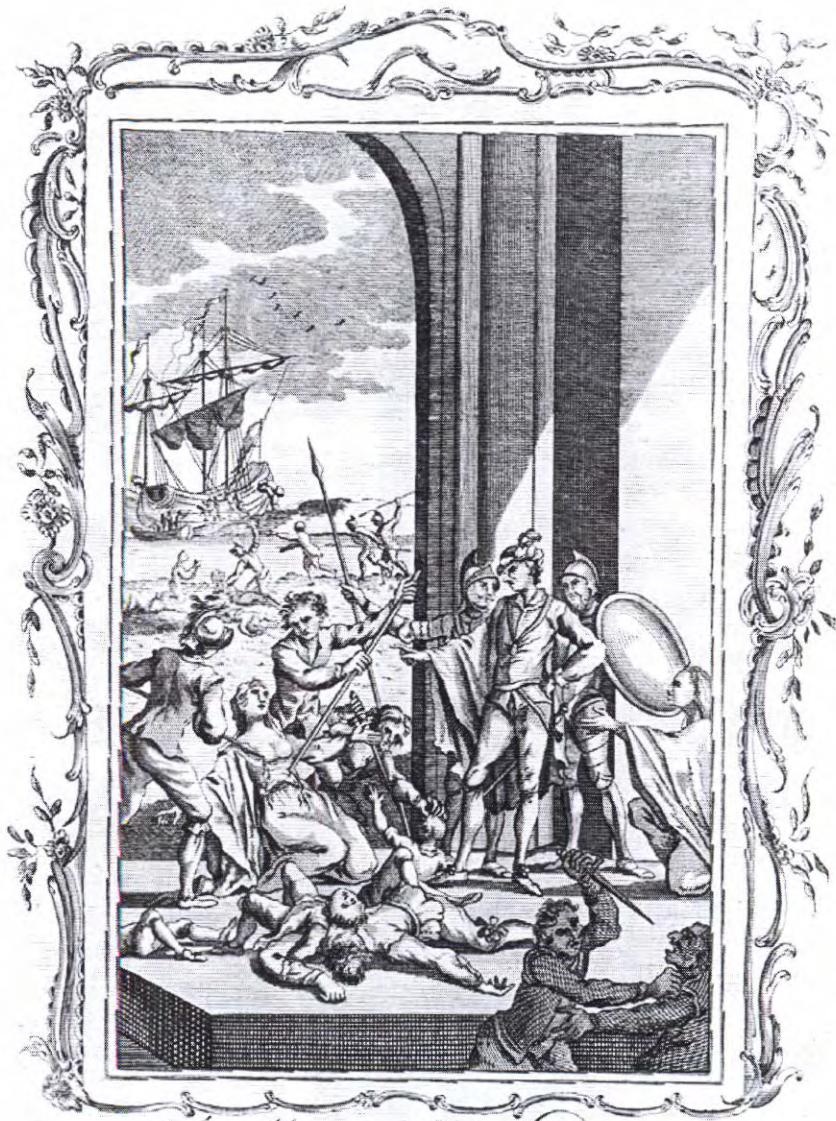
A rather different kind of story was told by another thirteenth-century monk of St Albans, Roger of Wendover, in his 'Flowers of History':⁵⁸

57 Freeman, *Norman Conquest*, p. 637, followed by 'Chronicle', ed. Vaughan, p. 60, n. 1, was impressed by the chronicler's statement that the Danes were killed on a Saturday, for 'in 1002 that festival [St Brice's Day] would really fall on a Saturday'. In point of fact, 13 November 1002 was a Friday.

58 Text: *Matthæi Parisiensis, Monachi Sancti Albani, Chronica Majora*, ed. H. R. Luard, 7 vols., Rolls Series (London, 1872–83), I, pp. 486–8 (the small type representing Roger's text). Translation: J. A. Giles, *Roger of Wendover's Flowers of History*, 2 vols. (London, 1849), I, pp. 282–3.

In this year [1012] a certain Huna, King Æthelred's chief military commander, an undaunted and warlike man, beholding the insolence of the Danes, who after the establishment of peace had grown strong throughout the whole of England, presuming to violate and insult the wives and daughters of the nobles of his kingdom, came in much distress to the king and made his doleful complaint before him. Greatly moved thereat, the king, by the advice of the same Huna, sent letters into all parts of the kingdom, commanding all the people that on one day – the feast of St Brice the bishop – they should rise and put to death all the Danes settled in England, leaving none surviving, so that the whole English nation might once and for ever be freed from Danish oppression. And so the Danes, who a little before had made a league with the English, and had sworn to live peaceably with them, were shamefully slain, and their wives and little ones dashed against the posts of their houses. The decree was mercilessly carried into effect in the city of London, insomuch that a number of Danes who had fled to a church for refuge, were all butchered before the very altars. But some Danish youths, flying on board a vessel, escaped to Denmark, and reported to King Swein the bloody end of his people. Moved to tears thereat, he called together all the nobles of his kingdom, and making known to them what had happened, inquired of them diligently what they advised to be done; whereupon they all with one acclamation determined that the blood of their kinsmen and friends should be revenged.

Their fury was increased by the death of Gunnhild, sister of King Swein, who was slain in England on this occasion. For this Gunnhild had been married to Earl Pallig, a Danish nobleman, and coming to England in former years with her husband, had there embraced the faith of Christ and the sacrament of baptism. This discreet woman had mediated a peace between the Danes and English and had given herself, with her husband and only son, as a hostage to King Æthelred for its security. Having been committed by the king to the custody of Earl Eadric, after a few days this traitor caused her husband and her son to be cruelly slain in her presence with four lances, and lastly ordered the noble woman to be decapitated. Enduring with fortitude the terrors of death, Gunnhild neither grew pale at its approach, nor did she lose her



The Massacre of the Danes.

Fig. 1. 'The Massacre of the Danes'. Engraving after a drawing by Samuel Wale, published in Mortimer's *New History of England* (1764-6).

serenity of countenance after her blood was spent; howbeit she confidently asserted in her last moments that the shedding her blood would be to the great damage of all England. For these causes, Swein, king of the Danes, a cruel and blood-thirsty man, eager for vengeance, assembled all his own forces, and sent messengers with letters to places out of his dominion, inviting such as were honest soldiers, desirous of gain and light of heart, to join in this expedition.

Here the source is not only William of Jumièges, but also William of Malmesbury; yet although Roger was a contemporary of the anonymous St Albans chronicler, they would appear to have been working independently of each other.⁵⁹ Roger's chief contribution was to introduce into the story a person called Huna, 'King Æthelred's chief military commander', though his remark that Huna had complained to the king that the Danes were violating and insulting all English women suggests at least some awareness of the version in the anonymous chronicle. It is also interesting, in view of the charter for St Frideswide's, Oxford, to find a statement to the effect that the citizens of London took refuge in a church, and were all butchered before the altars. Roger of Wendover's version of the story was taken over by Matthew Paris, another monk of St Albans, and was absorbed thence into the chronicle attributed to 'Matthew of Westminster'.⁶⁰ The stories of the massacre told by medieval chroniclers were bound to have a significant impact on the perception of King Æthelred which passed into standard (seventeenth- and eighteenth-century) accounts of English history. These were the days before the invention of serious source-criticism, when so many things were taken at face-value and there was little sense of a distinction between what was authoritative and what was not. An edition of 'Matthew of Westminster' was published by Matthew Parker in 1570, and in this way the 'St Albans' view of the distant past became accessible and influential. There is no need to track accounts of the massacre any further, through works such as Sir Richard Baker's *Chronicle of the Kings of England* (first published in 1643), or John

59 'Chronicle', ed. Vaughan, pp. xii–xiii.

60 For further details, see C. Gross, *A Bibliography of English History to 1485*, ed. E. B. Graves (Oxford, 1975), pp. 421 (no. 2871) and 441 (no. 2941).

Milton's *History of Britain* (first published in 1670);⁶¹ but it was works like these, as well as other editions of medieval chronicles, which lay behind the establishment of an English historical tradition in the eighteenth century, represented (for example) by Rapin's *History of England*, in the late 1720s, and by David Hume's *History of England*, in the early 1760s. Suffice it to say, for Rapin, that the Massacre of St Brice's Day had its usual place: symbolic of the depravity to which the English had sunk; explaining why the Danes took their revenge; and demonstrating, in its dire consequences, that the perpetrators of massacres never secured their objectives. It may be that for Rapin the event had special significance, and that his feelings as a Huguenot, conditioned by the 'Massacre of St Bartholomew's Day' (1572), made him perhaps instinctively sympathetic towards the imagined victims of the Massacre of St Brice's Day; for the death of Gunnhild was chosen as one of the decorative headpieces in his *History*, to serve as a defining image for the later Anglo-Saxon period.⁶² The same image, of the death of Gunnhild, recurs (obviously under Rapin's influence) in one of the first of the various multi-part illustrated histories produced later in the eighteenth century, which did so much to formulate and to popularize the historical identity of the English during the reign of George III (fig. 1).⁶³ Unsurprisingly, however, it is the only illustration in the series not dedicated to a noble patron, and was dropped altogether from the later eighteenth-century history books using the same material. Of course the French had no such scruples, and the scene reappears in the first volume of an illustrated *Histoire d'Angleterre*, published in 1784.⁶⁴

FOLK MEMORIES OF THE DANES

Some of the popular tales which enliven perceptions of the Anglo-Saxon past in the early modern period reflect an awareness (if not

61 R. Baker, *Chronicle of the Kings of England* (London, 1643), 2nd ed. (London, 1653), pp. 18; Milton, *History of Britain*, pp. 290–1.

62 S. Keynes, 'The Cult of King Alfred the Great', *Anglo-Saxon England* 28 (1999), pp. 225–356, at 291.

63 The drawing, by Samuel Wale, was engraved for Mortimer's *New History of England*, published in 1764–6; see Keynes, 'Cult of Alfred', p. 306.

64 Keynes, 'Cult of Alfred', p. 312, n. 413.

necessarily a memory) of the Danish raids which had afflicted the English people in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. The question is whether they add anything useful to historical knowledge, but the problem is to establish how they might have originated. Did such tales represent 'genuine' traditions transmitted from one generation to the next, or were they, no less interestingly, a reflection of raised awareness of the past, as the stories contained in Latin chronicles, and more popular histories, were transmitted to the people at large?

Several place-names throughout England contain elements which appear to indicate an association of some kind with the Danes;⁶⁵ and among them, a profusion of earthworks, ring-ditches, Iron Age hill-forts and other features in the landscape have come to be identified in local tradition, and sometimes marked on Ordnance Survey maps, as 'Danish' camps.⁶⁶ It is rarely clear, however, when these names might have originated, or indeed whether it was the place-name which generated the explanation, or the presumed explanation which generated a popular name; and of course one suspects in most cases that the apparent association with Danes is no more than a product of wishful thinking or folk etymology.⁶⁷ One should note in the same connection that the Middle English word *lurdan*, *lurdein*, *lordein*, borrowed from Old French *lordin* (*adj.* 'stupid', *noun* 'idiot'), and used in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to denote an 'evildoer', 'lazy person', or 'unfortunate wretch',⁶⁸ emerged into seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English usage as 'Lurdane', meaning an idle, lazy fellow who lived at other people's expense, and was explained at that time, by a similar process of folk etymology, as 'Lord-Dane', with reference to Danes,

65 Examples abound: e.g. Danebury (Hants.), Dane Court (Kent), Danehill (Sussex), Dane End (Beds.), Danbury (Essex), and Daventry, in its local form 'Daintree' (Northants.).

66 There are so-called 'Danish camps' at Cholesbury (Bucks.), Wareham (Norfolk), Willington (Beds.), and elsewhere.

67 A popular etymology for the places mentioned in the previous note, and others like them, is more likely to have led to the Danes than to OE *dun* 'hill', *denu* 'valley', *denn* 'pasture', or a personal-name *Dene*. The warning is sounded by P. H. Reaney, *The Origin of English Place-Names* (London, 1960), p. 162. I am also grateful for guidance in this connection to Dr David Parsons, Institute for Name-Studies, University of Nottingham (letter, 22 November 2002).

68 A. Hindley, *Old French-English Dictionary* (Cambridge, 2000), s.v., and *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. S. M. Kuhn, *et al.* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1952–2001), s.v.

formerly employed as mercenaries, who set themselves up over their masters.⁶⁹ More to the point, perhaps, are the popular names current in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for certain plants, which allude to a supposed association between the plants in question and the 'Danes', in ways which suggest that the Danes had retained or developed a place in folk memory as people synonymous with victims of slaughter. Dwarf Elder (*Sambucus ebulus*) was known to the Anglo-Saxons as *wealh wyrt* (foreigner-plant), or *wæl wyrt* (slaughter-plant).⁷⁰ We may presume that one form developed from the other, though it is not clear which came first; both survive as 'walwort'. By the sixteenth century this plant was known, in certain parts of the country, as 'Danewort', or 'Dane's Blood', so-called because the rich red colour of the berries, when crushed, was thought to derive from the soil, in areas noted for the slaughter of Danes.⁷¹ Thus William Camden, in his account of the (Romano-British) burial-mounds at Bartlow, in Essex: 'The country people say that they [the barrows] were reared after a field there fought against the Danes. For *Dane-wort* which, with blood-red berries, commeth up heere plenteously, they still call by no other name than *Danes-blood*, of the number of Danes that were there slaine, very beleeving that it blometh from their blood.'⁷² Other plants accorded an association with the Danes were Pasque Flower (*Anemone pulsatilla*), known in certain parts of eastern England as 'Danes' Blood' or 'Danes'

69 Sir Richard Baker, *A Chronicle of the Kings of England*, 2nd ed. (London, 1653), p. 18: '... by which means, the land was emptied of all coyne, and the English were brought so low, that they were fain to till and eare the ground, whilst the Danes sate idle, and ate the fruits of their labours; abusing the wives and daughters of their hosts where they lay, and yet in every place, for very fear, were called Lord-Danes, (which afterwards became a word of derision, when one would signifie a lazy lubber.)' See also David Hume, *The History of England* I (London, 1762), pp. 99–100, and *The History of England*, 8 vols. (London, 1778), I, pp. 140–1 and 474.

70 BL Cotton Vitellius C. iii, fol. 47v. Facsimile: *The Old English Illustrated Pharmacopoeia: British Library Cotton Vitellius C III*, ed. M. A. D'Aronco and M. L. Cameron, Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile 27 (Copenhagen, 1998), p. 54. Text: *The Old English Herbarium and Medicina De Quadrupedibus*, ed. Hubert Jan De Vriend, Early English Text Society 286 (Oxford, 1984), p. 136.

71 William Turner: 'Libellus de re herbaria' 1538, *The Names of Herbes* 1548 (London, 1965), p. 102 (from *The Names of Herbes*); *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v.; see also Grigson, *Englishman's Flora*, pp. 253 and 346–51.

72 W. Camden, *Britannia* (London, 1607), p. 326 (Latin); (London, 1610), p. 453 (English).

Flower', and Field eryngo (*Eryngium campestre*), known in the vicinity of Daventry as 'Dane Weed'.⁷³

A similar process of thought lies behind explanations for the 'Dane-skins' found on church doors in various parts of the country. It was popularly supposed that Danes who had been caught attacking churches, and committing other acts of sacrilege, were flayed alive, and that their skins were nailed to church doors to serve as a warning of the punishment awaiting those who did likewise. On 10 April 1661 Samuel Pepys admired the great doors of Rochester Cathedral, and was told that they were covered 'with the skins of the Danes'.⁷⁴ Similar traditions were recorded in the eighteenth century from Westminster Abbey,⁷⁵ and from the churches at Hadstock and Copford in Essex.⁷⁶ The specimen from Hadstock was exhibited by Sir Henry Englefield at a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries on 2 July 1789.⁷⁷

The Vice-President in the Chair was pleased to exhibit to the Society a plate of Iron &c attended with this explanation. The Plate of Iron & piece of skin which I have the honour to exhibit are part of a very singular remain of high antiquity, on the door of Hadstock Church in the Hundred of Freshwell in Essex; the skin is by the tradition of the country that of a Danish leader who having been vanquished on a predatory irruption into the country was fled & had his skin nailed to the door of the Church he had

73 R. C. A. Prior, *On the Popular Names of British Plants* (London, 1863), 3rd ed. (London, 1879), p. 63; J. Britten and R. Holland, *A Dictionary of English Plant-Names* (London, 1886), pp. 142–3; Geoffrey Grigson, *The Englishman's Flora* (London, 1958), new ed. (Oxford, 1996), p. 35.

74 *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols. (London, 1970–83), II [1661], p. 70.

75 John Dart, *Westmonasterium, or the History and Antiquities of the Abbey Church of St Peter's Westminster*, 2 vols. (London, 1742), I, p. 64: 'This Vestry (which is called the Chapel of Henry VIII, for what reason I know not, unless for that he stripp'd it of its Furniture) is inclosed with three Doors, the inner cancellated; the middle, which is very thick, lin'd with Skins like Parchment, and driven full of Nails. These Skins they, by Tradition, tell us, were some Skins of the Danes, tan'd, and given here as a Memorial of our Delivery from them.'

76 Philip Morant, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex*, 2 vols. (London, 1768), II, pp. 196 (Copford) and 543 (Hadstock), citing earlier published sources.

77 Society of Antiquaries of London, Minute-Book for Thursday July 2nd 1789 (pp. 159–60). I am grateful to Mr Bernard Nurse, Librarian, Society of Antiquaries, for his help in this connection.

plundered as a warning to future pirates. Time & the curiosity of different persons has long since destroyed every part of the skin which was exposed to view; but as it had been fastened to the door with plates such as the one herewith exhibited, the parts covered by them have still escaped. One of these having been taken off by the permission of the Rector is now laid before the Society. The skin seems evidently human, as no trace of hair is visible on it. It was put fresh on the door & with the raw side towards the wood as the grain of the plank is strongly marked on it. The ferocity of manners which such a custom shews, is a proof that the skin must have remained on the door from a remote period & very probably from the time the tradition of the country ascribes to it. Mr Morant slightly mentions the fact in his History of Essex & adds that at Copford in the Hundred of Lexden in the same County another instance of the same kind occurs, which I believe are the only two existing.

In 1848 fragments of the 'Daneskins' from Worcester, Hadstock and Copford were the subject of an interesting paper by Mr Albert Way, who had sought expert opinion from John Thomas Queckett (1815–61), microscopist, of the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons, and was delighted to have it confirmed that the fragments were probably of human origin.⁷⁸ More recently, Michael Swanton has reported the re-

⁷⁸ Albert Way, 'Some Notes on the Tradition of Flaying, Inflicted in Punishment of Sacrilege; the Skin of the Offender Being Affixed to the Church Door', *Archaeological Journal* 15 (1848), 185–92. According to Mr Way, in the *Catalogue of Antiquities, Coins, Pictures, and Miscellaneous Curiosities, in the Possession of the Society of Antiquaries of London* (London, 1847), p. 46, a portion of skin from the doors of Worcester Cathedral had been among items bequeathed to the Society of Antiquaries by Peter Prattinton (1776–1840); see also P. J. Willetts, *Catalogue of Manuscripts in the Society of Antiquaries of London* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 245–7. The specimens were to be seen in the museum for many years thereafter (F. Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History* (London, 1877), p. 84; C. J. S. Thompson, *Guide to the Surgical Instruments and Objects in the Historical Series* (London, 1929), pp. 83–4), but were destroyed by enemy action in 1941. Curiously, Queckett himself is said to have bequeathed a large fragment of the Copford Daneskin to the Taunton Museum ('The Danes' Skin: an Unusual Ornament for Essex Church Doors', on the website of the Foxearth and District Local History Society); and a specimen from East Thurrock, in Essex, also passed through his hands (R. Pierpoint, 'Flaying Alive', *Notes & Queries* (1904), pp. 73–4). See also Gray, 'The Massacre at the Bran Ditch, A.D. 1010', 84–5 (Appendix A, 'On the "Dane Skin" at Hadstock').

sults of the examination of other fragments of the 'Daneskins' from Hadstock and Copford, pointing towards the same conclusion.⁷⁹ It would be remarkable indeed if any such 'Daneskin' could be shown by modern scientific examination to be certainly human, and to date from the early eleventh century; but until such evidence is forthcoming, we should make do with the conclusion that knowledge of the supposed practice is attested as early as the seventeenth century, and must be judged alongside other manifestations of folk-memories invoking the Danes.⁸⁰

One last such 'folk-memory' is of particular significance in the present connection. The 'Hock-tide' festivities which used to be held in Coventry on the Monday and Tuesday immediately after Easter are presumed to celebrate the deliverance of the English from the Danish menace, with reference either to the St Brice's Day massacre of November 1002 or to the death of King Harthacnut on 8 June 1042.⁸¹ On the occasion of Queen Elizabeth's famous visit to Kenilworth Castle, in 1575, the men of Coventry put on a special performance of their 'Hock Tuesday play'; and to judge from a wonderful letter

79 M. J. Swanton, "Dane-Skins": Excoriation in Early England', *Folklore* 87 (1976), pp. 21–8, at 25–6. One should add, however, that further examination of a part of the Hadstock skin, now in the Saffron Walden Museum, suggests that it was the hide of a cow: see Julian Richards, *The Blood of the Vikings* (London, 2001), pp. 212–13.

80 Séra Geir Waage, successor of Snorri Sturluson as priest of Reykholt, in Iceland, kindly informed me in 2007 that he read, somewhere, that football originated when the English started kicking around the heads of the Danes killed in the massacre of St Brice's Day; but in the absence of evidence I am bound to leave this aside. There is also little to recommend the notion that the Massacre of St Brice's Day was 'the greatest massacre of Christians in England', and that memories of it explain why three dismembered corpses feature on the sixteenth-century seal of the City of Lichfield; see S. Bell, 'The St Brice's Day Massacre', *The Friend*, 5 April 2002, pp. 7–9.

81 S. Denne, 'Memoir on Hokeday', *Archaeologia* 7 (1785), 244–68; and T. Sharp, *A Dissertation on the Pageants or Dramatic Mysteries Anciently Performed at Coventry, by the Trading Companies of that City* (Coventry, 1825), reprinted with a Foreword by A. C. Crawley (East Ardsley, 1973), pp. 125–32. See also R. Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: the Ritual Year 1400–1700* (Oxford, 1994), p. 124, and *idem*, *The Stations of the Sun: a History of the Ritual Year in Britain* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 204–13, at 210.

describing this event, they had great fun hamming it up for Her Majesty's benefit.⁸²

Certain 'good harted men of Couentree' made petition on this occasion 'that they moought renu noow their olld storiall sheaw'.

Of argument, how the Danez whylom heere in a troubloous seazon wear for quietnesse born withall, & suffeard in peas, that anon, by outrage & importabl insolency, abuzing both Ethelred, the king then, and all estates euerie whear byside : at the greuoous complaint & coounsell of Huna, the king's chieftain in warz, on Saint Brices night, Ann. Dom. 1012 [sic]. (As the book sayz) that falleth yeerely on the thirteenth of Nouember, wear all dispatcht, and the Ream rid. And for becauz the matter mencioneth how valiantly our English women for louue of their cuntree behaued themseluez : expressed in actionz & rymez after their manner, they thought it moought mooue sum myrth to her Maiestie the rather.

The thing, said they, iz grounded on story, and for pastime woont too bee plaid in our Citee yeerely ...

But aware, keep bak, make room now, heer they cum! And fyrst, captin Cox, an od man I promiz yoo: by profession a Mason, and that right skilfull, very cunning in fens, and hardy az Gawin; for hiz tonsword hangs at his tablz eend : great ouersight hath he in matters of storie ; *<followed by a long list of the books owned by Captain Cox>*

Captain Cox cam marching on valiantly before, cleen trust, & gartered aboue the knee, all fresh in a velvet cap (master Goldingham lent it him) floorishing with hiz tonswoord, and another fensmaster with him : thus in the foreward making room for the rest. After them proudly prickt on formost, the Danish launs-knights on horsbak, and then the English : each with their allder poll marcially in their hand. Eeven at the first entree the meeting waxt sumwhat warm : that by and by kindled with corage a both sidez, gru from a hot skirmish vnto a blazing battail : first by speare and shield, outragious in their racez az ramz at their rut, with furious encoounterz, that togyther they tumbl too the dust,

82 *Captain Cox, his Ballads and Books; or Robert Laneham's Letter* , ed. F. J. Furnivall (London, 1871), pp. 26–32; and *Robert Langham: a Letter*, ed. R. J. P. Kuin (Leiden, 1983), pp. 52–5 and 96–9. Hence Walter Scott, *Kenilworth: a Romance* [1821], ed. J. H. Alexander (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 362–5.

sumtime hors and man : and after fall too it with sworde & target,
good bangz a both sidez : the fight so ceassing; but the battail not
so ended : folloed the footmen, both the hostez, ton after toother :
first marching in ranks : then warlik turning, then from ranks into
squadrions, then in too trianglz; from that intoo rings, & so
winding oout again : A valiant captain of great prowez, az fierz az
a fox assauting a gooz, waz so hardy to giue the first stroke : then
get they grisly togther : that great waz the actiuitee that day too
be seen thear a both sidez : ton very eager for purchaz of pray,
toother vtterly stoout for redemption of libertie : thus, quarrell
enflamed fury a both sidez. Twise the Danes had the better; but at
the last conflict, beaten doun, ouercom, and many led captiue for
triumph by our English weemen.

This waz the effect of this sheaw, that az it waz handled, made
mooch matter of good pastime....

One gets the impression that this performance was based not so much on folk memory of the Danes as on something which Captain Cox had read in one of his many books, in this case probably Parker's edition of Matthew of Westminster (published in 1570).

The Danes are seen in these ways to have made a considerable impression on popular culture, so much so, indeed, as to make one wonder where it all came from. The question, however, is whether any of these various manifestations of 'Danes' in folk-memory represent 'genuine' traditions, reaching back into the eleventh century, or whether they arose in some way from popular awareness of the stories of the period as told by medieval chroniclers. A sceptical historian is bound to conclude that *none* of this represents genuine folk memory of Danes, and that further work on the diffusion of knowledge of the past, current in the early modern period, might show how the Danes were effectively re-inserted into popular culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – in printed history books, school education, broadsheets, plays, ballads, sermons, and so on. An example might be the notion, which has gained wide currency, that the nursery rhyme 'London Bridge is falling down' alludes to the destruction of the bridge during the attack on London in 1014, when Olaf Haraldsson was helping Æthelred to recover control of London after the death of Swein Forkbeard;⁸³ for while the rhyme, and the associated children's game, can be traced back

83 *Óláf's saga helga (Heimskringla)*, chs. 12–13.

to the seventeenth century, it is attested so widely elsewhere, and in so many different forms, that one should be looking to anthropology, not history, for its origins.⁸⁴

So how, in the final analysis, should we judge the ‘Massacre of St Brice’s Day’? It is one of those events which has long seemed to blacken the reputation of the king in whose reign and in whose name the order was implemented. As Sir Frank Stenton put it, the ‘acts of spasmodic violence’ perpetrated by King Æthelred the Unready were among the signs ‘of a trouble which lies deeper than mere incapacity for government’.⁸⁵ Æthelred murdered his half-brother, Edward the Martyr, in 978; he ravaged the diocese of Rochester in 986, for no apparent reason; he caused Ælfgar, son of the cowardly Ealdorman Ælfric, to be blinded in 993; he ravaged Cumberland in 1000; he massacred the Danes in 1002; he had some more people blinded or killed in 1006; and so it went on. In the case of the Massacre of St Brice’s Day, there is an irresistible logic which sets it up as nothing short of a crime against humanity. The act was directed against ‘all the Danish men who were in England’; and since there can be no doubt that the word ‘Danes’ was used in the late tenth century to designate the inhabitants of Anglo-Danish England, in what had come to be known as the Danelaw, it might well appear to have been an act of indiscriminate murder. It was very unpleasant; it was part of a pattern; and it is bound to feature in any indictment of King Æthelred brought forward before God at the dreaded Day of Judgement.

Yet was it one of those ill-advised or misguided actions for which the king became so notorious – in other words, one of the *unrædas* which gave Æthelred his epithet ‘the Unready’? It was certainly reprehensible, if visited upon innocent ‘Danes’, and on their wives and children. Yet in making any judgement of this event, we have to recognise that several elements of the *familiar* story are not present in the earliest accounts, and form part of the later literary development: the more lurid details; the inclusion among the victims of Gunnhild, sister of King Swein; the notion that Swein invaded England in order to punish the English; the notion that it affected the Danes settled among the English, on a

84 *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*, ed. Iona and Peter Opie (Oxford, 1951), pp. 270–6. I owe this reference to the kindness of Dr Kate Bennett.

85 Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 374.

Saturday; and the role of Huna, King Æthelred's commander, who gave the order. Even shorn of all these accretions, it remains a difficult call. The so-called 'massacre' of the Danes in 1002, however horrible it may seem when judged by standards of our own, was a product of the deep feelings which must have been generated in England during twenty years of raids, and after ten years of sustained oppression. The Danes had come in 991 as a hostile army; they had been paid off in 994, whereupon some of them entered in Æthelred's service a mercenary force; they resumed activity as a hostile army in 997, and were paid off again in the opening months of 1002. The order issued by the king and his councillors, perhaps in September or October of that year, was *conceived* as a pre-emptive strike in response to a reported threat against the English; it was *directed* against Danes who were probably the paid-off members of an army which until so recently had been ravaging the kingdom; it was *put into effect* by the people, with the readiness that flowed from their deep resentment of all they had been forced to endure; and it must be *judged* accordingly, as a course of action adopted in these wretched circumstances. There is no need to take sides. The vikings who had been so active in the 990s were doing what they were bound to do, and much as the Angles, Saxons and Jutes had done to the British in the more distant past; yet it is hardly surprising, under all these circumstances, that King Æthelred and his councillors should have *resorted* to such a desperate measure. We also have to ask ourselves: was this really the event which prompted Swein to invade in 1013. Rather unlikely. Far more likely that Swein invaded in 1013 because he realised that the English had been all but overwhelmed by the devastating raids of 1006–7 and 1009–12, and perhaps to punish Thorkell for his defection to the English side in 1012.

And what have we learnt from this exercise? The temptation is to reach for the arresting modern parallel, and to regard the event as a reprehensible act of 'genocide', or 'ethnic cleansing', or as a manifestation of an early-eleventh-century 'war against terrorism'.⁸⁶ However compelling, such parallels are perhaps inappropriate and unhelpful. The so-called 'massacre of St Brice's Day' takes us close to the horror of the

86 Lavelle, *Aethelred II*, pp. 101–2; see also R. Lavelle, 'Ethnic Cleansing in Anglo-Saxon England', *BBC History Magazine* (November 2002), pp. 42–4.

Danish wars; and things would only get worse thereafter.⁸⁷ After the event of 1002, the next recorded ‘massacre’ in Anglo-Saxon history was that perpetrated at Guildford in 1036, when Earl Godwine and his accomplices captured the ætheling Alfred and his companions. As a contemporary chronicler put it: ‘some were sold for money, some were cruelly killed, some were put in fetters, some were blinded, some were mutilated, some were scalped. No more horrible deed was done in this land since the Danes came and peace was made here.’⁸⁸ It is an interesting comment, for various reasons. It acknowledges the particular horror which attached in the eyes of many to the capture and death of Alfred, as a victim of political subterfuge. Yet note also the careful wording. Hitherto, the formulation used in expressions of this kind had been ‘since the English first came to this land’, with reference to the so-called ‘Adventus Saxonum’ in the mid-fifth century. For this English observer, although he was generally hostile to the Anglo-Danish political establishment, it was the Danish conquest of 1013–16 which provided a new point of departure. It could be, I suppose, that he wanted to make the Danish conquest a new starting point for acts of infamy, in order to exclude from the reckoning a deed done not long before that time: perhaps because he subscribed to the view that the ‘massacre’ of 1002 had been a ‘most just extermination’ (as the draftsman of King Æthelred’s charter had put it); perhaps out of shame, because it was perpetrated by his own side; or perhaps for reasons of tact, because it had been directed against forebears of the regime now in power. I should like to think, however, that the careful wording reflects a contemporary perception that in 1018, when peace was made between the Danes and the English, all the unpleasantness of the preceding twenty or thirty years was set aside. If we must resort to modern parallels, the negotiations which led to the agreement at Oxford in 1018 must have been as momentous as the ‘peace processes’ of our own times; and it was very much to the credit of King Cnut, acting in close association with Archbishop Wulfstan, that an agreement was reached at all. The chronicler himself was evidently dismayed by the treatment of the ætheling Alfred in 1036; yet perhaps behind his comment lay not

87 S. Keynes, ‘An Abbot, an Archbishop, and the Viking Raids of 1006–7 and 1009–12’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 36 (2007), pp. 151–220.

88 ASC, MSS. CD, s.a. 1036. Text: *MS. C*, ed. O’Keeffe, p. 106. Translation: *EHD*, pp. 257–8 (no. 1).

so much an attempt to push the massacre of St Brice's Day under the carpet, as a pointed determination on his part to respect the new beginning.

BISHOP BRICCIUS – SAINT BRICE

Julia Barrow

BRICCIUS (in French, and thence English, simplified to Brice) succeeded the much more famous St Martin as bishop of Tours, and probably held the office from 397 to 442.¹ A man of – to judge from the sources closest to his time – limited self-control, he was not an obvious candidate for sainthood. He is not a well-known saint worldwide, and even in his homeland, France, he is chiefly venerated as a satellite of the greater luminary, St Martin. Brice's subordinate position to Martin defined his life, his cult, and even – as I hope to show – Æthelred the Unready's choice of St Brice's day for the massacre of the Danes in England in 1002. This paper sets out to map out Brice's life and his cult and to explain why Æthelred found St Brice's day particularly appropriate for his purposes. To get from the fourth century to the eleventh century I propose to divide up the subject-matter as follows:

- 1 what we learn about Brice from contemporary sources
- 2 Brice's life according to Gregory of Tours (who was writing over a hundred years after Brice's death)
- 3 the origins of Brice's cult
- 4 the spread of the cults of Martin and Brice to Anglo-Saxon England
- 5 why Æthelred chose St Brice's day for the massacre

¹ Following the dates proposed by Luce Piétri, 'La succession des premiers évêques tourangeaux: essai sur la chronologie de Grégoire de Tours', *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome: Moyen Âge – Temps modernes*, 94, part 2 (1982), 551–619 at 618. Danuta Shanzer, Ian Wood and Catherine Cubitt all advised me on various aspects of the discussion below, and I am very grateful to all of them; they are not responsible for any errors I may have made.

Contemporary sources for Brice are few, but nevertheless help to anchor him in time and place and give some insight into his temperament. The first is a passage in Sulpicius Severus' *Dialogues*.² Sulpicius was a passionate apologist of St Martin who wrote the *Life* of Martin shortly before the latter's death and then, after Martin's death, wrote further works, the *Chronicles* and the *Dialogues*, to win support for him in the face of what clearly was deep-rooted Gaulish scepticism about Martin's sanctity.³ Martin's career needed some explanation: he came from Pannonia (modern Hungary); he was an ex-soldier, and the son of a soldier who had risen through the ranks, which meant that socially he was of low status, and he had carried on being a soldier for some time after his baptism, which made many of his contemporaries, including Brice, view him as unclean.⁴ Brice has a cameo appearance in Sulpicius' *Dialogues* as a protégé of Martin who is inspired by demons to rage at the saint. In the passage, Sulpicius says that Brice had been brought up by Martin at Marmoutier and had been ordained as a clerk, presumably by Martin. In Sulpicius' account, Martin had criticized Brice for purchasing horses and slaves, both boys and pretty girls, although he had had nothing before Martin had brought him up. The day after this ticking off, Brice, in a furious temper, approached Martin as the latter sat in his favourite wooden seat outside his living-quarters, and raged against Martin. With lips trembling, his face shaking, pale with fury, he poured out words of sin, asserting that he was the holier, since he had grown up from his early years in a monastery amid the holy teachings of the church, as Martin himself had brought him up, whereas Martin,

2 Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogues*, III, c. 15; *Sulpicii Severi opera*, ed. Carolus Halm, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, 1 (Vienna, 1866), 213-14. An English translation can be found in Sulpicius Severus, *Writings*, ed. Bernard M. Peebles, in *The Fathers of the Church*, 7 (Washington, D. C., 1970), 246-7; the one supplied below is my own.

3 For Sulpicius' *Vita Martini*, see Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, ed. and tr. Jacques Fontaine, 3 vols., Sources chrétiennes, 133-5 (Paris 1967-9); for discussion of the circumstances in which Sulpicius wrote, see Clare Stancliffe, *St Martin and his Hagiographer: History and Miracle in Sulpicius Severus* (Oxford, 1983), esp. pp. 71-85, 290-6.

4 Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogues*, III, c. 15; *Sulpicii Severi opera*, ed. Halm, 213-14; see also Stancliffe, *St Martin and his Hagiographer*, 258 and Raymond Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton, 1993), 16.

which he himself could not deny, had polluted himself with military deeds, and now had grown old and completely nonsensical thanks to his groundless superstitions and ridiculous fantasies about visions'. Martin remarked to those who asked why he did not remove his tormentor from the priesthood that if Christ had put up with Judas then surely he could put up with Brice.⁵

The second contemporary source about Brice is a letter of Pope Zosimus (417-18) of 22 September 417 attacking Lazarus, bishop of Aix, for, among much else, having made false accusations against Bishop Brice at the Council of Turin. The Council of Turin was held 22 September in a year between 398 and 407, probably nearer 398, which helps to provide a terminus ad quem for Brice's succession as bishop.⁶ Lazarus was an extreme ascetic associated with Priscillianism, and his hostility to Brice suggests that the latter belonged to a rival, less ascetic, faction among the Gaulish clergy. The antagonism between the two men may provide a further explanation for the ill-feeling Brice had for Martin, for Martin had been sympathetic to Priscillian⁷ the ultra-ascetic churchman executed by Magnus Maximus after a bitter heresy trial in 385. Martin was probably not a supporter of Priscillian's theological views, but he would certainly have approved of Priscillian's asceticism. In particular,

5 Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogues*, III, c. 15; *Sulpicii Severi Opera*, ed. Halm, 213-14; Stansliffe, *St Martin and his Hagiographer*, 195.

6 Zosimus, *Epistolae et Decreta*, epp. 3, 4; *Patrologia Latina*, XX, 656, 663. The council of Turin is usually dated 22 September 398 (*Concilia Galliae A. 314-A.506*, ed. Charles Munier, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, 148 (Turnhout, 1963), 52-60), though Luce Piétri thinks it may have taken place a year or two later: 'La succession des premiers évêques tourangeaux', 598-9. On the dating range, see Henry Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila: the Occult and the Charismatic in the Early Church* (Oxford, 1976), 161-2.

7 Stansliffe, *St Martin and his Hagiographer*, 259-61, 288-9 on Priscillianism; this is also the line taken by Ralph Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism and Religious Controversy in Fifth-Century Gaul* (Washington 1989), 20-2, and see *ibid.*, 12-17 for the dispute among the Gallic bishops over Priscillian, who was wrongly accused by Emperor Magnus Maximus of Manichaeism at Trier in 386, with the support of Bishop Felix of Trier (supporters of Priscillian were therefore also known as anti-Felicians); Hippolyte Delehaye, 'St Martin et Sulpice Sévère', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 38 (1920), 5-136 at 125, saw the hostility between Martin and Brice being grounded in the fact that the former was more monastic than the latter, while Eugen Ewig, 'Der Martinskult im Frühmittelalter', *Archiv für mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte*, xiv (1962), 11-30 at 11, hypothesized that it was Martin's opposition to a Constantinian imperial church which antagonized Brice.

Martin was deeply shocked by Priscillian's trial at Trier in 385, both because it was conducted by a secular authority, the usurping emperor Magnus Maximus, and because it resulted in Priscillian's execution;⁸ Martin himself thought that debates over doctrine should be settled by churchmen without secular interference and that churchmen should not be involved in bloodshed. Thereafter he refused to take communion with any of the Gaulish bishops who had pressed for Priscillian's conviction, and he maintained this stance until the end of his life.⁹ His biographer, Sulpicius Severus, had similar convictions; interestingly he never comments on the synod of Turin in 398 which was supposed to heal the rift between the anti-Priscillianists and those who were unhappy about the way Priscillian had been treated, and Claire Stancliffe deduces from this that he may have been harassed by anti-Priscillianists hostile to his ascetic form of life.

One of the reasons sometimes given by scholars for the hostility between Martin and Brice is their difference in background. Raymond Van Dam sees the difference chiefly in the fact that Martin was Pannonian and was therefore an outsider in fourth-century Gaul.¹⁰ Friedrich Prinz, though expressing himself with caution, sees the difference partly in class terms, with Brice as an aristocrat and Martin as a man of the people who had made his way up in the world through army service, but he also notes that Martin's asceticism and unkempt appearance aroused hostility.¹¹ A recent study by Allan McKinley is unwilling to see Martin's 'foreign' birth and low social origins as the factors that would have aroused hostility at the time. As he argues, in the fourth century it was socially acceptable to make one's career in the army, and to move across the Roman empire, and he notes that the governor of Lugdunensis III during Martin's episcopate, Valerius

⁸ Friedrich Prinz, 'Le cas test: la conception de l'Eglise de l'évêque Martin de Tours et la persécution des priscillianistes', in *Clovis, histoire et mémoire*, ed. Michel Rouche, 2 vols (Paris, 1997), I, 81–95, argues that Sulpicius Severus and probably therefore also Martin himself were hostile to Priscillianism as such, though sympathetic to Priscillian's predicament.

⁹ Ibid., 90, citing Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogus*, III, c. 13 (*Sulpicii Severi Opera*, 211).

¹⁰ Raymond Van Dam, 'Images of Saint Martin in late Roman and early Merovingian Gaul', *Viator*, 19 (1988), 1–27, at 3.

¹¹ Prinz, 'Le cas test', 84.

Dalmatius, was, like Martin, a Pannonian.¹² We also need to consider the speed with which the Gaulish senatorial aristocracy developed an interest in holding high office in the church: they were keen to do this in the fifth century, when it became politically attractive, indeed politically necessary, but in the fourth century there were plenty of other opportunities for exercising influence.¹³ Furthermore, there is no contemporary evidence about Brice's social origins. The statement by Sulpicius that Brice had had nothing before he became a clerk suggests that his social origins were not of the very highest, but rather more modest; moreover, nothing in Brice's career suggests that he had any family contacts outside Tours.¹⁴ This seems to preclude his membership of the senatorial aristocracy, a class characterized in the fourth century by long-distance family connections (typically, for Gaulish families, within Gaul, but occasionally elsewhere in the empire also);¹⁵ instead, he might have been of curial rank (the lower nobility, whose interests were centred on a particular city). It was Sulpicius himself who was high-born, and even he did not belong to the senatorial class, though he married into it.¹⁶ He could afford the time (the aristocratic *otium*) and the money to write about Martin, and, on the latter's death, he established a monastery at a site, presumably a villa, called *Primuliacum*, and encouraged several of the community of Marmoutier to join him there. This site, which cannot be identified, but which probably lay between Toulouse and Bordeaux,¹⁷ was the place where Martin's cult began to be built up.¹⁸

Perhaps it is better to see the hostility between Brice and Martin arising out of different standpoints to the church as an institution.

¹² A. S. McKinley, 'The first two centuries of Saint Martin of Tours', *Early Medieval Europe*, 14 (2006), 173–200, at 176–7.

¹³ Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800* (Oxford, 2005), 159; see also Stancliffe, *St Martin*, 267, on the other side of the question, the process by which bishops began to be viewed as of high social status in the fourth century.

¹⁴ Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogues*, III, c. 15: *Sulpicii Severi Opera*, ed. Halm, 213; see also discussion by Luce Piétri, *La ville de Tours du IVe au VIe siècle: Naissance d'une cité chrétienne*, Collection de l'Ecole française de Rome, 69 (Rome, 1983), 640.

¹⁵ Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, 160.

¹⁶ Stancliffe, *St Martin*, 15–16.

¹⁷ Stancliffe, *St Martin*, 30, n. 3.

¹⁸ McKinley, 'The first two centuries', 182.

Martin had warmly embraced one of the principal trends in the fourth-century church, the acceptance of monasticism as part of the ecclesiastical mainstream rather than as an eccentric side-growth. He had encouraged its development in Gaul and his actions, especially the foundation of Marmoutier, had laid the groundwork for a relationship between bishops and monasteries in which the former could foster the latter and make use of them as part of their pastoral provision.¹⁹ Coupled with this was a strong stress on asceticism. Martin was opposed to the possession of material goods, as we see from his criticism of Brice. Likewise, one of his main objections to the bishops who called for Priscillian's conviction was that they wanted to lay hands on the belongings of Priscillian and his supporters and were therefore avaricious.²⁰ Brice, by contrast, thought there was no harm in clergy owning horses and slaves. Similarly Martin wanted to encourage chastity, and here, too, he was following a significant trend in fourth-century thinking. The fourth century was in particular a period when some of the points of difference between monks and clergy began to merge; for example, the latter started to take on the daily office of services of psalms said by the former, as we see in the communities associated with Augustine of Hippo and with Eusebius of Vercelli. During the fourth century, the celebration of mass became a daily occurrence and with that demand grew for the celibacy of the clergy, especially those in higher orders, that is, bishops, priests and deacons; previously, weekly mass had meant that priests had simply been expected to abstain from sexual activity the night before celebrating, but now daily celebration meant permanent sexual abstinence.²¹ The earliest official evidence for this is a letter from Pope Siricus to Bishop Himerius of Tarragona in 385, which seems to have been sparked by the debate over Priscillianism, though this is nowhere mentioned (Himerius may have been expressing concern over an accusation against one of Priscillian's principal opponents, Hydatius of Emerita).²² However, the movement did not meet with instant acceptance from all, and clearly there must have been

19 Cf. Prinz, 'Le cas test', 89, 92.

20 Ibid., 89.

21 Raymund Kottje, 'Das Aufkommen der täglichen Eucharistiefeier in der Westkirche und die Zölibatsforderung', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 82 (1971), 218–28; Robert Godding, *Prêtres en Gaule mérovingienne* (Brussels, 2001).

22 Godding, *Prêtres en Gaule mérovingienne*, 113 (the letter *Dominus Inter* attributed to Pope Damasus is of uncertain origin); Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila*, 29–31.

many clergy in Gaul in the late fourth century who took a different line on asceticism to that taken by Martin, and Brice, as we will see in a minute, may have been one of them.

GREGORY OF TOURS

It is certainly the less ascetic side of Brice that emerges in Gregory of Tours' *Ten Books of the Histories*.²³ Gregory supplies the fullest account we possess of Brice's career, but it needs to be treated as a literary rather than as a historical source. For Tours, Gregory had access to liturgical materials and some simple historical sources, including a list of bishops with the lengths of their pontificates, and probably epitaphs and inscriptions,²⁴ but he was not primarily an antiquarian. Rather (and here we need to take note of the work of Walter Goffart and Danuta Shanzer), he was a born story-teller and a great comic author, who took care to shape his material to create the best dramatic effect.²⁵ Gregory talks about Brice at two points in the *Ten Books*, first at the start of Book II (c.1), and secondly in the final chapter (c.31) of Book X, in which he gives brief accounts of all the bishops of Tours down to his own day.²⁶

The placing of the first entry of Brice at the start of Book II is significant. Book I runs from the Creation to the death of St Martin (probably 397); Book II, which runs from the start of Brice's pontificate to the end of the reign of Clovis (511), opens with a preface in which Gregory explains, using Biblical precedents, why he puts stories of good

²³ *Gregorii Episcopi Turonensis Libri Historiarum X* (hereafter *DLH*), ed. Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (hereafter *MGH*), *Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum* (hereafter *SRM*), 1, part 1 (Hanover, 1951), esp. 36–8, 528; for an English translation of Gregory's *Ten Books of the Histories*, see *Gregory of Tours, The History of the Franks* (hereafter *HF*), tr. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth, 1974), 104–6, 595.

²⁴ This material clearly provided the basis for Book X, c. 31: *DLH*, 526–37; *HF*, 593–604.

²⁵ Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (AD 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, NJ, 1988), 112–234 for Gregory's use of satire in the *Ten Books of the Histories*; Danuta Shanzer, 'Laughter and humour in the early medieval Latin west', in Guy Halsall, ed. *Humour, History and Politics in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2002), 25–47 at 31–5 on Gregory's use of humour.

²⁶ *DLH*, 37–8 (II, 1), 528 (X, 31); *HF*, 104–6, 595.

and wicked people side by side.²⁷ This must surely be a hint to the reader to look back to the account of the saintly Martin at the end of Book I and then forward to the account of the more questionable Brice in the first chapter of Book II.²⁸ Moreover, II c.1 is itself full of awkward conjunctures. One of these comes at the outset, when Brice, still a priest, tells a pilgrim seeking St Martin ‘If you are looking for that crazy fellow, just cast your eyes in that direction. In his usual half-witted way, he is staring at the sky’. Martin lets Brice know that he had been able to overhear what Brice said, and adds that he had just had a revelation that Brice would become bishop but would have to put up with many adversities.²⁹

Once bishop, the previously scornful Brice devoted himself to prayer; he was chaste but also proud and vain. But Gregory no sooner invokes Brice’s chastity than he calls it into question, for he immediately goes on to say that in the thirty-third year of his pontificate (a symbolic number – 33 is the perfect age, the age of Christ at the crucifixion), Brice was faced with a serious accusation. As Gregory puts it: ‘Although Bricius was arrogant and vain, he was considered to be chaste in body. In the thirty-third year after his ordination, a lamentable charge was levelled against him. A woman to whom his servants used to give his clothes to wash, and who for religious reasons had herself given up wearing lay garments, became pregnant and bore a child’.³⁰ Gregory may perhaps be inviting the reader to wonder what Brice had been doing to his underwear – or, for that matter, what technique the laundress was adopting to get it clean – and he develops the contrast between purity and pollution further: the citizens of Tours were convinced that Brice was the father and said that they did not want to be polluted by having to kiss his hands. To make matters more serious, the laundress had, as we have seen, adopted religious clothing; in other words, she had become a nun or a vowess (though Gregory’s language, ‘sub specie

27 *DLH*, 37 (preface to Book II); *HF*, 103; on Gregory’s use of prefaces, see Guy Halsall, ‘The preface to Book V of Gregory of Tours’ Histories: its form, context and significance’, *English Historical Review*, 122 (2007), 297–317.

28 See discussion by Martin Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century* (Cambridge, 2001), 132.

29 *DLH*, 37 (II, 1); *HF*, 104 (from which the quotation is taken).

30 This topic has been discussed in an unpublished paper by Ralph Mathisen, ‘Some 5th century Gallic unmentionables’, delivered at the International Medieval Congress at Kalamazoo, 2000.

religionis', may suggest that her vocation was suspect).³¹ Brice tried two methods of clearing his name. To start with he got the baby, a month old, to act as an oracle, adjuring it in the name of Jesus Christ to say whether or not he was the father. 'You are not my father', said the baby.³² But Brice refused to question the child further about its paternity, and thus failed to satisfy the citizens of Tours. He then performed an ordeal, carrying burning coals wrapped in his cloak to the tomb of St Martin.³³ The cloak was not singed but the citizens were still angry. Brice was ejected from the city and spent seven years at Rome; meanwhile the citizens of Tours elected a new bishop, Justinian, and on his death another, Armentius.³⁴ Brice returned to Tours, entering the city as the dead Armentius was carried out of it for burial. Gregory is emphasising the ceremonial aspect of the forgiven Brice's return to Tours by making his *adventus* take place simultaneously with the egress of Armentius' corpse. Brice was reinstated and served as bishop unchallenged for a further seven years until his death. Much of Gregory's account of Brice in Book II, chapter 1 should not (or not necessa-

31 *DLH*, 37 (II, 1); *HF*, 104.

32 *DLH*, 37 (II, 1); *HF*, 105. For a later example of an oracular baby, see *Vita Goaris*, c. 7, in *Passiones Vitaeque Sanctorum Aevi Merovingici*, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH, SRM, 4 (Hanover and Leipzig, 1942), 417-19, where the hermit, Goar, is forced by his diocesan, Bishop Rusticus of Trier (who suspected that Goar's miracles were the work of the devil), to ask a three-day old foundling to declare who its parents were: the baby announced that Rusticus was its father. An earlier example of an oracular child is the one overheard by Augustine singing 'Tolle, lege' (Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII, 12: *Sancti Augustini Confessionum Libri XIII*, ed. Lucas Verheijen, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, 27 (Turnhout, 1981), 131). I am grateful to Danuta Shanzer for pointing out these examples and the ones in the following note.

33 *DLH*, 38 (II, 1); *HF*, 105. For a similar story told by Gregory, see his *Gloria Confessorum*, c. 75, where the people of Autun cannot believe that Bishop Simplicianus and his wife sleep together chastely, and Simplicianus' wife carries burning coals in her clothing to show her innocence: *Gregorii Episcopi Turonensis Miracula et Opera Minora*, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH, SRM, 1, part 2 (Hanover, 1885), 343. Brice may have got off lightly: in the seventh century St Emmeram, accused of fathering a child on the daughter of the duke of Bavaria (according to the *Vita Emmerami* he was not guilty, but was taking the blame for the girl's lover), was mutilated and killed: *Vita vel passio Haimbrammi*, in *Passiones Vitaeque Sanctorum Aevi Merovingici*, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH, SRM, 4 (Hanover and Leipzig, 1942), 489-90; see also C. I. Hammer, 'Arbeo of Freising's "Life and Passion" of St Emmeram: the martyr and his critics', *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 101 (2006), 5-36.

34 *DLH*, 38 (II, 1); *HF*, 105-6.

rily) be taken as literal truth: the division of Brice's episcopal career into spells of $33 + 7 + 7$ years sounds symbolic,³⁵ and Gregory seems to be depicting Brice as someone who had sinned against St Martin and been punished for it, but who had done penance and had ended up as a worthy bishop of Tours. The seven years spent at Rome look very like a penitential pilgrimage, of the sort demanded in the *Penitential of Vinnian* and the *Penitential of Columbanus* in cases where a cleric had begotten a child in fornication (both demand seven years in exile for this sin).³⁶ The motif of an ordeal by burning coals to determine a bishop's chastity crops up in another of Gregory's works, the *Glory of the Confessors*. Here it is a bishop's wife (the wife of Bishop Simplicianus of Autun), who carried burning coals in her clothing to prove that she and her husband slept together chastely.³⁷ Similar motifs – oracular babies and bishops being suspected of fathering children – crop up in some later Merovingian hagiographies.

Gregory's account of Brice in his list of bishops of Tours in Book X, chapter 31, of the *Ten Books of the Histories* is quite different in tone: 'Brictius, the fourth bishop, was consecrated in the second year of Arcadius and Honorius, when they were reigning together. He was a citizen of Tours. In the thirty-third year of his episcopate he was accused by the citizens of Tours of the crime of fornication; they drove him out, and consecrated Justinianus as bishop. Brictius went to the pope of Rome. Justinianus, going after him, died in the city of Vercelli. The Tourangeaux, still hostile, appointed Armentius. Brictius stayed

35 As noted by Piétri, *La ville*, 113.

36 *The Irish Penitentials*, ed. Ludwig Bieler, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae*, 5 (Dublin, 1975), 76–9 and 98–9 respectively. Columbanus would have reached Gaul at about the time that Gregory was completing the *The Ten Books* and would have written his penitential rather later still, but it is not impossible that knowledge of Vinnian's penitential might have been brought to the Loire valley by Samson of Dol, who attended the third council of Paris (556 x 573) as a suffragan of Tours (Piétri, *La ville*, 220, 238, 244n); Samson, born and educated in Wales, would have been knowledgeable about British penitential material, and according to his earliest *Life* had been impressed by the learning of a learned brother called Winniau, presumably Vinnian (David Dumville, 'Gildas and Uinniau', in *Gildas: New Approaches*, ed. Michael Lapidge and David Dumville (Woodbridge, 1984), 207–14, at 214). I am grateful to Ian Wood for suggestions about how Gregory could have known about insular penitential literature.

37 *Gloria Confessorum*, c. 75; *Gregorii Episcopi Turonensis Miracula et Opera Minora*, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH, SRM, 1, part 2 (Hanover, 1885), 343.

seven years with the pope, and then, being found innocent of the crime, was ordered to return to his city. Here he built a small basilica over the body of St Martin, in which he himself was buried. When he was going through the city gate, Armentius, dead, was being carried out through another gate, and after he had been buried he (Brichtius) received his throne. They say that he founded churches in the villages, that is in Clion, Brèches, Ruan, Brizay and Chinon. All the years of his episcopate added up to 47, and he died and was buried in the basilica, which he built over St Martin'. Here, Gregory is terse about Brice's life and character, but adds detail about the churches he founded, in particular stressing (through repetition) the basilica he built over the tomb of St Martin, in which he himself was buried, and which apparently had a fine vault.³⁸

One final point to ponder in Gregory's account of the bishops of Tours is his statement in Book V, chapter 49 of the *Histories*, that, of the eighteen bishops who had preceded him in the see, only five had not been related to him.³⁹ Although it is not possible to identify with certainty all the five who were not related to Gregory, it is overwhelmingly probable that two of them were Gatianus, who came from Rome, and Martin, who was Pannonian, and possible that two of the other three were Licinius (from Angers) and Injuriosus (from a poor family in Tours). Brice may possibly have been one of Gregory's kinsmen. Gregory himself was a member of the senatorial class and so were those of his relatives of whom he speaks most,⁴⁰ but it would not have been impossible for some of his early fifth-century ancestors to be of curial rank.

38 *DLH*, 528 (X, 31); *HF*, 595 (the version above is slightly altered); Brice's successor Eustochius was also buried in the basilica Brice had built (*DLH*, 529; *HF*, 595); for the vault of Brice's church, which was removed and used to roof another church by Perpetuus when he pulled down the church to build his new basilica of St Martin over and around it, see *DLH*, 64 (II, 14); *HF*, 130.

39 *DLH*, 262 (V, 49) 'praeter quinque episcopos reliqui omnes, qui sacerdotium Turonicum suscepserunt, parentum nostrorum prosapia sunt coniuncti'; *HF*, 321. I am very grateful to Ian Wood for alerting me to this point, and for commenting on which bishops are least likely to have been Gregory's kinsmen. For discussion of this passage in *DLH* see Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours*, 23–8.

40 Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours*, 7–22.

THE ORIGINS OF BRICE'S CULT

Here too our principal source is Gregory of Tours, mostly in his account of the bishops of Tours in Book X, chapter 31 of the *Ten Books of the Histories*.⁴¹ Brice's cult may just possibly have begun immediately after his death, but is certainly attested under his successor but one, Bishop Perpetuus (458/9-488/9), and it is probably Perpetuus who was responsible.⁴² Perpetuus is one of the principal figures in the creation of the cult of Martin; he commissioned Paulinus of Périgueux to write a verse version of Sulpicius' *Life of St Martin*,⁴³ and he ensured that the city of Tours itself would be the main focus for the cult, thus enhancing the city's identity and its pre-eminence within Lugdunensis III, after the boundaries of the latter had been altered.⁴⁴ With Tours as the leading city within the new Lugdunensis III, Perpetuus was the metropolitan bishop of the province, and in 461 he wound up the council held at Tours by persuading his fellow-bishops to entrust their decisions to the patronage of St Martin.⁴⁵ In Book II, c. 14, of the *Ten Books*, Gregory says that Perpetuus rebuilt the church Brice had built over Martin's grave – St Martin's church – on a massive scale. Gregory places his account⁴⁶ of the rebuilding almost immediately before his account of Bishop Namatius' rebuilding of Clermont cathedral,⁴⁷ giving specific dimensions for both churches, as well as the total numbers of windows, doors and columns. Clermont mattered a great deal to Gregory because his father's family lived there,⁴⁸ but Tours mattered more to him, partly, as we have seen, because of his family connections with the see, and partly because of St Martin, and his apposition of Namatius and

41 *DLH*, 529-30 (X, 31); *HF*, 596-7.

42 Piétri, 'La succession des premiers évêques', 618, for Perpetuus' dates as bishop; Ewig, 'Der Martinskult', 14, on the political circumstances of Perpetuus' pontificate and the effects of these for the development of the cult of Martin at Tours.

43 Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Martini*, ed. Michael Petschenig, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 16 (Vienna, 1888), 1 (prologue), 151 (Bk VI, line 301); Piétri, *La ville*, 737, n. 17, notes that Paulinus omitted the story about Brice, presumably at Perpetuus' request.

44 As argued by McKinley, 'The first two centuries', 185-9.

45 Van Dam, 'Images of Saint Martin', 7-8.

46 *DLH*, 64 (II, 14); *HF*, 130.

47 *DLH*, 64 (II, 16); *HF*, 131.

48 Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours*, 12.

Perpetuus' churches is designed to show that St Martin's shrine church, not itself a cathedral, was somewhat bigger than the cathedral at Clermont. Perpetuus reburied Martin in the new church, and, since its site included the floor area of the original building, we can assume that the tombs of Brice and Eustochius survived as features of the new church.⁴⁹ The church of St Martin had already become, under Brice and Eustochius, a burial church for bishops of Tours. In this, Tours followed the Basilica Romana in Milan, dedicated by Ambrose, in which five fifth-century bishops were buried; in a similar development, in the mid-to late fifth century, the sacristy at St Peter's in Rome became a burial place for popes.⁵⁰ Tours may have been one of the models for the episcopal burials at St Augustine's in Canterbury.⁵¹

Gregory of Tours not only described Perpetuus' building but also, in Book X, c. 31, gave details of his liturgical innovations, copying lists, probably drawn up by Perpetuus, of fasts and of the feasts for which vigils were celebrated at each of the Tours churches.⁵² The feasts with vigils celebrated at St Martin's church included the two early medieval feasts of St Martin, 4 July, his consecration as bishop, and 11 November, his deposition (Martin had died at Candes, perhaps on 8 Nov 397, and his body had been brought to Tours for burial),⁵³ and also the feast of St Brice, 13 November. The timing of Brice's feast seems to have been

49 *DLH*, 63–4 (II, 14) and 529 (X, 31), and *HF*, 130, 596, for Perpetuus' translation of St Martin. Perpetuus' new church had a large east end, perhaps the site of Martin's shrine: on the building see Luce Piétri and Jacques Biarne, *Province ecclésiastique de Tours (Lugdunensis Tertia)*, Topographie chrétienne des cités de la Gaule des origines au milieu du VIIIe siècle, ed. Nancy Gauthier and J-C. Picard, 5 (Paris, 1987), 32.

50 For Milan, see J-C. Picard, *Le souvenir des évêques: sépultures, listes épiscopales et culte des évêques en Italie du Nord des origines au Xe siècle*, Bibliothèque des Ecoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 268 (Rome, Ecole française de Rome, 1988), 53–4; for discussion of papal burials, see Alan Thacker, 'In Gregory's footsteps? The pre-conquest cult of St Augustine', in Richard Gameson, ed. *St Augustine and the Conversion of England* (Stroud, 1999), 374–90 at 378.

51 Thacker, 'In Gregory's footsteps?', 377–8, hypothesises that St Peter's, Rome, might have provided the model for the episcopal burials at St Peter and St Paul's, later St Augustine's, in Canterbury, but Tours could equally well have done: the burials below the floor encased with cement and topped with covers at St Augustine's might possibly explain a feature of the tomb of St Martin, the marble lid presented by Bishop Eufronius of Autun (*DLH*, 64 (II, 15); *HF*, 131).

52 *DLH*, 529–30 (X, 31); *HF*, 596–7.

53 Delehaye, 'Saint Martin et Sulpice Sévère', 29, 115–16.

chosen to create a four-day block of liturgical celebrations centred on Martin in the middle of November, from 10 November, the eve of St Martin's deposition, to 13 November, the feast of St Brice. Perpetuus heightened the significance of this block of feast days by two six-week periods of fasting, the first between 1 October and Martinmas and the second between Martinmas and Christmas; Gregory reinforced the importance of the second of these two fasting periods, and at the Council of Mâcon held between 581 and 583, the bishops in attendance laid down that masses said between those dates ought to be celebrated in the same way as masses said in Lent.⁵⁴ Mid-November was now firmly linked with St Martin of Tours.

THE SPREAD OF THE CULTS OF ST MARTIN AND ST BRICE TO ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

The cult of St Martin was further developed in the sixth century, largely through the writings of Venantius Fortunatus and Gregory of Tours.⁵⁵ It is possible, as Allan McKinley has recently argued, to be too trusting of Gregory here and thus overstate the importance of the cult of Martin to the Merovingian dynasty: St Médard and St Denis, for example, mattered more to Merovingian kings than Martin did.⁵⁶ Martin probably mattered relatively little to Merovingian kings in the sixth century; by contrast, however, his cult benefited from the support of two Frankish queens in retirement, in other words two fringe members of the dynasty who probably wanted a spiritual focus at a remove from the saints favoured by ruling kings. According to Gregory, Clovis's wife Clotild retired to Tours following her husband's death in 511 as a nun

54 Piétri, *La ville*, 444; the observance of the Martinmas-Christmas fasting period is also stipulated in the *Rule of Chrodegang*, c. 20 (*The Chrodegang Rules*, ed. Jerome Bertram (Aldershot, 2005), 39), repeated in the Latin and Old English versions of the *Enlarged Rule of Chrodegang*, c. 33 (*The Old English Version of the Enlarged Rule of Chrodegang*, ed. Brigitte Langefeld, *Texte und Untersuchungen zur englischen Philologie*, 26 (Frankfurt am Main, 2003), 238–9).

55 *Venantii Honori Clementiani Fortunati presbyteri italicici opera poetica*, ed. Friedrich Löwe, MGH, *Auctores Antiquissimi*, 4, part 1 (Berlin, 1881), 293–313 for Venantius Fortunatus' *Vita S. Martini*; for Gregory's interest in St Martin, see, in addition to DHL, his *De virtutibus Sancti Martini*, in *Gregorii Episcopi Turonensis Miracula*, ed. Krusch, 135–211. See discussion by McKinley, 'The first two centuries', 193–5.

56 McKinley, 'The first two centuries', 196–9.

attached to St Martin's church.⁵⁷ Later in the sixth century, Ingoburga, after she had been divorced by her husband Charibert I (who ruled 561–7), took an interest in Tours. Gregory knew her well and helped her to draw up her will shortly before her death in 589, in which she made a bequest to the basilica of St Martin.⁵⁸ It was Ingoburga's daughter Bertha who married Æthelbert, who became king of Kent.⁵⁹ Bertha and her bishop Liudhard worshipped at the church of St Martin in Canterbury before the arrival of St Augustine, and it may perhaps have been Bertha who chose the dedication.⁶⁰ Another likely means by which interest in Martin reached Anglo-Saxon England is Augustine, who very probably visited Tours on his way through Gaul to Kent, and who would have been impressed by the basilica of St Martin and its cult.⁶¹

Knowledge of the cult of Martin became a prominent feature of Anglo-Saxon Christianity from early on, and with the cult of Martin came the cult of Brice. Both are featured in all Anglo-Saxon calendars (that is, all save some fragments that have no surviving entries for the month of November), including the earliest, a late ninth-century one from Northumbria preserved in Bodleian Digby 63, fos. 40r–45v.⁶² The feast of Martinmas is mentioned in the lawcode of Ine of Wessex (688–

57 *DLH*, 94 (II, 3) and 135 (IV, 1), though 117 (III, 18) shows that Clotild also spent time in Paris (*HF*, 158, 197 and 180).

58 For Ingoburga and her daughter, see *DLH*, 157 (IV, 26) and 445 (IX, 26); *HF*, 219, 513.

59 Discussed by I. Wood, 'Augustine and Gaul', in *St Augustine and the Conversion of England*, ed. Gameson, 68–82 at 70–2.

60 Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and tr. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), 76–7 (I, 26).

61 Wood, 'Augustine and Gaul', 72.

62 Rebecca Rushforth, *An Atlas of Saints in Anglo-Saxon Calendars*, ASNC Guides, Texts, and Studies, 6 (Cambridge, 2002), Table XI (Brice occurs in all calendars except no. 1 (eighth-century, written by insular scribes at Echternach) and the incomplete nos. 2–3, 10, 26); see also *English Kalendars before AD 1100*, I, Texts, ed. Francis Wormald, Henry Bradshaw Society, 72 (London, 1934), 12, 26, 40, 54, 68, 82, 96, 110, 124, 138, 152, 166, 180, 194, 208, 222, 236, 250, 264. Brice does not occur in *An Old English Martyrology*, ed. George Herzfeld, Early English Text Society, O.S., 116 (London, 1900). Masses for St Brice occur in some French sacramentaries from the tenth century onwards: *The Leofric Missal*, ed. Nicholas Orchard, 2 vols, Henry Bradshaw Society, 113–14 (Woodbridge, 2002 for 1999–2000), I, 168.

726) as the point in the year when church-scot had to be paid.⁶³ Martinmas occurs quite often as a dating point or period of the year in Anglo-Saxon narratives, for example, the day on which, according to Asser, Alfred began to study bits of the Bible in Latin, and, in more general terms, the time of year when Edward the Elder ceased to campaign and moved to winter-quarters in 914, 915 and 917.⁶⁴ Martin became a popular saint for church dedications;⁶⁵ Brice, however, did not, because he was simply a pendant of St Martin.⁶⁶

WHY WAS ST BRICE'S DAY CHOSEN FOR THE MASSACRE?

Trditionally, November was the month when a large proportion of the livestock which could not be fed over the winter months was

- 63 Code of Ine, c. 4: *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, ed. Felix Liebermann, 3 vols (Halle, 1898–1916), I, 90–1; this term for church-scot payment is repeated in II Edgar, c. 3, and VIII Æthelred, c. 11 (*ibid.*, 196, 265), with the requirement that royal reeves should enforce payment if required.
- 64 Martinmas was the day when Alfred began to study excerpts from the Scriptures in Latin: Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, ed. W. H. Stevenson, new impression with article by Dorothy Whitelock (Oxford, 1959), 75 (c. 89), translated in *Alfred the Great*, ed. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (Harmondsworth, 1983), 100. Martinmas in the more general sense of mid-November is referred to in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as the point in the year by which Edward the Elder tried to cease campaigning and consolidate his position in 914, 915 and 917: *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, tr. Dorothy Whitelock, D. C. Douglas and S. I. Tucker (London, 1961), 64, 66.
- 65 Alison Binns, *Dedications of Monastic Houses in England and Wales 1066–1216* (Woodbridge, 1989), 19; Frances Arnold-Forster, *Studies in Church Dedications in England's Patron Saints*, 3 vols. (London, 1899), I, 439, II, 50, 508, 517. Churches dedicated to St Martin occur in two eighth-century Anglo-Saxon charters: P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: an Annotated List and Bibliography*, (London, 1968), nos. 24 and 1253; see also Wilhelm Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* (Oxford, 1946), 259.
- 66 Only one church in England in the middle ages was dedicated to St Brice, the chapel of Bentham in Shropshire, which is first mentioned in 1221, where the dedication was probably influenced by the fact that the nearby priory of Much Wenlock was a daughter-house of La Charité-sur-Loire: *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: a History of Shropshire*, X, ed. G. C. Baugh (Oxford, 1998), 256. The church was later rededicated to St Bartholomew. The church of Brize Norton in Oxfordshire, now dedicated to Brice (Arnold-Foster, *Studies in Church Dedications*, I, 449), was dedicated in the middle ages to St Peter: *Cartulary of Eynsham Abbey*, ed. H. E. Salter, 2 vols., Oxford History Society, 49, 51 (1907–8), I, 276–7 (I am grateful to John Blair for advice on this point).

slaughtered and salted down. This particularly applied to pigs, since pork is especially suited to being cured. Curing takes time, and had to be started some weeks ahead of Christmas, for which festivity large supplies of meat were essential. In pre-Christian times in Anglo-Saxon England, November was termed Blotmonath, ‘the month of sacrifices’ according to Bede in his *De temporum ratione*, because it was then that people sacrificed some of the animals destined for slaughter to their gods.⁶⁷ There are no specific Anglo-Saxon references to Martinmas as a time for animal slaughter, but it was normal to have one main period of slaughter in the year, *sticunge* or *occisio*, as we see from *Rectitudines Singularum Personarum*, a treatise on estate management probably originally composed in the tenth century.⁶⁸ By the twelfth century, the starting point for the slaughtering process certainly was Martinmas, 11 November. At Shaftesbury Abbey, for example, the slaughter of beasts at Martinmas is referred to quite casually in a charter of the 1180s. Later on, in Scotland and northern England, the word ‘mart’ came to be a common term for an animal fattened for slaughter, and although this word derived from a Gaelic word for an ox or a cow, its take-up in England and in non-Gaelic speaking parts of Scotland seems to have been assisted by popular etymology linking the term with Martinmas.⁶⁹

It is likely that the link between Martinmas and slaughter goes back very early: we can perhaps guess that Gregory I’s letter of 18 July 601 to Abbot Mellitus,⁷⁰ when Gregory suggested that the Anglo-Saxons should be encouraged to kill animals for their own use on a Christian feast day, rendering thanks to God, rather than sacrificing them, led Augustine and Mellitus to propose Martinmas, then the main Christian feast in the first half of November, as an appropriate focus for the

67 Bede, *De tempore rationum*, c. 15, in Beda, *Opera Didascalia*, ii, ed. C. W. Jones, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* (Turnhout, 1977), 332.

68 *Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, ed. Liebermann, I, 448–9, referring specifically to pigs.

69 *Charters and Custumals of Shaftesbury Abbey, 1089–1216*, ed. N. E. Stacy (Oxford, 2006), 46, charter no. 12; *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition, ed. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, 20 vols. (Oxford, 1989), XX, 407 (‘mart’), 413 (‘Martinmas’). Martinmas was already an accepted date for the payment of conweth (which included livestock) in Scotland in the twelfth century: see *The Charters of King David I*, ed. G. W. S. Barrow (Woodbridge, 1999), 129 (no. 158), though it could also be paid on All Saints’ Day: *Regesta Regum Scottorum*, I: *Malcolm IV*, ed. G. W. S. Barrow (Edinburgh, 1960), 264, no. 243.

70 Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 106–9 (I, 30).

November slaughter. Gregory wrote to Mellitus, then journeying through Gaul on his way to Augustine in Kent: 'And because they are in the habit of slaughtering much cattle as sacrifices to devils, some solemnity ought to be given them in exchange for this. So on the day of the dedication or the festivals of the holy martyrs, whose relics are deposited there, let them make themselves huts from the branches of trees around the churches which have been converted out of shrines, and let them celebrate the solemnity with religious feasts. Do not let them sacrifice animals to the devil, but let them slaughter animals for their own food to the praise of God, and let them give thanks to the Giver of all things for His bountiful provision. Thus while some outward rejoicings are preserved, they will be able more easily to share in inward rejoicings. It is doubtless impossible to cut out everything at once from their stubborn minds: just as the man who is attempting to climb to the highest place, rises by steps and degrees and not by leaps. Thus the Lord made Himself known to the Israelites in Egypt; yet he preserved in his own worship the forms of sacrifice which they were accustomed to offer to the devil and commanded them to kill animals when sacrificing to him. So with changed hearts, they were to put away one part of the sacrifice and retain the other, even though they were the same animals as they were in the habit of offering, yet since the people were offering them to the true God and not to idols, they were not the same sacrifices. These things then, dearly beloved, you must say to our brother so that in his present position he may carefully consider how he should order all things'. This is the letter in which Gregory changed his mind about the best approach to take to certain pagan practices, and, in contrast to a letter to Æthelbert king of Kent written a few weeks earlier in which he had recommended the destruction of pagan shrines, he now recommended that they be converted into churches.⁷¹ Decoupling the slaughter of animals from pagan sacrifices was another move in the same direction. We may also note that Gregory urged Mellitus and Augustine to link the day chosen for slaughter with a saint's day, giving them a free choice, presumably to allow them to choose the one that would best suit the time of year favoured by the Anglo-Saxons for slaughter. At the turn of the sixth and seventh centuries, major feasts of the church in

⁷¹ The conversion of the Pantheon into a Christian church lay only a little ahead in the future – 609 under Pope Boniface IV (Richard Krautheimer, *Rome, Profile of a City, 312–1308* (Princeton, N.J., 1980), 72).

November were few. At the end of the month was St Andrew's Day, 30 November, too late for animal slaughter because grass would by then have become poor. In Gregory's time there was little available at the start of the month; All Saints Day had not yet begun to be celebrated on 1 November. The original date for commemorating all the saints was the first Sunday after Pentecost (and remained so in the eastern church); in the western church the date shifted after Gregory III (731-41) dedicated a chapel to All Saints in St Peter's on 1 November in the earlier eighth century, and this November date for the feast was popularized later in the century by Alcuin.⁷² Thus, in Augustine's time the feast of Martin was the biggest event in the church's calendar in the first half of November. By Æthelred's time, Martinmas would have been long established as a time for slaughtering animals, and thus have been a time when all the necessary equipment for an act of genocide – ropes, animal pens, axes and knives – would have been ready to hand.

Æthelred's ability to organise a co-ordinated killing of Danes (presumably a clearly defined group of Danes)⁷³ would have been facilitated by another phenomenon: during the tenth century England had become noticeably urbanised. In order to impose control on the areas of England they took over between Alfred's death in 899 and the conquest of York in 954, the kings of Wessex (or kings of England) imposed the shire system, long-established in Wessex, with each shire named after, and centred on, a fortified place in which the notables of the shire, headed by the local bishop and ealdorman, could maintain a garrison, organise the collection of taxes and hold shire-moots, meetings of the shire court (these in fact tended to be held just outside the shire town in the late Anglo-Saxon period, only moving into shire towns in the twelfth century).⁷⁴ Each bishop would usually have more than one shire town within his diocese, and each ealdorman might well have several, but each shire had its own royal reeve (the sheriff or shire reeve). Probably from Edgar's reign and certainly from Æthelred's kings would routinely send sealed writs to communicate their wishes to shire

72 D. A. Bullough, *Alcuin: Achievement and Reputation* (Leiden, 2004), 210 n. 239, 217, 250.

73 See paper by Simon Keynes, above.

74 A project to study the functions of shire towns (*Early English Shire Towns*) is currently being undertaken under the direction of Richard Sharpe.

communities.⁷⁵ In order to organise mass killings in different places without allowing news of the deed to leak out, all Æthelred had to do was to despatch royal messengers bearing his seal to royal officials in shire towns with the order to carry out the killing on a fixed day. This is indeed what Henry of Huntingdon says in his *History of the English People*: 'In my childhood I heard very old men say that the king had sent secret letters to every city, according to which the English either maimed all the unsuspecting Danes on the same day and hour with their swords, or suddenly, at the same moment, captured them and destroyed them by fire', and although Henry was writing well over a century after the event his account seems quite plausible.⁷⁶

Moreover, one of the features of Anglo-Saxon towns was that it was only in them that commodities above a value of 20*d.* could be traded, which would include trade in livestock over a certain number,⁷⁷ and since townspeople had disposable income they could purchase large quantities of meat, so many of the animals sold in towns would also be slaughtered there. Indeed, one of the results of urbanisation was to spread out the process of butchering throughout the whole year and to create a profession for the butchers (or, in Old English, 'fleshmongers') who carried it out. Already in 996 Winchester had a street named 'flæscmangere stræte', that is 'butchers' street', mentioned in a boundary clause in a charter of Æthelred the Unready restoring a tenement in Winchester to Old Minster.⁷⁸ However, not all English towns were so quick to acquire professional butchers: evidence for the slaughter of cattle in York in the period down to the Norman Conquest shows that it was done by unskilled amateurs.⁷⁹ Moreover, although townspeople liked

75 Richard Sharpe, 'The use of writs in the eleventh century', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 32 (2003), 247–91, at 247, 251; see also Florence Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs* (Manchester, 1952), 13–16.

76 *Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon: Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People*, ed. and tr. Diana Greenway, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1996), 340–1 (Bk II, ch. 2).

77 II Æthelstan 12 (*Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, ed. Liebermann, I, 156–7).

78 Alexander Rumble, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester: Documents Relating to the Topography of the Anglo-Saxon and Norman City and its Minsters* (Oxford, 2002), 207–12; Peter Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon charters: an Annotated List and Bibliography* (London, 1968), no. 889.

79 T. P. O'Connor, *Bones from Anglo-Scandinavian Levels at 16–22 Coppergate*, The Archaeology of York, 15/3 (York, 1989), 159.

to have a steady supply of fresh meat throughout the year they were also attached to the old system of mass slaughter in November followed by curing, and, according to the *Leges Edwardi* or *Laws of Edward the Confessor*, a text written in the 1130s to explain Anglo-Saxon laws and customs to an Anglo-Norman audience, the two systems operated side-by-side. In the final paragraph of the *Leges Edwardi* we see both professional butchers and the amateur Martinmas slaughterers complaining that the legal requirement to provide proof of ownership before animals could be sold was too cumbersome: 'Moreover, when it was said that they ought not to buy animals without pledges, the butchers from the cities and boroughs, whom the English call *flesmangeres*, claimed that they had to buy, kill, and sell animals every day. Likewise the citizens and burghers claimed as their own customs that around the feast of St Martin they used to purchase animals without pledges in order to do their butchering in preparation for Christmas'.⁸⁰

Therefore, if we picture ourselves in Oxford⁸¹ in November 1002 we can imagine the Cornmarket and the High full of animals brought in from the surrounding countryside waiting to be sold to butchers and killed. Possibly Oxford already had an established shambles: if so it might have been at the west end of the High, where it is recorded by the early thirteenth century.⁸² The animal slaughter would probably still have been continuing two days later on St Brice's day, and Æthelred would probably have viewed this day as more appropriate for a massacre of Danes than St Martin's day, Brice being a much less popular, and much less significant, saint than St Martin. Once more, in his cult as well as in his life and death, St Brice was a satellite, if a disquieting and disquieted one, of St Martin.

80 *Leges Edwardi Confessoris*, c. 39: Bruce R. O'Brien, *God's Peace and King's Peace: the Laws of Edward the Confessors* (Philadelphia, 1999), 200–3; see also *Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, ed. Liebermann, I, 669.

81 Oxford is the only town for which we have specific evidence of what took place: see *Cartulary of the Monastery of St Frideswide*, ed. S. R. Wigram, 2 vols, Oxford Historical Society, 28, 31 (1895–6), I, 2–9; Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, no. 909.

82 Janet Cooper, 'Medieval Oxford', in *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: a History of the County of Oxford*, IV, *The City of Oxford*, ed. A. Crossley (London, 1979), 3–73, at 27; see Janet Cooper, 'Markets and fairs', *ibid.*, 305–12, at 306.

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Niels Lund

Else Roesdahl

Simon Keynes

Julia Barrow

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