

PETER OF BLOIS AND ABBOT HENRY DE LONGCHAMP

At the end of the twelfth century England was home to two people whom we may characterize as men of letters. Both, as it happens, were archdeacons by occupation and both were in some sense disappointed men. Peter of Blois was French. After studies in Bologna and Paris, and a short stay in Sicily, Archbishop Rotrou of Rouen helped him into a position in England. He became secretary to Richard of Dover, a Norman monk long resident in England, soon after Richard had become archbishop of Canterbury in 1173. He served Richard and his successor Baldwin as their chancellor—he may have known Baldwin in Bologna in the 1150s—and he accompanied him on the third Crusade, returning in 1191. Peter was archdeacon of Bath from before 1182 until 1206 or later, by which date he was also archdeacon of London from about 1201 until his death in 1211.¹ Gerald of Wales was of French descent on his father's side and Welsh descent on his mother's side, but he would no doubt have considered himself *engleis* as the word had come to be used. After many years as archdeacon of Brecon, he resigned in 1203 to live on the favour of cathedral communities at Hereford and later at Lincoln. Both men were prolific authors, both were much concerned with their Latin style, but Peter enjoyed literary success, while for Gerald recognition of his talents came chiefly from his self-regard. Of course there were many others who wrote books in England in the 1190s, but no writer within England at this period achieved the audience that some of Peter's essays reached, and few can have had his connexions. To have commissioned Peter of Blois to rewrite the Life of St Guthlac may be considered a literary coup.

The name of Peter of Blois is written into the second part of Ingulf's History of Crowland, printed in the seventeenth century and regarded as a forgery since the nineteenth century.² It is an enthralling

¹ Fully referenced data on his ecclesiastical career are gathered by D. E. Greenway, *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1066–1300* (London, 1968–2012), vii. 28–9 (as archdeacon of Bath); *Fasti*, i. 10 (as archdeacon of London). The full extent of his benefices may no longer be knowable. His life was written by J. A. Robinson, *Somerset Historical Essays* (London, 1921), 100–141; Peter's role as archdeacon of Bath was the reason for his inclusion in these studies by the dean of Wells.

² 'Petri Blesensis Continuatio ad Historiam Ingulphi', [ed. W. Fulman], *Rerum Anglicarum scriptorum veterum tomus I, quorum Ingulfus nunc primum integer, caeteri nunc primum prodeunt* (Oxford, 1684), 108–130, where the text breaks off in mid-sentence after relating the death of Queen Matilda in 1118 and introducing Count Theobald of Blois (with the unfulfilled promise of more about his brothers King Stephen and Bishop Henry). Fulman's edition resumes in King Stephen's reign, under a new heading, 'Historiae Croylandensis continuatio', 451–593, but the text is not a unity. For the remainder of Stephen's reign and most of Henry II's, it is a brief annalistic account with two royal charters (pp. 451–3). From 1189, however, it becomes a rich account of the abbey's legal disputes into the reign of John (pp. 453–71, on which see below, n. 46). After Abbot Henry's death (p. 477), the

work, but it is always difficult to know what to make of it. It was surely one and the same author who posed as Abbot Ingulf in the first part and as Peter of Blois in the second part.³ The latter treats part of the reigns of William II and Henry I; its written sources are sometimes obvious, and its late date is signalled, for example, by the tale of Brother Gilbert, ‘sacrae theologiae professor’, who started the schools at Cambridge.⁴ This part begins with a flattering letter from the abbot of Crowland, Henry de Longchamp, who addresses Peter thus:⁵

Amicissimo suo Magistro Petro Blesensi archidiacono Bath’ et domini nostri regis uicecancellario, totiusque regni dignissimo prothonotario ac omnium artium liberalium sanctuario scientissimo necnon eloquentie Tulliane nostri temporis eminentissimo professori frater Henricus de Longo Campo seruorum Dei in ecclesia Croyland monasterii Domino militantium indignus abbas inutilisque minister se totum et sua ad beneplacita et mandata.

To his dearest friend Master Peter of Blois archdeacon of Bath and vice-chancellor of our Lord King, most worthy protonotary of the whole realm, most learned repository of all the liberal arts, and most eminent teacher of Ciceronian eloquence in our time, Brother Henry de Longchamp, unworthy abbot of God’s servants soldiering for the Lord in the church of Crowland abbey and unuseful attendant offers himself wholly and his at your pleasure to command.

The letter offers a roll-call of famous writers, a tradition into which Peter is conscripted. It is difficult to see who could have written this or why, but that is the great conundrum of the Crowland History. One can only wonder why he thought Peter was the king’s vice-chancellor, a title used in Richard I’s charters for the royal clerk who kept and used the seal in the absence of the chancellor.⁶ Peter once attested a charter for King

documentary history of the abbots continues to the year 1281 (p. 482), at which point there is a hiatus in the text; Fulman’s manuscript resumed in 1327 (p. 482). And so it goes on. The several parts were translated into English by H. T. Riley, *Ingulph’s Chronicle of the abbey of Croyland with the continuations by Peter of Blois and anonymous writers* (London, 1854).

³ The preface in Peter’s name explicitly presents Ingulf’s work as the first part and his own as the second (Fulman, 110; Riley, 228); despite the gap of a century in the ostensible date of writing, he picks up exactly where Ingulf’s work ended, having even to record Ingulf’s death in 1109 (Fulman, 112; Riley, 233). At several points links are embedded, for example, with the one hundred year lease of Badby (Fulman, 57, 124; Riley, 116, 257). The reference to Wulfius in Ingulf’s part (Fulman, 58; Riley, 117) appears intended only as an advance marker for the discourse in Peter’s part (Fulman, 121–3; Riley, 252–6).

⁴ Fulman, 114; Riley, 237.

⁵ Fulman, 108; Riley, 224.

⁶ The formula, ‘Datum per manum W. Eliensis episcopi et cancellarii nostri anno primo regni nostri’, to close the highest grade of act under the king’s great seal was introduced when William was chancellor, one of several major changes in royal diplomatic. It follows practice long established on the Continent and cannot be regarded as evolving from the occasional *per manum* clauses in Henry II’s charters. Richard I’s chancellors did not habitually accompany him, and the appearance of a vice-chancellor in this clause makes that fact highly visible. When the king was in France and the chancellor in England, the latter had the use of the

Richard, but he never kept or used any of his seals.⁷ Nor is there evidence that he was Richard's protonotary and little for the existence of any such office.⁸ This is richly imaginative fiction.

When C. L. Kingsford wrote a brief biography of Peter for the *Dictionary of National Biography*, he observed, 'The continuation of Ingulf is a manifest forgery and is not in Peter's style'. He went on, 'The ascription to Peter of a *Vita Guthlaci* is probably equally false', citing the Bollandists' *Acta Sanctorum*, where only its existence was reported at second hand.⁹ Kingsford was too sceptical. The same assumption of forgery informs his last comment, that a letter in Peter's letter-collection 'professes to be addressed by Peter to the abbot and monks of Croyland'. When R. W. Southern wrote a fresh biography of Peter for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, he said only, 'He also rewrote two ancient saints' Lives: his Life of St Wilfrid, already mentioned, and a Life of St Guthlac of Crowland, giving both of them a modernity of style and spiritual outlook'. The Life of St Wilfrid has not been traced, but Peter held a stall in the minster at Ripon, so he could have written this on his own initiative or at the request of his colleagues. Its patron, and presumably Peter's, was the archbishop of York, Geoffrey Plantagenet.¹⁰

slightly smaller Exchequer seal.

⁷ L. Landon, *The Itinerary of Richard I*, Pipe Roll Society (1935), 139, 171 (no. 543). This was a charter for the monks of Tynemouth, renewed under the second great seal at La Roche d'Andely, 13 November 1198; the charter was sealed by Master Roscelin as vice-chancellor, and Peter archdeacon of Bath attested alongside Archbishop Hubert Walter and a whole clutch of archdeacons. This was a busy period for sealing renewals.

⁸ J. C. Russell and J. P. Heironimus, *The Shorter Latin Poems of Henry of Avranches relating to England* (Cambridge, MA, 1935), 106–7, argued for an element of authenticity in the address. Imagining Peter as chief clerk to his friend the chancellor, they thought the combination of vice-chancellor and protonotary could not be false. They knew that T. F. Tout was ready to generalize from one unusual act that refers to the protonotary (citing *Chapters in the Administrative History of England* (Manchester 1920–33), i. 134, but not his unsupported statement that, 'The notary, or protonotary, was a recognized Chancery officer under Richard I and John', 'The household of the chancery', 76n). Tout relied on the single use of *protonotarius* in King John's ordinance on the fees of the seal, 7 June 1199, where the role of protonotary was distinct from that of vice-chancellor. This argument for the credibility of Abbot Henry's letter imposed on the much better informed H. G. Richardson, 'Introduction', *Memoranda Roll 1 John*, Pipe Roll Society (1943), p. lxii.

⁹ *Acta Sanctorum*, Aprilis II (1675), 37, where Henskens says no more than that 'Aliud compendium Vitae dicitur scripsisse Petrus de Blesis Archidiaconus Bathoniensis, & claruisse anno MCLX; hujus exordium a Molano citatur his verbis, *Quia gesta illustrium virorum*'. This refers to Jan van der Meulen (1533–1585), Molanus in Latin, *Additiones ad Usuardum* (Antwerp, 1583), 'Petrus de Blesis in lucem emisit Guthlaci confessoris uitam libro uno. Is incipit, *Quia gesta illustrium uirorum*. Claruit anno 1160. Substantiam uitae arbitror apud Surium esse, pag. 644' (an addition since the 1568 edition). Molanus has taken date and incipit from John Bale, *Scriptorum illustrium Maioris Britanniae catalogus* (Basel, 1557–9), ii. 130–31. The epitome of Guthlac's Life in L. Surius, *De probatis sanctorum historiis* (Cologne, 1571–5, &c.), is not Peter's version.

¹⁰ John Leland quoted a few lines from the Life; he saw a copy of it 'in sacro uestiario Ripoduni' and mentions that it was dedicated to Geoffrey, who was archbishop of York from

Peter's connexion with the abbey or the abbot of Crowland did not rate a mention. More recently the only book-length study of Peter of Blois offers a brief comment on the Life of St Guthlac, which takes the view that Peter wrote it out of interest: 'It is not difficult to understand the appeal Guthlac's story had for Peter'.¹¹ Peter's supposed veneration for his subject and for the value of hagiography is in my view no more than familiarity with a popular genre of writing.

Kingsford was correct to be sceptical about the letter supposedly addressed by Peter to Abbot Henry and the monks of Crowland. The letter begins, 'Petrus dilectis in Christo dominis et amicis H. dei gratia abbati et conuentui Croylandie, salutem in eo sine quo non est salus' (*Ep.* 216), ('Peter to his beloved lords and friends in Christ H. by God's grace abbot and the convent of Crowland, greeting in him without whom there is no salvation').¹² The wording is immediately suspect. Peter placed his name first in letters to close friends, but he would have addressed any abbot deferentially; he almost invariably styles himself 'Petrus Blesensis Bathoniensis archidiaconus', and he never uses the one word Petrus. The form of greeting, 'salutem in eo sine quo non est salus', was occasionally used by Peter in his letters, and by others, and it is tempting to think that this letter is no more than an exercise, a request for prayers. It relies heavily on biblical allusion, where Peter himself would have used more direct quotation. The *mise-en-scène* is likely to be a fiction: 'A domino Cantuariensi uocatus, et tractus, tempestiue Northmanniam transfretare decreui, longius forsitan profecturus' ('summoned, even dragged, by my

1189 until his exile during the interdict (*Collectanea Joannis Lelandi*, ed. T. Hearne (Oxford, 1715), iv. 110). Bale, *Index* (n. 34), 319, indicates that Leland appropriated the book, which is the likely source of Bale's 'Petrus Ripponensis' (*Catalogus*, i. 231–2). A fifteenth-century verse account of the archbishops refers to the translation of Wilfrid's relics at Ripon by St Oswald and again by Archbishop Walter de Gray; under Archbishop Geoffrey, the same poem says, 'Huic Petrus rhetoricus Blesensis honoris / transumpsit historiam Wilfrid senioris' (J. Raine, *Historians of the Church of York*, RS 71 (1879–94), ii. 471–2, 480; R. Sharpe, *A Handlist of the Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland to 1540* (Turnhout, 1997), 200–201). On 4 April 1208 a writ close was sealed, instructing Robert of Vieuxpont (as custodian of the see of York) to allow Master Peter of Blois, canon of Ripon, to have all his possessions in Robert's jurisdiction that had been taken into the king's hands by reason of the interdict (*Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum*, 2 vols (London, 1833–4), i. 108b). Similar writs went to other *custodes*, presumably as Peter was allowed his goods around the country. At some point he witnessed a quitclaim as a member of the chapter of Ripon (J. T. Fowler, *Memorials of the Church of SS. Peter and Wilfrid, Ripon*, Surtees Society 74, 78, 81, 115 (1882–1908), i. 255). At the end of the tenth century it was held that the relics of St Wilfrid had been enshrined at Ripon by Archbishop Oswald of York, who held the see 972–92 (Byrhtferth, *Vita S. Oswaldi*, § 9, ed. M. Lapidge, OMT (2009), 170); their later translation by Walter de Gray is attested only by the poem cited above. It had already been claimed by Archbishop Oda of Canterbury that the relics were taken to Canterbury cathedral before 958.

¹¹ J. D. Cotts, *The Clerical Dilemma: Peter of Blois and literate culture in the twelfth century* (Washington, DC, 2009), 260.

¹² *PL* 207. 503–4 (*Ep.* 216).

lord of Canterbury, I resolved to cross the Channel to Normandy at once, and I shall perhaps be going rather further'). After Henry was elected abbot of Crowland, the archbishop of Canterbury was Hubert Walter, with whom Peter did not at first find favour.¹³ If summoned to Normandy, however, why should he pause to explain this to the monks of Crowland and to request their prayers? In an authentic letter Peter made poor health his excuse for *not* attending on Archbishop Hubert.¹⁴

What we need here is more literary context. Peter of Blois was a distinguished writer of letters. It was what gained him position under Archbishop Richard and Archbishop Baldwin. In 1184, after Richard's death and before Baldwin reinstated him, he published a collection of his letters with a dedication addressed to King Henry II. And he reworked his collection thereafter, sometimes revising the letters.¹⁵ The published editions, however, sit light in relation to the textual sources, and the want of any point of reference for the dating of individual letters is sorely felt. Convenience, and no other reason, has led historians to use the hybrid edition of the letters published by the Abbé Migne in *Patrologia Latina* 207 (1855). Migne reprinted *Ep.* 216 from J. A. Giles's edition (1846–7), in which it had appeared as letter CCXXI. Giles explained his sources only in general terms.¹⁶ It belongs to a whole run of letters whose authenticity must be judged by a combination of textual source and internal evidence. The letter from the Patriarch Albert and King John of Jerusalem to Pope Honorius III (*Ep.* 195), describing the capture of Damietta in 1219, eight years after Peter's death, and the pope's reply (*Ep.* 196), are obviously

¹³ He drafted one letter in Archbishop Hubert's name and included it in his own collection (*Ep.* 135); discussed by C. R. Cheney, *Hubert Walter* (London, 1967), 158–60. Cheney goes so far as to refer to Peter as 'within Hubert Walter's own circle' (p. 185), but he attested only two acts for the archbishop, both concerning Lambeth in 1197 (C. R. Cheney, *English Episcopal Acta 3 Canterbury 1193–1205* (1986), 37–8, 42–4, nos. 369, 372).

¹⁴ *Ep.* 109. It is hardly datable at all but was not included in Peter's letter collection before version III (c. 1196).

¹⁵ This is the case put with minimal argument by R. W. Southern, 'Towards an edition of Peter of Blois's letter collection', *EHR* 110 (1995), 925–37; he lists manuscripts as representing six versions of the collection in 'Peter of Blois: a twelfth-century humanist?', *Medieval Humanism and other Studies* (Oxford, 1970), 105–32 (at pp. 131–2). I have used this as a guide but am conscious that the evidence behind it is not laid out.

¹⁶ J. A. Giles, *Petri Blesensis Bathoniensis archidiaconi opera omnia* (Oxford, 1846–7), ii. 284, says that the first 183 letters were reprinted from Goussainville's folio edition of 1667; what should have been *Ep.* CLXXXIII however was misprinted as CLXXXVIII. Next, from there to CCXIII came from the early printed editions, the oldest of which is now identified as printed in [Brussels: Fratres Vitae Communis, between 1479 and 9 June 1481] (*Bod-Inc* P 183), which supplied *Epp.* 184–198, and sundry others that were also in Goussainville. Finally, CCXIV–CCXLIX, including ours, 'ex codicibus manuscriptis nunc primum sunt editae'. He provides a list of manuscripts without matching letters to sources. Correcting the misnumbering, *PL* reprinted *Ep.* 1–183 from Goussainville, *Epp.* 184–243 from Giles, omitting Giles's CCXLIX. The sources of Goussainville's edition are not apparent.

not meant to be here, but they came in from early imprints.¹⁷ They circulated widely. It is coincidental that a chronicler at Crowland in the 1220s gave an account of the capture of Damietta and miracles associated with English saints.¹⁸ Letters from collections of letters that bear Peter's name can be difficult to assess, because the manuscript evidence has not been reduced to order nor the information digested to help the reader.¹⁹ In this case, I can say that the plain Peter's letter to the monks of Crowland derives from three English manuscripts, all of them consulted by Giles. These are BL MS Royal 14 C. iv (s. xiv), the closely related BL MS Burney 303 (s. xv), and the less closely related Bodl. MS Bodley 759 (SC 2671) (s. xv), all late and not representing Peter's own selection. Discussing the letters added to the corpus by Giles, Stanley Cohn rejected *Epp.* 215 and 217, which come only from BL MS Arundel 227, but he was reluctant to reject *Ep.* 216: 'Yet the link of *Ep.* 216 with the source of the New College MS 127 tradition' [which delivered *Epp.* 209–212] 'seems to me too strong to justify rejection outright of a letter which appears in three manuscripts not identical in arrangement'.²⁰ From where this letter got into these three collections is unexplained, but on internal evidence it fails the test of authenticity. Two possibilities present themselves. It may have been an exercise written by a monk of Crowland, who had some knowledge to come up with the *mise-en-scène*, or, more plausibly, it was an exercise written by someone who had read Peter's Life of St Guthlac with its prefatory letter to Abbot Henry of Crowland. I should say that its only value for our purpose is that it may well represent outside knowledge of this Life.

There is no uncertainty about the authorship of *Vita et translatio S. Guthlaci* (BHL 3728–9), written by Peter of Blois, archdeacon of Bath. The text was published in 1901 by Carl Horstman from Dublin, Trinity College, MS 172 (B. 2. 7), pp. 289–308, 308–316.²¹ It had been brought to his attention by W. G. Searle, who had worked on *Ingulf* some years before.²² Discovery of the work hitherto believed lost was signalled by

¹⁷ In the *editio princeps*, they are letters 170–71, sig. z4r–z5v.

¹⁸ The chronicle in College of Arms, MS Arundel 10, which is persuasively attributed by C. N. Ispir to Roger of Crowland, devotes some space to the story, s.a. 1219, 1221.

¹⁹ The main published attempt is L. Wahlgren, *The Letter Collections of Peter of Blois. Studies in the manuscript tradition* (Göteborg, 1993).

²⁰ E. S. Cohn, 'The manuscript evidence for the letters of Peter of Blois', *EHR* 41 (1926), 43–60 (at p. 49).

²¹ C. Horstman, *Noua Legenda Anglie* (Oxford, 1901), ii. 698–719, 719–27.

²² W. G. Searle [1829–1913], *Ingulf and the Historia Croylandensis. An investigation attempted* (Cambridge, 1894). Searle also devoted a great deal of time and effort to the manuscripts in which the letters of Peter of Blois are transmitted; Robinson, 'Peter of Blois', 139, tells us that Searle regarded 'nearly all the letters' as the 'free composition of an anonymous writer, whom he called "the epistolary Peter" in contrast to "the historical Peter" whose story he did much to reconstitute from charters and other sources'. Searle's transcript from the Dublin manuscript is now CUL MS Add. 5985, while MSS Add. 6599–6600 are his

Paul Meyer in 1879, who published a description of the book.²³ The work begins clearly enough with a prefatory letter addressed to Henry, abbot of Crowland, by Peter of Blois, archdeacon of Bath. Henry de Longchamp became abbot of Crowland in 1190, and Peter did not use the title archdeacon of Bath after becoming archdeacon of London by January 1202. The writing of the Life probably dates from the reign of Richard I. The extant manuscript, written in the middle of the fourteenth century, combines a copy of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Gesta Britonum* and a medley of English saints' Lives. It is clearly English in origin, though its provenance is unknown. Paul Grosjean without solid reason thought it was from Westminster abbey.²⁴ M. L. Colker hazarded Northampton on the combination of a description of the discovery of the relics of St Ragner, knight and martyr (pp. 226–30), and the name Peter Whalley, which he took for a local name.²⁵ The *Inuentio cum translatione S. Ragnerii* (BHL 7054f) was printed from here by Horstman.²⁶ It may be noted that in the manuscript it follows two works about St Edmund, and Ragner was said to be nephew to St Edmund. In the seventeenth century the book was acquired by James Ussher (1581–1657), archbishop of Armagh, and went with his books to the library of Trinity College.

Assurance that this Life is not a forgery drawn up at Crowland under the name of Peter of Blois is provided by two manuscripts that have transmitted some sixty or so letters written by Peter of Blois, for the most part at a date after he last published the collection of his letters. These were mostly written as archdeacon of London, and it is thought that they must derive from drafts retained by Peter, very likely at his lodgings in London. Both contain the prefatory letter from Peter to Abbot Henry in an unimpeachable context, independent of the monks of Crowland. The manuscripts are now Erfurt, MS Amplon. F. 71 (s. xv), fol. 194r, and Admont, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 463 (s. xiv/xv), fol. 146r, from where the preface has been published as part of this assemblage of

collections on Peter of Blois.

²³ P. Meyer, 'La vie latine de saint Honorat et Raimon Féraut', *Romania* 8 (1879), 481–508 (pp. 484–5).

²⁴ P. Grosjean, 'Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum latinorum bibliothecarum Dublinensium', *Analecta Bollandiana* 46 (1928), 81–149 (p. 86), followed by B. Colgrave, *Felix's Life of St Guthlac* (Cambridge, 1956), 22. Since the seventeenth century Trinity College catalogues had stated that the manuscript came from Westminster abbey. The reason seems to have been a miracle of St Edward on p. 2, though it is no more than an extract from Aelred's *Vita*, widely known and copied in full in the manuscript (pp. 21–64).

²⁵ M. L. Colker, *Trinity College Library Dublin. Descriptive Catalogue of the Mediaeval and Renaissance Latin Manuscripts* (1991), 318–19. It is always dangerous to assume that texts about local saints never travel; the basis for saying that Whalley was 'a local Northampton name' may be the entry for another Peter Whalley in *DNB*.

²⁶ Horstman's Appendix III comprises three works from TCD MS 172, Burghard's *Vita S. Fremundi* (BHL 3144b), Peter's *Vita S. Guthlaci*, and the *Inuentio cum translatione S. Ragnerii* (BHL 7054f).

Peter's later letters.²⁷ The Erfurt copy has a heading, 'Hec epistola est prologus in uitam suam Guthlaci quam Petrus dictauit' ('This letter is the prologue to his Life of Guthlac which Peter composed').

Although we now have only one copy of Peter's Life, there are attestations of other copies no longer extant. The library of the monks of Durham had a copy, reported only in the catalogue of books in the cloister library in 1395, part of a volume whose other contents were short devotional texts rather than other saints' Lives:²⁸

a Vita sancti Guthlaci heremite ex compositione Petri Blesensis. **b** Quedam meditacio beati Bernardi Abbatis de compassione beate Marie. **c** Tractatus de eieccione Ade de paradiso. **d** Tractatus de assumptione beate virginis. **e** Tractatus de gallico qui sic incipit. *qui bene pense*. **f** Tractatus de quadam anima ducta ad penas infernales postea ad gaudia paradisi et dicitur purgatorium Patricij. ij^o fo est corpus eius.

The words quoted from the second folio do not occur, as one would expect, early in the text but in the heading of the twenty-fourth chapter, 'Quomodo in alium tumulum translatum est corpus eius' (p. 716). This is easily explained: if there were a table of chapters between the prefatory letter and the first chapter, these words might well fall at the beginning of the second leaf, albeit implying a copy in small format and two columns. This is very likely the form in which the text was circulated at the end of the twelfth or the beginning of the thirteenth century. The manuscript from Durham is not now known to survive, and it is hazardous to guess at its date from the contents—the work in French is Robert Grosseteste's *Chastel d'amur*, dating from c. 1215—but there is nothing here to prevent its being an early copy. Indeed, it is possible that this description represents several booklets bound together. If that were so, then it would have been most likely a contemporary copy from the period when the Life was first circulated. Primary booklets were usually copied into multi-text volumes or bound with other booklets, losing their free-standing identity.

The earliest mention of Peter's Life of St Guthlac is only as old as the surviving manuscript: Henry de Kirkestede, librarian of Bury St Edmunds around 1350, records just the title, 'Vitam S. Guthlaci monachi

²⁷ Elizabeth Revell, *The Later Letters of Peter of Blois* (London, 1993), 104–6 (no. 18); French translation by E. Türk, *Pierre de Blois. Ambitions et remords sous les Plantagenêts* (Turnhout, 2006), a selection of 150 letters drawn from the main collection and from the later letters, pp. 455–7 (no. 94), following Revell in dating to 1196. Revell reports variant readings from MS T, that is the TCD MS 172, though this was assigned the letter D in her introduction (p. xxxiii).

²⁸ The catalogue was printed from DCL MS B. IV. 46 by Beriah Botfield, *Catalogi veteres librorum ecclesiae cathedralis Dunelmensis*, Surtees Society 7 (1838), 55; the entry is found at fol. 21v.

et anachorete’, as a work of Peter of Blois.²⁹ Two centuries later John Bale recorded the work from two sources, on both occasions copying the opening of Peter’s letter to Abbot Henry, ‘Ex Ayloto Holte, Buriensi’, who was a sixteenth-century monk of Bury St Edmunds, and ‘Ex Bibliotheca eiusdem Lelandi’, that is from the collection of John Leland. It is merely to join two dots with a line to guess that Henry de Kirkestede recorded a copy at Bury in the fourteenth century, which came into the hands of Ailot Holt after the abbey was dissolved.³⁰ If so, it is not known to survive, for the extant copy does not bear any of the distinctive marks of Bury St Edmunds, not least among them notes on the contents by Kirkestede. That a copy of the work passed through Leland’s hands is certain, for he made notes from it, now BL MS Cotton Julius C. vi, fol. 88. The manuscript in Dublin shows no trace of Leland’s use.

On this evidence, we may claim that Bale saw two copies, one in the hands of a former monk of Bury, the other among Leland’s books. We know that Leland obtained at least one book from Crowland and that he made notes from this Life. There was also a copy at Durham in the middle ages. There is no good reason to connect any of these attestations with the surviving copy.

It has been thought that Peter’s Life was used by Alexander of Ashby, an Austin canon writing in the first quarter of the thirteenth century. This is ill-founded. W. F. Bolton makes a case, without the quotations to make it convincing, that John of Tynemouth’s *Vita S. Bertellini* was an abridgement of a lost text based on Peter’s Life of St Guthlac; ‘very little remains’ in the abridgement, but it was used, ‘altering scarcely a word’.³¹ The Life of St Bertellinus has certainly drawn on a Life of St Guthlac, whether Peter’s or another, but any idea that it was the work of Alexander of Ashby must be dismissed. Both copies include a miracle dated 1386. The attribution, with the incipit, first appears in Bale’s *Catalogus* (1557), but it cannot be sourced from his

²⁹ Henry de Kirkestede, *Catalogus de libris authenticis et apocrifis*, ed. R. H. Rouse & M. A. Rouse (London, 2004), 395 (K444. 11). I have amended the printed text, which follows a transcript made in 1694. Rouse & Rouse did not identify Henry’s source.

³⁰ Rouse & Rouse, pp. clxxxi–clxxxii. Holt once owned a copy of Kirkestede’s *Catalogus*; from him it passed to John Bale, and in the following century it was in James Ussher’s hands and in the possession of Thomas Gale before disappearing after 1694. It did not reach Trinity College, Dublin. There is no positive reason to transfer the same descent to TCD MS 172, and the absence of Kirkestede’s marks is against it.

³¹ W. F. Bolton, ‘The Latin revisions of Felix’s *Vita sancti Guthlaci*’, *Mediaeval Studies* 21 (1959), 36–52 (at pp. 46–7). The abridged *Vita S. Bertellini* is in *Nova Legenda Anglie*, i. 162–7, and the Bollandists had already printed a closely related text, *Acta Sanctorum*, Sept. III (1750), 449–53 (*BHL* 1263).

notebook.³² The most that this approach provides is that whoever wrote the short Life of St Bertellin could have had a copy of Peter's Life.

Peter's Life and Translation were based, sometimes quite closely, on a copy of Felix's Life with Orderic's *Abbreuiatio*, continued by the account of the Translation that took place on Sunday, 23 August 1136, with the subsequent miracles. This combination is known only from a single copy, originally from Crowland, in what is now MS 852 in the library at Douai, a book that probably got there in the late sixteenth century through an English recusant.³³ There is a case for thinking that the book had been brought from Crowland to London by John Leland. While in Leland's hands it was seen by John Bale who recorded five works from it, Felix's Life, the Translation and subsequent Miracles, the 'Epitome' (which we know as the work of Orderic), and what he calls *Gesta abbatum Croilandie*.³⁴ He entered them all under the name of Felix, despite the obvious fact that Felix lived in the eighth century, the Translation carries the date 1136 and the miracles continue until the twelfth year of King Stephen's reign, and (by his own account) the *Gesta* take the history of the abbots to the year 1281. Through an English recusant the *Translatio cum miraculis* came to the notice of the Bollandists, who published it in 1675 as a sequel to Felix's Life.³⁵

That the published text derived from the manuscript in Douai is shown by the ending of the *miracula*, 'ad nepotem suum trucidandum eum stimulauit'. The text, in a hand of the late twelfth century, ends at the foot of fol. 46v, at the end of a regular quire, 'trucidandum eius (*sic*) stimula|'; there is no catchword.³⁶ When compared with Peter's text, this falls part way through a long-winded story about one Rainald of Cornouailles, cured of madness when brought into St Guthlac's church, a story that Peter pruned back. It is no accident that the Douai text breaks

³² John Bale, *Scriptorum illustrium Maioris Britanniae catalogus* (Basel, 1557–9), i. 318. He also attributes to Alexander a Life of St Cyngar. His notebook (see n. 34) attributes to him a Life of St Agnes with a hexameter as its incipit, on the evidence of John Duckett, of Lynn; even this does not connect with Alexander's metrical *Liber festiualis*.

³³ Bolton, *supra*. Colgrave, *Felix's Life*, 47–8, noticed the close relationship between the copy of Felix's Life in D and that in the earlier copy, H, now BL MS Harley 3097 (s. xi/xii), which was at the nearby abbey of Peterborough at the beginning of the twelfth century (K. Friis-Jensen & J. M. W. Willoughby, *Peterborough Abbey* (London, 2001), 9, 57, BP2.15 = BP21.9). The Peterborough text was no doubt copied from an exemplar at Crowland, but these witnesses do not provide a sound text. Colgrave can hardly be correct in thinking D was copied from H, which was already at Peterborough; knowing their textual kinship, he simply supposed that the younger copy was made from the older copy.

³⁴ John Bale's notebook, edited by R. L. Poole & Mary Bateson as *Index Britanniae scriptorum: John Bale's Index of British and Other Writers* (Oxford, 1902), 71.

³⁵ Sharpe, *infra*.

³⁶ A. Poncelet, 'Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum latinorum bibliothecae publicae Duacensis', *Analecta Bollandiana* 20 (1901), 406–7. On fol. 70v the original scribe had provided a whole catchphrase at the very bottom of the page.

off here, but the result of thirteenth-century reconfiguring of the manuscript.³⁷ Someone who had a hand in that work wrote in red ink in the middle of the lower margin, ‘Deficiunt miracula’. Later in the manuscript, at fol. 70v, another regular quire ends in a chasm in the same way, cutting off the *miracula* of St Waltheof; and again, a hand has written in red ink in the middle of the lower margin, ‘Deest de miraculis’. It does not look at all the same hand. It happens again at the end of the next quire that the Life of St Neot breaks off (fol. 78v) but without any note to show that this was intentional.³⁸ While this is now the only copy of the twelfth-century *Translatio cum miraculis*, it was the copy on which editorial effort was expended in the thirteenth century. That does not prove that there were no others available, but Jane Roberts was not without reason in speculating that, ‘Peter most likely worked from MS Douai 852, for he includes miracles otherwise known only in this manuscript’.³⁹ Peter must have had the text in front of him to work from, and he must have done so at a date before the manuscript was reconfigured. It is a matter of speculation to ask whether, like Orderic Vitalis, he came to Crowland to read the older text and compose his newer one. We cannot exclude the possibility that he was sent the book, so that, working at home, he could draft his paraphrase in more easily understood Latin. The later Crowland historian who used Peter’s name made up a story about his happy sojourn in the fens when writing the Life, but he spoke of sending documents to London for him to work on the History.⁴⁰

Peter’s text need not detain us long. It does what he set out to do. The preamble of his preface to Abbot Henry restates the old theme that memory fails and writing preserves what should be remembered. For this reason he takes up the Life of St Guthlac as a subject for his pen (‘in materiam scribendi’).⁴¹

Ad hoc enim urget me uestre postulationis instancia et imperiosa dilectio. Veteris autem hystorie superflua resecaans, et obscura dilucidans, nequaquam a tenore ueritatis excessi, nec noui^a aliquid nisi quod publice edificationis exigentia dictabat apposui.

³⁷ *Translatio cum miraculis*, § 19 (*Acta Sanctorum*, Apr. II, 60); the equivalent passage in Peter’s text, *Nova Legenda Anglie*, ii. 725. 27–33. The last four lines of Peter’s text bear feeble witness to the ending of the original story, now wanting from the manuscript.

³⁸ M. Lapidge, ‘The manuscripts of *Vita I*’, in D. N. Dumville & M. Lapidge, *The Annals of St Neots with Vita prima sancti Neoti* (Woodbridge, 1984), p. lxxx. The text breaks off in §16 (p. 130, surge celer meque p̄reio).

³⁹ Jane Roberts, ‘An inventory of early Guthlac materials’, *Mediaeval Studies* 32 (1970), 193–233 (at pp. 205–6).

⁴⁰ In the authorial response to Abbot Henry’s letter, Peter speaks of how richly he was entertained by the devout monks and how much he regretted having to leave when called away by the king’s business; Fulman, 109; Riley, 226–7.

⁴¹ *Nova Legenda Anglie*, ii. 699.

^a conj. Horstman] nouimus MS

For the prompting of your demand drives me to this, and your masterful affection. Cutting back the excessive length of the old narrative, and bringing light where it was dark, I have nowhere departed from the true account, and I have added no novelty except that which the need to edify the audience required.

He has written in obedience to the abbot's request, cutting back what was too full, replacing rarer words with more familiar words, and adding only for the sake of edifying the reader, by which he no doubt means introducing an abundance of biblical quotations. The rest of the preface is filled with precisely that. A couple of short extracts will illustrate the character of the rewriting, while a table of Peter's chapters and their sources will allow the interested reader to study the parallels more fully.

Felix's prose was old-fashioned and heavy, and Peter's aim was to lighten and shorten:

Felix, c. 42 (MS D)

Alio quoque tempore, cum praefati exulis Æthelbaldi comes quidam, uocabulo Egga, ab immundi spiritus ualidissima uiolentia miserabiliter grassaretur, ita ut quid esset, uel quo sederet, uel quid parabat facere nesciret, corporis autem et membrorum uigor inlaesus permansit, facultas uero loquendi, disputandi intelligendique penitus defuit. Quadam die propinqui sui formidantes perpetuam uesaniam sibi uenturam, ad praefati uiri Guthlaci limina duxerunt, confestimque, ut se cingulo illius succinxit, omnem amentiam de se ablatam animumque sibi integre redditum persensit. Se quoque illo cingulo semper praecingens, usque in ultimum diem uitae suae, nullam a Sathana molestiam perpressus est.

Peter, § 16 (NLA, ii. 711. 5–12)

Erat quidam nobilis, illius exulis Aethelbaldi comes, nomine Egga, qui immani grassatione demonum torquebatur:

cuius propinqui, de Christo misericordia et beati Guthlaci meritis confidentes, eum uiro dei humiliter et deuote presentant, fletuque et gemitu suffragium sue intercessionis implorant. Accinxit eum uir dei cingulo suo, et statim maligni spiritus cessauit quassatio. Ipse uero deo gratias referens zona beati uiri toto tempore uite sue se cinxit, nec eum demon ulterius infestare presumpsit.

Very few words pass unchanged but the substance remains the same. Detail is lost but space is made for a little more piety. The Latin of the *Translatio*, though far more recent than Felix's work, was still heavier in words and was susceptible to still greater shortening:

Translatio S. Guthlaci, § 8

Illud quoque ad laudem almi patris Guthlaci memorie intimandum arbitror, quod architectum quemdam de eodem cenobio Alwoldum nomine pestifera passio diutine intolerabili anguore, scilicet capitis uertigine, momentatim torquebat; ut ex cerebri lesione discretionis absurditatem et

Peter (NLA, ii. 722. 14–21)

Erat ibi homo Alwoldus nomine, in architectoria doctus, sed percussus in emigranea passione miserabili: continua uertigine capitis et importabili angustia torquebatur. Hic accedit ad episcopum et humiliter rogat ut scrinium in quo erat iam caput beati Guthlaci repositum, suo capiti

infrunitatis maculam per interualla pateretur. Hic ab episcopo pura mentis deuotione impetrauit quatenus scrinium cum sancti Guthlaci capite ceruici sue desuper imponeret. Quod ut factum est, ita omnis capitis dolor et amaritudo euanuit, ut deinceps omni uita sua sano cerebro et pristina passione illesus uiueret.

superponat. Fauet episcopus: scrinioque uertici eius apposito, ita plene sanatus est, ut postea toto tempore uite sue continua incolumitate gauderet.

Horstman printed the text under the impression that it was the source from which John of Tynemouth, the object of his investigation, had made his abbreviation of the Life of St Guthlac. The likelihood is rather that John of Tynemouth had seen the same sources at Crowland, quite possibly the very manuscript now in Douai. He used this as his source for a paragraph about the elevation of the bones of St Neot at Crowland, carried out by Abbot Henry in 1213, ‘sicut scriptum in eodem monasterio palam ostenditur’, and briefly described in the manuscript.⁴² The modern reader has no more occasion to read Peter’s paraphrase than John’s, since we can read the fuller, if more tedious and obscure, originals by Felix and by the inventive author of the *Translatio cum miraculis*, writing, one may suppose, after 1160, possibly even after 1170.⁴³

What is interesting, however, is context. How did Abbot Henry come to ask Peter of Blois to provide this service to his abbey? How did it fit the programme of promotion that he undertook? In the longer view, Henry showed a continual interest in enhancing the cult of saints in Crowland, despite his arriving here only as abbot, after his profession some years earlier at Evesham. He staged more than one translation and he commissioned more than one hagiographical account.⁴⁴

The difficulty presented by Peter’s Life is that it carries nothing whatever to fix it in time.⁴⁵ It is in my view likely to be the earliest of Henry’s efforts. This depends on some conjecture on the circumstances of its commissioning. In 1124 Abbot Geoffrey had brought Orderic to Crowland from the abbey of Saint-Evroul in Normandy: he had himself been prior at Saint-Evroul until nominated abbot of Crowland, so he was

[continues p. 16

⁴² *Noua Legenda Anglie*, ii. 218; *Analecta Bollandiana* 20 (1901), 464. The source is found in Douai, MS 852, fol. 2r–v; printed from there in *Analecta Bollandiana* 20 (1901), 465–6.

⁴³ Discussed by Sharpe, ‘The twelfth-century Translation’, *supra*.

⁴⁴ R. J. Bartlett, ‘The hagiography of Angevin England’, *Thirteenth-Century England* 5 (1995), 37–52 (at 49–51).

⁴⁵ The date most often suggested, 1196, is commented on hereafter. J. C. Russell guessed c. 1200, in his paper, ‘Literature at Croyland abbey under Henry Longchamp, 1191–1237’, *Three Short Studies in Medieval Intellectual History*, Colorado College Publications, General Series 148 (1927), 49–59 [not seen]; he was followed by Bolton, ‘Latin revisions of Felix’s *Vita S. Guthlaci*’, 44, and by N. Adkin, ‘The proem of Henry of Avranches’ *Vita S. Guthlaci*’, *Analecta Bollandiana* 108 (1990), 349–55 (at p. 349).

<i>Felix's chapters</i>	<i>Peter's chapter-headings</i>	<i>NLA page/line</i>
	Incipit epistola magistri Petri Blesensis	698. 27
1–8	[1] De signo in natiuitate beati Guthlaci	699. 34
9–17	[2] De fama miraculi in natiuitate et baptismo pueri	700. 6
18	[3] De militia beati Guthlaci et de conuersione eiusdem	700. 36
19–20	[4] Qualiter ad quoddam monasterium se contulit et tonsuram clericalem accepit; et quomodo in sciencie profecerit	701. 19
21–	[5] Quomodo factus est anachorita	702. 14
24–	[6] De insula Croilandie, et de conuersione beati Guthlaci	703. 7
29–	[7] De desperatione et consolatione eiusdem	703. 38
–	[8] De diuersis temptationibus demonum, et de patientia beati Guthlaci	704. 40
–	[9] Quomodo demones in specie hostilis exercitus in eum irruerunt	706. 29
35	[10] Quomodo clericus machinatus est mortem eius: quod ipse presciuit	707. 7
36	[11] De molestia demonum in specie bestiarum apparentium	708. 8
37	[12] De cedula quam coruus in harundine dimisit appensam	708. 35
38–39	[13] Quomodo aues et pisces familiariter conuersabantur cum eo	709. 15
40	[14] De Æthelbaldo exule, et de duabus manicis	709. 30
41	[15] Qualiter demoniacum et insanum sanauerit	710. 21
42	[16] De alio demoniaco per sanctum Guthlacum curato	711. 5
43	[17] De duobus clericis cuiusdam abbatis, quorum turpitudinem beatus Guthlacus in spiritu uidit	711. 13
44–45	[18] De duobus fratribus uenientibus ad eum, quos in spiritu cognouit duo flacula abscondisse; et de Obba, cuius pedi se spina infixit	712. 1
46–47	[19] De ordinatione beati Guthlaci ab episcopo Hedda, et de Wilfrido [<i>F</i> : Wigfrido], cuius absentis uerba sanctus Guthlacus spiritu reuelante cognouit	712. 30
48	[20] De Ægburga filia regis Ædwulfi, et de plumbeo sacrofago lintheoque transmissa ad beatum Guthlacum; et de successore eiusdem in insula Croilandie	713. 29
49	[21] Consolatio Æthelbaldi exulis	714. 4

50	[22] Qualiter infirmatus est beatus Guthlacus, et de sui reuelatione secreti	715. 1
50	[23] De transitu beati Guthlaci, et de uisione lucis, et de aduentu sororis eius	715. 39
51	[24] Quomodo in alium tumulum translatum est corpus eius	716. 34
52	[25] De aduentu Æthelbaldi et conquestione atque consolatione eius	717. 14
53	[26] De quodam homine de prouincia Wisa, qui uisum miraculose recepit	718. 18
Douai, fol. 52r	[27] De munificentia Æthelbaldi, the last page of Orderic's <i>Abbreuiatio</i> of the Life (Chibnall, ii. 338. 14–340. 10)	718. 31
<i>Translatio</i> [1]	Incipit prologus in translationem cum miraculis beati Guthlaci anachorite	719. 22
[2–9]	Incipit translatio beati Guthlaci cum miraculis eiusdem	720. 15
[10–12]	<i>First miracle</i> : Instat nobis cuiusdam miraculi oportuna relatio	723. 4
[13–14]	<i>Second miracle</i> : Processu temporis Hulfketellus abbas	723. 40
[15–16]	<i>Third miracle</i> : Monachus quidam Spaldingensis monasterii procurator	724. 22
[17–18]	<i>Fourth miracle</i> : In uilla que dicitur Caua	725. 4
[19] <i>breaks off</i>	<i>Fifth miracle</i> : Anno duodecimo regis Stephani Reginaldus de Cornubia	725. 27
	<i>Sixth miracle</i> : In uilla que dicitur Coueham	725. 38
	<i>Seventh miracle</i> : Anno duodecimo regis Stephani celestis indignatio	726. 11
	<i>Eighth miracle</i> : Apud Rameseyam, ubi monasterium beati Benedicti	726. 33
	<i>Ninth miracle</i> : Erat apud Bedefordiam matrona nomine Guymarca	726. 39
	<i>Tenth miracle</i> : In uilla de Stocha quidam	727. 11
	<i>Conclusion</i> : Si linguis loquerer angelorum, non sufficerem explanare magnalia dei	727. 24

asking an author already well known to him. Our question is how did Henry de Longchamp persuade Peter of Blois to take his commission.

Henry was elected abbot in 1190, as we learn from a good source, a detailed narrative of his abbacy, hidden by its association with the Crowland History:⁴⁶

Defunctus est abbas Robertus in uigilia Pasche, et seisita est Croylandia in manu regis et cancellarii, quem quando rex transfretauerat reliquerat capitalem iusticiam totius Anglie. [. . .] Interim dominus Willielmus de Longo Campo, Eliensis episcopus, domini regis cancellarius, tunc apostolice sedis legatus, directis nuntiis ad regem in Normanniam ubi iter suum Hierosolytanum sollicite disposuit, licentiam obtinuit ab ipso abbatem in monasterio de Croyland substituendi. Itaque per assensum regis et electionem fratrum de Croyland electus est in abbatem Croyland dominus Henricus Evesham' monachus predicti cancellarii frater carnalis.

Abbot Robert died on Easter Eve [24 March 1190], and Crowland was seised into the hand of the king and the chancellor, whom the king, when he went over sea, had left as chief justiciar of all England. [. . .] Meanwhile the lord William de Longchamp, bishop of Ely, chancellor of the lord king, at the time papal legate, having sent messengers to the king in Normandy, where he was carefully arranging his journey to Jerusalem, obtained licence from him to appoint an abbot to the monastery of Crowland. And so with the king's assent and by the election of the brethren of Crowland, Henry, a monk of Evesham, and the brother in the flesh of the foresaid chancellor, was elected abbot of Crowland.

On the day when Abbot Robert died, the king was at Rouen, and with him were his chancellor William de Longchamp and the archbishop of Canterbury. After sealing a charter at Gisors on Monday, 2 April, the chancellor returned to England and was at Westminster on Wednesday, 11 April.⁴⁷ The king with no small court travelled south-west, spending

⁴⁶ The account of Abbot Henry's abbacy that became part of the Crowland history has the smack of a contemporary account; printed by Fulman, 456–77 (quotation at p. 456). The only existing manuscript source for this in the context of the Crowland history is now BL MS Cotton Otho B. xiii (xv²), fols. 12r–25v. Two fragmentary leaves, Lincoln RO, Cragg/3/14 (a and b), were identified by Capt W. A. Cragg (1859–1950) as fragments from a copy of the account of Abbot Henry's time. The handwriting has been dated to the first half of the fourteenth century. There is nothing to determine whether the roll from which these membranes have survived contained more than the account of Henry's abbacy, but their survival is an important vindication of materials concatenated after the fictitious history. D. M. Stenton regarded the detailed account of the law-suit between the abbey of Crowland and the priory of Spalding during the years 1189–1203, in which this passage falls, as contemporary. The translation here is adapted from hers, *English Justice between the Norman Conquest and the Great Charter 1066–1215* (Philadelphia, PA. 1964), 148–211 (at p. 165). The Crowland chronicle in College of Arms, MS Arundel 10, written while Henry was still abbot, is more concise, s.a. 1190: 'Robertus abbas Croilandia obit. Succesit Henricus frater Willelmi de Longo Campo regis cancellarii monachus Eveshami'.

⁴⁷ Landon, *Itinerary*, 29, 158 (no. 249, for the canons of St Bartholomew, sealed by the chancellor at Rouen and attested by the archbishop); N. E. Karn, *English Episcopal Acta 31 Ely 1109–1197* (2005), 230 (when Bishop William was on the king's bench at Westminster,

some time at Chinon before heading across France to Lyon and reaching Marseille about the end of July. Between 2 April and 1 August Archbishop Baldwin's route is unknown, but he did not attest any royal charters until he rejoined the king at Marseille at the beginning of August. It is not clear when or where the abbey's messenger would have reached the chancellor, but William kept up official contact with King Richard. He was named as papal legate by Clement III on 5 June 1190, whose letter would have gone to the king before it was delivered in England.⁴⁸ His appointment as chief justiciar dated from 6 June. Many weeks may have passed before he was able to appoint his brother to the abbey.⁴⁹

The movements of Peter of Blois are not documented by charters, and far less is known. He had, it appears, warned the chancellor that enemies were plotting, but he soon afterwards left England with the king, which can only have been in December 1189.⁵⁰ In March 1190 he was surely in Rouen with Archbishop Baldwin, who was preparing to go to Palestine ahead of the king. Peter went with him.⁵¹ After the archbishop's death at Acre in November 1190, Peter returned to Sicily, where he had stayed long before. Here, at the end of March 1191, Queen Eleanor brought the king's bride to meet Richard, who had wintered at Messina and now sailed for Cyprus with his betrothed on 10 April. Already on 2 April Eleanor sailed for Salerno on her way to Rome.⁵² She was accompanied by Walter de Coutances, a trusted administrator under Henry II, now archbishop of Rouen, who had spent the winter with the king at Messina.⁵³ And Peter too is thought to have accompanied her.⁵⁴

R. C. van Caenegem, *English Lawsuits from William I to Richard I*, Selden Society 106, 107 (1990–91), i. 656, no. 621).

⁴⁸ JL 16505; Ralph of Diss copied the letter twice, both in his letter of advice to William de Longchamp and in his *Ymagines historiarum*, ed. W. Stubbs, RS 68 (1876), ii. 83, 178.

⁴⁹ The vacancy at Crowland occurred before that at Westminster, where William sought to put in another unnamed brother as abbot after Michaelmas 1190 (Richard of Devizes, 39, 54). He was prevented. The brother may have been Robert de Longchamp, whom he would soon instal as prior of Ely (*Heads*, i. 46).

⁵⁰ This emerges from a letter to William Longchamp (*Ep.* 87), 'Sane antequam cum domino rege Anglia exiuissem, presens eram, uobisque predixeram, qualiter emuli uestri iam contra uos arma iniquitatis in inuidie fornace conflabant' (*PL* 207. 273A); French translation by Türk, 418–23 (no. 87). The letter was first included in Peter's collection in version IV, c. 1198 (Southern, 'Peter of Blois: a twelfth-century humanist?', 132).

⁵¹ The evidence that Peter was with the archbishop in Palestine is brief remarks added in revising a work originally composed at the end of 1187 (*PL* 207. 962C, 969A), as discussed by R. W. Southern, 'Peter of Blois and the third Crusade', *Studies in Medieval History presented to R. H. C. Davis* (Oxford, 1985), 207–219 (at p. 216).

⁵² Roger of Howden, *Gesta*, ed. W. Stubbs, RS 49 (1867), ii. 161; id. *Chronica*, ed. W. Stubbs, RS 51 (1868–71), iii. 100.

⁵³ R. V. Turner, *ODNB*, s.n. Coutances, Walter de: 'He received papal release from his crusading vow, and returned to England in the spring of 1191, accompanying Eleanor of Aquitaine, the queen mother'.

⁵⁴ R. W. Southern, *ODNB*, s.n. Blois, Peter of: 'Peter probably travelled with her through Italy and France; then, while Eleanor stayed in France, he went on and arrived back in

This appears to be entirely supposition. Eleanor was still in Normandy at the end of 1191, but Peter is presumed to have returned to England ‘before the fall of William Longchamp in October 1191’.⁵⁵ Southern would eventually amend his dating to ‘by the following July’.⁵⁶ Archbishop Walter, it appears, reached England on 27 June with letters to the chancellor and other justiciars.⁵⁷ This would allow Peter three clear months in England with William de Longchamp.

On his return he may have sought out the chancellor of England, to whom Walter carried the king’s letters. By October, however, William was under severe political pressure. He avoided Count John, the king’s brother, at Staines and went to the Tower of London on 7 October; after surrendering castles and hostages to John, he left London for Dover on 12 October.⁵⁸ At this point in his chronicle, Roger of Howden introduced a public letter written by Bishop Hugh of Coventry, denouncing Bishop William and describing his flight towards Dover, disguised as a woman. To which Roger subsequently added a response by Peter of Blois, praising Bishop William and blaming Hugh for his envy towards the chancellor.⁵⁹ It was presumably at this time too that Peter wrote a letter to William himself, filled with biblical quotations, in which he indicated at the end that he would make an appeal to the queen mother.⁶⁰ She returned

England in the autumn of 1191’. This was accepted by R. V. Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine, Queen of France, Queen of England* (New Haven, CT, 2009), 272.

⁵⁵ Southern, ‘Peter of Blois and the third Crusade’, 215.

⁵⁶ R. W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe* (Oxford, 1995–8), ii. 203.

⁵⁷ Landon, *Itinerary*, 192, argues for this date from *Itinerarium regis Ricardi* and Ralph of Diss, overriding an alteration in Ralph’s text. On the other hand, Howden, *Gesta*, ii. 158, dates the archbishop’s departure to February, which is compatible with the dates of the two royal letters that he carried, 20 and 23 February (Landon, *Itinerary*, 46). Critical support for the later chronology against Howden is a payment for debts of the queen and Archbishop Walter in Rome (*PR 3 Richard I*, 29).

⁵⁸ Ralph of Diss, *Ymagines historiarum*, ed. Stubbs, ii. 98–100. The hostages included two of William’s brothers, Henry and Osbert, both sheriffs. It is an odd fact that sources refer to three different men named Henry de Longchamp as brothers of the chancellor (Karn, *Ely 1109–1197*, p. lxxxix).

⁵⁹ Roger of Howden, *Gesta*, ii. 215–20; id. *Chronica*, iii. 141–7, and 148–50 (Peter’s letter). Peter’s letter appears in his own collection, *Ep.* 89 (*PL* 207. 279–81); French translation by Türk, 424–7 (no. 88). Türk’s date, ‘vers 1198’, ignores the witness of Howden and is in any case impossible, since William died in January 1197. It was first included in Peter’s collection in version IV.

⁶⁰ *Ep.* 87, ‘Ego autem ad dominam reginam me contuli, donec uideam ultionem de inimicis tuis, et in statum pristinum cum gloria et honore reuertaris’ (*PL* 207. 276A). Peter’s letter may have followed William to France. It was dated no later than October 1191 by Southern, who also took ‘contuli’ as an indication that Peter was already in France with the Queen (‘Peter of Blois and the third Crusade’, 215). If that were so, there is actually no evidence that he was back in England at all in 1191. Peter had known Queen Eleanor of old, and he would attest two of her charters in the near future, one for the monks of Canterbury, 1192 × 1194 (J. B. Sheppard, *Litterae Cantuarienses*, RS 85 (1887–9), iii. 379–80), one for the canons of Waltham, 1193 (H. G. Richardson, ‘Letters and charters of Eleanor of Aquitaine’, *EHR* 74

to England in February 1192 to stand up for the king's interest against Count John.⁶¹ In late summer 1191, therefore, Peter of Blois was as close as he would ever be to William de Longchamp, bishop of Ely. A brief return as far as Canterbury during Lent 1192 did not result in William's finding a better reception in England, and after that he spent a year in France.⁶² Thereafter he made just three short visits to England in spring 1193, spring 1194, and July 1196.

Now William was the brother of Henry de Longchamp, whose election to the abbey he had facilitated in 1190. Between Peter's return to England and William's departure for France, the opportunity existed for Henry to recruit Peter through the mediation of his brother. There is nothing to suggest that a direct request from Henry to visit Crowland would have found favour. During succeeding years it is less likely that Peter would have had much contact with the chancellor. This has implications for the dating of two other letters from Peter to William.⁶³

At this period Peter was hoping for an influential patron. He did not get lasting support from the bishop of Ely and turned his attention first to Walter of Coutances, archbishop of Rouen, and then to Hubert Walter, from 1193 archbishop of Canterbury. These were years of insecurity for Peter, who was not content, it seems, with his benefices.⁶⁴

It is also to be remembered that Abbot Henry twice travelled to see the king on the Continent. The first time he must have been away for some time during 1193 and 1194, for he met with King Richard at Speyer in January 1194.⁶⁵ In August 1195 he met the archbishop of Canterbury at Winchester before travelling on to Normandy. On the second occasion, the King, the chancellor William de Longchamp, and his brother Abbot Henry spent much of September in one another's company. The visible

(1959), 193–213, at p. 211). On both occasions he attested after Herbert, archdeacon of Canterbury; the first was sealed in London, the second at Berkhamstead. This does not add up to evidence for his being a member of her household.

⁶¹ Roger of Howden, *Gesta*, ii. 236–7; id. *Chronica*, iii. 187.

⁶² Roger of Howden, *Gesta*, ii. 239; id. *Chronica*, iii. 188. Karn, *Ely 1109–1197*, 232.

⁶³ *Ep.* 108 (*PL* 207. 331–2) was concerned with his difficulties as dean of Wolverhampton with the sheriff of Stafford, a subject on which he would later write to Pope Innocent (*Ep.* 152), a circumstance that explains Türk's dating *Ep.* 108 to 1198, more than a year after the addressee had died. It was included in version III of Peter's collection, c. 1196. Peter's very pithy *Ep.* 156 (*PL* 207. 450) appeals to the chancellor for help with a debt of £6 owed to Samson the Jew as Peter faced what he called crucifixion; this was already included in version II of Peter's collection, c. 1189. Since the letter cannot have been written before William became chancellor in August of that year, it must have been fresh when the revised collection was made available for copying.

⁶⁴ Türk, *Pierre de Blois*, 387–8; Cotts, *Clerical Dilemma*, 39–45.

⁶⁵ Landon, *Itinerary*, 82, citing Fulman, 459; the charter dated at Speyer, 22 January 1194, was entered in *Cartae Antiquae Roll R*, ed. J. C. Davies, *Cartae Antiquae Rolls 11–20* (1960), 129 (no. 515).

reason for the abbot's journey was to seek the king's seal to settle the dispute between his own abbey and the priory of Spalding.⁶⁶

The year sometimes mentioned as the occasion for the commission is 1196, and the reason for this is that on Saturday, 27 April, in that year Abbot Henry translated the body of St Guthlac into a more prominent location at the east end of the abbey church. Our information about this translation comes from the detailed narrative of Abbot Henry's abbacy.⁶⁷ To link the writing of Peter's Life with the translation, however, is circumstantial guesswork. If the commission were linked to the event, one might expect that Peter's text would mention something of these circumstances. Fresh miracles might have been expected to prove the revival of St Guthlac's power. If, on the other hand, Bishop William had been Abbot Henry's means of persuading Peter of Blois to undertake a commission—the only such in his entire oeuvre—this was not a good time. William was in France for more than eighteen months between December 1194 and July 1196, when he returned to England very briefly, going back to France in August.⁶⁸ He died in January 1197. Pitting one set of circumstances against another, the opportunity to involve Peter at Crowland seems more plausibly dated to 1191–2. The translation of 1196 was not anticipated.

Other evidence of Abbot Henry's interest in celebrating the saints who rested in the abbey follows. The drawing of the extant Guthlac Roll in Latin has been dated to the years immediately before or immediately after 1200.⁶⁹ A composite Life of St Thomas, referred to as the *Quadrilogus*, was commissioned by Henry from E(lias) of Evesham, Henry's abbey of first profession.⁷⁰ The work was carried out at Crowland in 1198–9; Elias gives the impression that Henry thought he was working too slowly and involved himself to speed completion. It was

⁶⁶ Landon, *Itinerary*, 104–5, citing Fulman, 460. which includes the charter dated at Gorran, 30 September 1195.

⁶⁷ Fulman, 463; Riley, 295–6. The passage is omitted by Stenton, 186–7. The year is not mentioned, and two contrary indications are given, the year after 1194, and the sixtieth year since the first translation (1136). Day and date coincide in 1196.

⁶⁸ Karn, *Ely 1109–1197*, 234.

⁶⁹ Roberts, *supra*. That there was an older Guthlac roll, in English rather than Latin, at Leominster c. 1192 is significant (R. Sharpe & others, *English Benedictine Libraries. The shorter catalogues* (London, 1996), 456 (B75. 16), 'Rotula cum uita sancti Guthlaci anglice scripta'). Its being at Leominster can only be explained as a gift through Robert of Reading, abbot of Crowland from 1175 to 1190, but previously prior of Leominster. The decline in the use of written English in the course of the twelfth century encourages the inference that the English roll was perhaps significantly older than that, so that we should not see its gift to Leominster as a sign of innovation.

⁷⁰ The extension of his initial as Elias depends on Leland's report from a copy of the work seen at Whitby, 'Helias Euesham monachus de uita sancti Thomae Cantuariensis ad Henricum abbatem Croylandiae' (*Collectanea*, iv. 39).

revised in 1213 by Roger of Crowland, who gives both dates at the end of his prefatory letter to Abbot Henry:⁷¹

Facta est autem prima illa compilatio hortantibus uobis [*PL*: uotis] pariter et cooperantibus apud Croylandiam anno regis Ricardi ultimo, et hec eiusdem compilationis adiectio itidem apud Croylandiam anno regni regis Joannis quarto decimo, qui fuit annus ab incarnatione domini iuxta Dionysium millesimus ducentesimus tertius decimus.

That first compilation was made, as much with your help as your encouragement, at Crowland in the last year of King Richard, and this addition to the same compilation again at Crowland in the fourteenth year of King John's reign, which was 1213 AD according to Dionysius.

Elias's work is a digest of four Lives of St Thomas, to which Roger added more than two hundred contemporary letters and arranged the whole in seven books: 'his adaptation of the *Quadrilogus* has in fact many claims to be regarded as one of the best accounts of the Becket dispute composed in the middle ages'.⁷² Its bulk, however, may have gone against it. Copies are rare. In the same year Henry conducted a second translation at Crowland, opening the chest holding bones of St Neot and bringing them from an obscure place to a more visible one.⁷³ In 1219 Henry also translated the remains of St Waltheof, as we read in a summary added to the *Gesta Waldeui comitis* in the reconfigured MS Douai 852:⁷⁴

⁷¹ The Crowland *Quadrilogus* is known as *Quadrilogus II* in the literature on the Becket Lives, to differentiate it from a later work, which happened to be printed in 1495 and gained spurious priority as *Quadrilogus I*, whose origin is not established. Elias's work is known from three copies, BL MS Cotton Faustina B. viii (s. xiii), fols. 54r–119v; BL MS Cotton Vespasian B. xiv (s. xiii²), fols. 33r–95r; and Bodl. MS Tanner 4 (s. xiii²), fol. 132r [one leaf with E's letter]. The prefatory letter in the name of 'E. humilis dictus monachus de Euesham' was printed by Hardy, *Materials*, ii. 343, and by J. C. Robertson, *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*, RS 67 (1875–85), ii. 425–6. Roger of Crowland's text, described in detail by A. Duggan, *Thomas Becket. A textual history of his letters* (Oxford, 1980), 206–223, survives complete in one late copy, BNF MS lat. 5372 (AD 1411, England), which includes E's letter to Henry as well as Roger's letter to Henry and Henry's letter to Archbishop Langton. From here J. A. Giles extracted the three letters, *Vita Sancti Thomae Cantuariensis* (Oxford, 1845), ii. 33–4 (Elias), 40–42 (Henry), 42–5 (Roger), repr. *PL* 190. 253–4, 257–9, 259–60. Roger's and Henry's letter had previously been printed by Dom M. J. J. Brial, 'Notice d'un manuscrit latin de la Bibliothèque impériale, no. 5372', *Notices et extraits des manuscrits* 9 (1813), pt 2, 85–92. At a later date Elias's text was denuded of his preface and equipped with a new one, in which form it gained wider circulation (Hardy, *Materials*, ii. 348–9, corrected by Duggan, *Thomas Becket. A textual history*, 205 n. 5).

⁷² Duggan, *Thomas Becket. A textual history*, 208.

⁷³ Douai, MS 852, fol. 2r–v, part of the 13th-century reconfiguration of the manuscript; *Analecta Bollandiana* 20 (1901), 465–6.

⁷⁴ Douai, MS 852, fols. 57v, 63v, in each case an addition using blank spaces in the manuscript; ed. F. Michel, *Chroniques Anglo-Normandes* (Rouen, 1836–40), ii. 103, 122–3. The form of words is almost identical at both points. The arithmetic is unsound; Earl

Post plurimorum uero curricula annorum, Henricus abbas Croilandie tumbam marmoream sancti comitis imagine sculpta insignitam parari fecit, in qua secus gradus maioris altaris a sinistra parte in loco decenti et eminenti constitutam, reliquias sancti comitis XVI^o kalendas Aprilis, astante et psallente conuentu, cum debita transtulit deuotione, anno ab incarnatione domini M^o CC^o XIX^o ac decollatione eiusdem comitis C^o XXIX^o.

After the passage of very many years, Abbot Henry of Crowland had a marble tomb made, distinguished by a carved image of the holy earl, positioned near the steps of the high altar on the north side in a fitting and prominent site, into which he translated the remains of the holy earl with due devotion on 17 March, while the monks stood by and chanted. It was the year of the Lord's incarnation 1219 and the one hundred and twenty ninth since his execution.

With rising ambition, perhaps, in 1220 he presented a copy of Brother Roger's *Quadrilogus* to Archbishop Stephen Langton at Canterbury to mark his pleasure at receiving the archbishop's invitation to be present at the martyr's translation in Canterbury. Henry's letter to Langton has been printed with Brother Roger's earlier preface from 1213. Henry offered the work as 'librum de sanctitate et magnificentia eiusdem martyris apud nos compilatum' (though editors mistook the sense and printed *uos*), 'a book compiled in our community about the sainthood and magnificence of that martyr'. And later still Henry invited the poet Henry of Avranches to write St Guthlac's Life in verse.⁷⁵ He wrote the Lives of six English saints, sometimes for named patrons. His lengthy Life of St Guthlac (*BHL* 3730) has been seen as delivering just what a patron might hope for, though there is little to show it found many readers.⁷⁶ It carries no evidence of date beyond the brief address to Abbot Henry. I incline to think around 1226 or 1227 may be more plausible than earlier.⁷⁷ This

Waltheof was executed in 1076. The calculation appears rather to be based on the original translation of his body from the chapter house into the abbey church in 1091.

⁷⁵ D. R. Townsend, *Saints' Lives. Henry of Avranches* (Cambridge, MA, 2014), ii. 2–125.

⁷⁶ N. Adkin, 'The poem of Henry of Avranches' *Vita S. Guthlaci*', *Analecta Bollandiana* 108 (1990), 349–55, identifying Henry's debt to Walter of Châtillon's *Alexandreis*, gives the work an appreciative review. Like several of Henry's verse Lives, it is known to us now only because Matthew Paris assembled a collection of Henry's poetry, now CUL MS Dd. 11. 78; another copy of Henry's verse Lives of English saints once existed in Cotton MS Vitellius D. xiv, destroyed in 1731.

⁷⁷ Russell and Heironimus, *Shorter Latin Poems*, 105–6, favoured 1220, linking it with the use Henry of Avranches made of the Crowland *Quadrilogus*, which had gone to Canterbury. Bolton, 'The Latin revisions of Felix's *Vita sancti Guthlaci*', 47, says *c.* 1224. Henry wrote several verse Lives in the early 1220s without naming patrons. The first to acknowledge its sponsor was the Life of St Birinus for Bishop Peter des Roches of Winchester, not after 1227. This was followed by a Life of St Oswald for the monks of Peterborough, 1226 × *c.* 1228. The work for Crowland may belong to the same period. Henry's departure for the papal court serves as the final term.

metrical Life was based on Peter's modern version, though the writer had access also to Felix's antiquated original.⁷⁸

Elias of Evesham and Roger of Crowland were obscure monks. Peter of Blois was a man with a literary reputation. Unlike Henry of Avranches, who needed commissions, Peter was someone who wrote what he wanted to write, and he was not given to writing hagiography. It was Abbot Henry's commissioning these two works that the late-thirteenth-century chronicler thought worth remembering about him:⁷⁹

Obiit dominus Henricus de Longo Campo abbas Croylandie ad cuius petitionem magister Petrus Blesensis archidiaconus Bathoniensis tunc eloquentissimus uitam sancti Guthlaci heroico stylo et magister Henricus metrico stylo uenustissime dictauerunt.

[In this year] Died Dom Henry de Longchamp abbot of Crowland, at whose request Master Peter of Blois, archdeacon of Bath, in his time the most eloquent writer, composed St Guthlac's Life in noble style and Master Henry in metrical style most pleasingly.

The author of the Crowland History certainly knew Peter's Life of St Guthlac: why else would he have named Peter as author of the second part of his fiction? He could have chosen someone who might appear, like Abbot Ingulf, to have been a contemporary author. We can no longer see where Peter's work ostensibly ended, but the evidence is against any idea that he was meant to have brought this part of the work down to Abbot Henry's time. The fifteenth-century writer says that Peter, 'uir eximius et singularis eloquentie titulis insignitus', ended his work at the beginning of King Stephen's reign.⁸⁰ Whether this should be associated with the Translation of St Guthlac in the first year of that reign is now beyond guessing. The author may have particularly wanted to name a French author, not an insider from Crowland, but Peter's famed eloquence seems to have been the main concern. He certainly made great play with Peter's reputation in Abbot Henry's petition, and in Peter's response, the writer plays up to his involvement in the king's business. It is particularly interesting, however, in the context of Peter's rewriting the Life of St Guthlac, that the imaginative historian puts into his answer to

⁷⁸ Colgrave, *Felix's Life*, 23–4; M. Chibnall, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, OMT (Oxford, 1969), vol. ii, p. xxvii, notes two readings to suggest he had also seen Orderic's *Epitome* as it appears in the Douai manuscript.

⁷⁹ J. A. Giles, *Chronicon Angliae Petriburgense* (London, 1845), 135. This chronicle, from BL MS Cotton Claudius A. v (s. xiv), consistently provides obituaries for abbots of Crowland, where it was surely composed; references to it as a, or worse the, Peterborough chronicle, are misleading. The words 'heroico style' would ordinarily be taken to mean in hexameters, not in prose.

⁸⁰ Fulman, 545, where the writer, under the year 1469, claims to have continued the work from where Peter ended, 'ab introitu Regis Stephani, tempore Abbatis Waldeui'.

Abbot Hugh, not an explanation of his work on the History—that is left oddly hanging, prefaced before it was written—but a comment on Felix’s Life and his own. This has been chiefly cited for distinguishing between St Felix, the bishop in East Anglia about whom Bede had written and whose relics were claimed by Ramsey abbey by this period, and the much later Felix, writer of the Life, whom he represents as trained in the school of Archbishop Theodore, ‘prout ex greccitate stili legenti satis liquet’ (‘as appears clearly enough to the reader from the Greekness of his style’). It appears that he would have been intimidated at rewriting the words of a saint: but, since it was not the saint who wrote the Life,⁸¹

audacior eram uestris iussionibus inseruire, conseruata in omnibus historie ueritate iuxta meum ingeniolum sacratissima gesta iusto lepore enarrare.

I felt myself the more emboldened to obey your commands, and to relate, with becoming neatness of diction, so far as my little talent allows, those of your most sacred annals as are preserved in all things by the truth of history.

This is not Peter but his fictional *alter ego*, saying that he would do for the History what the real Peter had done for Felix’s Life of St Guthlac.

Despite the fact that modern readers are likely to prefer the authenticity of Felix, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Peter’s Life appears to have enjoyed some circulation and interest. It was easier reading than Felix’s *Vita*, and it carried the story into the twelfth century as no other circulating text did. It is perhaps not surprising that the literary name of Peter of Blois seemed so conspicuous that, in later years, the writer of the History would contrive that flattering letter, full of superlatives to recreate in imagination his taking on Abbot Henry’s commission to continue their early history for the monks of Crowland.

⁸¹ Fulman, 110; Riley, 228.

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