




RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Ramsey Witness to Aimo's Life of Abbo of Fleury (BHL 3–4)

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Abstract

The significance of Abbo of Fleury's time in England to the intellectual life of tenth- and eleventh-century Ramsey is widely appreciated. Less well understood is what English monks knew of Fleury's claims of Abbo's sanctity. The present article explores knowledge of Abbo's cult in England through a close study of Oxford, Bodleian MS Lat. misc. c. 75, a twelfth-century witness to Aimo's *Vita et miracula s. Abbonis* of which the Life's editors were unaware. The manuscript is introduced, its textual relationship to the *Vita*'s other witnesses is examined and a stemma for the *Vita*'s textual transmission is proposed. Textual interpolations made at Ramsey are then analysed for the additional information which they provide about Abbo's legacy there before a possible context for the *Vita*'s transmission to Ramsey is proposed. An appendix of variants between the Ramsey witness and the *Vita*'s printed edition is also provided.

As medieval monks of Fleury knew from the *vita* written shortly after Abbo's death in 1004, their former abbot had lived an eventful life, in which he had counselled kings of France, read and written widely, and spent time in England as Ramsey's schoolmaster. This sojourn at Ramsey, though brief, had been fruitful, and the seeds of computistical learning which he had sown there would bloom in the writings of his former student, Byrhtferth.¹ However, while the great intellectual legacy of Abbo's time at Ramsey has been widely recognized, less clear is what an eleventh-century Ramsey monk could have known about Abbo the man. At Fleury, Abbo's murder while trying to 'reform' the rebellious Gascon

¹ For Abbo's influence on Byrhtferth's computistical writings, and understanding of Hyginus's *Astronomica*, see M. Lapidge and P. S. Baker, *Byrhtferth's Enchiridion* (Oxford, 1995); M. Lapidge and P. S. Baker, 'More Acrostic Verse by Abbo of Fleury', *Jnl of Med. Latin* 7 (1997), 1–27, at 8–9.

monks of La Réole would inspire a saint's cult to develop around him, and Aimo, his former student, to preserve his memory through the composition of a *vita et miracula*. But to what extent were the monks of Ramsey also involved in the process of preserving and promulgating Abbo's (sainted) memory?

A previously unappreciated witness to Aimo's *Vita et miracula sancti Abbonis* – Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Lat. Misc. c. 75 – offers new insights into Abbo's legacy at Ramsey. This twelfth-century manuscript from Ramsey was unfortunately unknown to Robert-Henri Bautier and Gillette Labory, the most recent editors of Aimo's *Vita*, but a close study of it reveals much about the textual transmission of Aimo's *Vita* and the continued intellectual connections between Fleury and Ramsey. Moreover, close examination of the text itself is especially valuable, since a Ramsey interpolator has inserted additional information interesting both for Abbo's time at Ramsey itself and for how the monks remembered it during the eleventh century. This article first introduces the manuscript and its history, before examining the textual variants in the Oxford manuscript for what they reveal about the *Vita*'s textual transmission, and proposing a stemma. It then analyses the Ramsey interpolations and considers the broader legacy of Abbo's time there. Finally, it raises some possible implications of this manuscript for Abbo's veneration.

Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Lat. Misc. c. 75 is a composite manuscript made up of seven disparate medieval components from the collection of the sixteenth-century ecclesiast and book collector, John Bale, bound together with no apparent logic save their large size of around 315 × 215 mm.² It is part six, fols. 144–75 of the current manuscript, which interests us. This comprises four quaternions, with two columns per page. The main text is the work of two scribes, each writing an English early gothic bookhand datable to the second half of the twelfth century. The first scribe is responsible for the first two quaternions (fols. 144–59), the other for the third and fourth (fols. 160–75).³ This division also corresponds to a division in the texts copied. Part six of MS Lat. Misc. c. 75 contains an acephalous copy of Cassiodorus's *Historia tripartita* (144r–148r); Aimo of Fleury's *Vita et miracula sancti Abbonis* (BHL 3–4, 148v–159r); the *Vita sancti Martialis* (BHL 5552, 160r–172v); and an apocryphal letter by a Greek emperor (174v–175v), which appears to have been added later in the manuscript's final blank folia. Based on Martial's feast date (30 June) and the fact that the final blank folia have accrued the sort of additions common to end pages, these quaternions probably once formed part of a larger, two-volume legendary in which fols. 160–75 formed the end of the January–June volume. Fols. 144–59, containing part of the *Historia tripartita* and Aimo's *Vita Abbonis*, presumably fell somewhere towards the end of the second volume as Abbo's feast day falls on 13 November.⁴ Since, in the catalogue of his library, John

² 'MS. Lat. misc. c. 75', *Medieval Manuscripts in Oxford Libraries*, https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_6596.

³ *Ibid.* For reasons unclear to me, the start of the second quire (152r–153r) briefly increases from c. 40 lines a page to c. 50 lines before reverting to the original layout.

⁴ For legends, see C. Lanéry, 'Manuscrits hagiographiques à usage liturgique et manuscrits liturgiques à contenu hagiographique. Quelques pistes de réflexion', *Décrire le manuscrit liturgique: Méthodes, problématiques, perspectives*, ed. L. Albiero and E. Celora, *Bibliologia* 64 (Turnhout, 2021), 13–39, esp. 16–20. For lections drawn from Cassiodorus's *Historia tripartita*, see T. Webber, 'Reading in the Refectory at Reading Abbey', *Reading Med. Stud.* 42 (2016), 63–88, at 72.

Bale describes these quires simply as ‘Haymo Floriacensis, de uita Abbonis monachi’ (Aimo of Fleury, Concerning the Life of the monk Abbo), the remainder of the manuscript was probably lost by the time he came to own it, plausibly a victim of the Reformation’s dispersal of monastic libraries.⁵ A fourteenth-century inscription on 175v reveals that at that time the manuscript was owned by Ramsey Abbey; Given Abbo’s biographical connections to Ramsey and textual additions to the *Vita Abbonis* only found in this witness, it is highly likely that the manuscript was originally copied there.

This twelfth-century witness helps elucidate the textual transmission of Aimo of Fleury’s *Vita Abbonis*. Only three other complete medieval witnesses to Aimo’s *Vita* survive: Dijon, Bibliothèque municipale MS 1118, 91v–124v (s. xi^{med}, copied at Fleury or its priory at Perrecy-les-Forges); Montpellier, Bibliothèque interuniversitaire, Faculté de Médecine MS 68, 56r–62v (s. xi², copied at Saint-Bénigne de Dijon); and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MS lat. 12606, 141rb–146ra (s. xii^{ex}, copied at Fleury).⁶ In addition to the four complete witnesses, there also survives an extract from chapter 13 of Aimo’s *Vita Abbonis* in Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Reg. lat. 1864, 73r–v (s. xi, copied in Northern France, possibly at Saint-Médard de Soissons).⁷ Previous scholars have discussed this section of Vatican 1864, since it preserves Abbo’s acrostic poem *Otto valens* but, to the best of my knowledge, none have noted that it is not an independent witness to the poem.⁸ Rather, it is an extract from Aimo’s *Vita Abbonis*, in which Aimo discusses Abbo’s poem, followed by the poem itself, which in some versions of the *Vita* is inserted into Aimo’s text. This extract is prefaced by a line turning this passage into a demonstration of the great learning of Fleury’s scholars.⁹

In their 2004 edition, Robert-Henri Bautier and Gillette Labory used Dijon 1118 as the basis for their ‘best text’ edition, on account of its early date, close connection to Fleury itself and supposed lack of corrupted readings.¹⁰ Generally,

⁵ H. McCusker, ‘Books and Manuscripts formerly in the Possession of John Bale’, *The Library*, 4th ser., 26 (1936), 144–65, at 153.

⁶ R.-H. Bautier and G. Labory, ‘Vie d’Abbon, Abbé de Fleury’, *L’abbaye de Fleury en l’an Mil*, ed. R.-H. Bautier, G. Labory, A. Davril and L. Donnat (Paris, 2004), pp. 11–143, at 18–28.

⁷ A. Poncelet, *Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum Latinorum Bibliothecae Vaticanae* (Brussels, 1910), p. 408.

⁸ For editions and discussions of *Otto valens*, see K. Strecker, *Die lateinischen Dichter des deutschen Mittelalters*, MGH Poetae 5, 1 (Leipzig, 1937), 469–71; S. Gwara, ‘Three Acrostic Poems by Abbo of Fleury’, *Jnl of Med. Latin* 2 (1992), 203–35.

⁹ Vatican Reg. lat. 1864, 73r, ‘Constat in floriacensi cenobio liberalium artium studium semper flourisse et cum pluribus perspicuum sit documentis uno maxime liquet exemplo quod abbo ipsius monasterii abba inter cetera que luculenti promulgauit facundia.’ (It is well known that the study of the liberal arts has always flourished at the monastery of Fleury and although this is clear in many texts, it is especially clear in one example which, among the other things which he wrote with brilliant eloquence, Abbo, abbot of that monastery, published.)

¹⁰ Bautier and Labory, ‘Vie d’Abbon’, pp. 28–31. This work replaces a series of unsatisfactory and interrelated early modern editions. *Recueil des Historiens de la France*, X (Paris, 1760), 328–40 reproduces extracts from André Duchesne, *Historiae Francorum scriptores*, IV (Paris, 1641), 125–35 who in turn reproduces Jean Du Bois, *Floriacensis vetus Bibliotheca* (Lyon, 1605), pp. 299–348. Du Bois took his text from Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 12606, though – as is common for Du Bois – often he struggled with and ‘emended’ his exemplar. Jean Mabillon, *Acta sanctorum ordinis sancti Benedicti*, VI,

the *Vita* exhibits a low degree of textual variation and the majority of Bautier and Labory's variant readings are orthographical or otherwise textually insignificant. Nonetheless, the Oxford witness is the most divergent of the witnesses and contains idiosyncrasies beyond minor textual errors. In chapter 13 of the *Vita*, the Oxford witness inserts the whole text of Abbo's poem *Otto valens*, a variant shared only with Paris 12606 and the Vatican extract; in chapter 20 it alone inserts the text of Abbo's epitaph, which otherwise only survives as a preface to the *Vita* in Dijon 1118, fol. 91; and, as discussed further below, it contains unique interpolations made at Ramsey.¹¹

Moreover, textual variants found in Oxford Lat. Misc. c. 75 enable us to establish its relationship to the other witnesses, to propose that the Oxford, Paris and Vatican witnesses reveal a potentially authorial revision of the *Vita*, and to construct a stemma. In chapter 13 of the *Vita*, the Vatican extract and Oxford and Paris manuscripts share a series of significant variants which reveal that they originate from a shared exemplar. Most notably, these three witnesses insert Abbo's acrostic poem *Otto valens* in its entirety into Aimo's text. However, unlike Paris 12606 and Vatican 1864, the Oxford manuscript preserves the poem's acrostic layout and thus confirms Scott Gwara's reconstruction of it, for which he also was unaware of the Oxford witness, and his supposition that Paris 12606's exemplar arranged the poem as an acrostic rather than as lines of verse.¹²

This insertion of the poem probably represents an authorial revision to the text.¹³ In the version preserved in Dijon 1118 and Montpellier 68, Aimo describes Abbo's poem, but states that he had not personally seen it ('hanc epistolam ab his qui eam viderunt in hunc modum compositam fuisse didicimus'; we have learnt that this letter was composed in this manner from those who have seen it). Although Aimo includes extracts from several of Abbo's letters in his *Vita*, gathering this material may have proved relatively challenging, since Abbo, unlike his contemporary Gerbert of Aurillac, appears not to have collected and curated his letters.¹⁴ However, in the Oxford, Paris and Vatican manuscripts,

pt 1 (Paris, 1701), 30–58, edited the *Vita Abbonis* 'ex libris editis & codice ms. Floriacensi' (p. 30); Mabillon drew on Du Bois's edition but it is unclear to Strecker and Gwara (and likewise me) with which other printed books he supplemented it (Strecker, *Die lateinischen Dichter*, p. 469; Gwara, 'Three Acrostic Poems', pp. 207–8). It appears likely, however, that the 'codex Floriacensis' is (again) Paris 12606, since in the seventeenth century this manuscript was acquired by Anselme Le Michel for the Maurists's library at Mabillon's monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés (É. Pellegrin, 'Membra disiecta floriacensia (II)', *Miscellanea codicologica F. Masai dicata* (Ghent, 1979), pp. 83–101, at 101). Mabillon's edition is reprinted by Jacques-Paul Migne, PL 139, cols. 387–414.

¹¹ Oxford, Lat. misc. c. 75, 154v and 158r. For Abbo's epitaph, see Bautier and Labory, 'Vie d'Abbon', pp. 142–3.

¹² Gwara, 'Three Acrostic Poems', pp. 207–9.

¹³ For other examples of Aimo's later revisions to his own texts, see A. Vidier, *L'historiographie à Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire et les miracles de saint Benoît* (Paris, 1965), pp. 73–5, 185–91.

¹⁴ L. Jégou and G. Labory, *Abbon de Fleury: Correspondance, Apologétique. Œuvres canoniques* (Paris, 2023), pp. 19–29; H. P. Lattin, *The Letters of Gerbert: with his Papal Privileges as Sylvester II* (New York, 1961), pp. 20–24. Although London, British Library, Add. MS 10972 (s. xith, Fleury) contains a selection of Abbo's letters, this collection made during or shortly after the abbacy of Gauzlin (1004–30) is clearly only a small part of Abbo's correspondence and many of the letters which Aimo quotes do not survive elsewhere.

Aimo's apology has been replaced with a line stating 'the text of that letter is likewise included in due course' (*cuius series epistole huiusmodi continetur ordine*) and the poem is now included. At the same time, smaller shared changes, such as the emendation of imperfect subjunctives to present subjunctives, have been made which corroborate that the Oxford, Paris and Vatican manuscripts descend from the same exemplar.¹⁵ Since the compilers of Paris 12606, Fleury's twelfth-century legendary, drew upon this version of the *Vita Abbonis*, presumably this exemplar was an authoritative manuscript housed at Fleury.¹⁶ The supposition must be that on later finding Abbo's poem, Aimo revised his *Vita*.

Based therefore on these changes to chapter 13 and the presence of Ramsey-specific interpolations discussed below, the following stemma for the *Vita Abbonis* is proposed (Fig. 1):

Yet although the Vatican extract and the Oxford and Paris manuscripts share a common exemplar, the text of the *Vita Abbonis* underwent revisions between this lost Fleury manuscript and the version which was copied at twelfth-century Ramsey. At some point between its composition (datable to between 1005 and 1022) and the second half of the twelfth century, someone further revised the *Vita* with a Ramsey audience in mind. Oxford Lat. Misc. c. 75 is not just an English witness because it was copied in England; the text of the *Vita* has been 'anglicized' as well. Some of these changes are minor. Wording which assumes the reader is at Fleury has been modified ('*in hoc sacratissimo Floriacensi loco*' (in this most sacred place of Fleury) to '*in sacratissimo Floriacensi loco*' (in the most sacred place of Fleury), for example, and the name of Æthelwine, Ealdorman of East Anglia and founder of Ramsey, is written 'Æthelwinus', rather than the French phonetic version, 'Hehelguinum', used

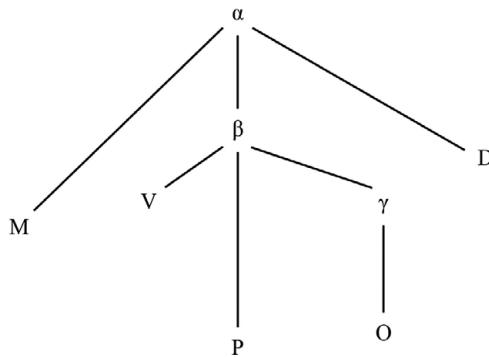


Figure 1: The Textual Transmission of Aimo's *Vita Abbonis*.

α = textual archetype; β = (authorial?) recension with *Otto valens* inserted; γ = Ramsey insertions; D = Dijon I 118; M = Montpellier 68; P = Paris 12606; O = Oxford Lat. Misc. c. 75 and V = Vatican 1864

¹⁵ For a full description, see the appendix below. Due to omissions found only in Paris 12606 (e.g. Bautier and Labory, 'Vie d'Abbon', p. 58, nn. q-s) and additions found only in Oxford, Lat. misc. c. 75, it is possible to exclude one manuscript's descent from the other.

¹⁶ On Fleury's dismembered twelfth-century legendary, see É. Pellegrin, 'Nouveaux fragments du lectionnaire hagiographique de Fleury: Paris, Bibl. nat. lat. 12606', *Scriptorium* 39 (1985), 269-74 and Pellegrin, 'Membra disiecta floriacensia (II)', pp. 99-102.

by Aimo.¹⁷ Similarly, whereas Aimo simply states that Abbo put on weight while living in foreign lands, the reviser makes explicit the implication that this was in England by inserting ‘which land is called England’ into Aimo’s text.¹⁸

More significantly, the English reviser has also inserted textual additions relevant to Ramsey into Aimo’s text. In chapter 5 Aimo discusses Abbo’s time at Ramsey and states that Abbo ‘instructed some of the monks in the knowledge of letters’.¹⁹ The Oxford manuscript follows this with the claim that ‘among those monks, there was one by the name Oswald, a man most learned and kind in all things’.²⁰ This cannot refer to St Oswald, bishop of Worcester and first abbot of Ramsey, both for chronological reasons and since he is already introduced earlier in the chapter. Rather, it likely refers to Oswald ‘the Younger’, monk and scholar of Ramsey and nephew of Bishop Oswald.²¹ Ramsey’s mid-twelfth-century *Liber benefactorum* records that Oswald was an *ephebus adolescens* (youthful young man) during the abbacy of Eadnoth ‘the Younger’ (992–1006), which would accord with him receiving his preliminary education from Abbo during his 985–987 residence at Ramsey.²² Given Oswald the Younger’s reputation at eleventh- and twelfth-century Ramsey as a scholar of great learning, it is interesting not only that he was taught by Abbo but that a Ramsey monk felt this worthy of record.²³

Equally interesting for Abbo’s time as Ramsey’s schoolmaster is an insertion made later in the work concerning Abbo’s lost Gospel commentary. Following the description in chapter 13 of Abbo’s literary compositions, the Ramsey reviser appends the following lines:

Sciendum est ergo quod ipse predictus uir de euuangeliiis composuit insignem librum continentem pleniter exammusim categorias spirituales. Quem qui legerit noscere quiverit quam arduam uitam duxit. Hunc namque ut relatu multorum didicimus dictauit in Ramesyensi cenobio. Qui liber nuncupatur ABBO ut ipse.²⁴

¹⁷ Oxford, Lat. misc. c. 75, 149rb, 150rb and 150va. Interestingly, the ‘in hoc sacro floriacensi cenobio’ in Aimo’s prefatory letter is left unamended (148va).

¹⁸ Oxford, Lat. Misc. c. 75, 153vb, ‘quae dicitur anglia terra’; Aimo, *Vita S. Abbonis*, ch. 11 (ed. Bautier and Labory, ‘Vie d’Abbon’, p. 90).

¹⁹ Aimo, *Vita S. Abbonis*, ch. 5 (ed. Bautier and Labory, p. 54), ‘aliquos monachorum scientia imbuat litterarum’.

²⁰ Oxford, Lat. Misc. c. 75, 150va, ‘Inter quos erat unus nomine Oswaldus, uir per omnia doctissimus atque benignissimus.’

²¹ M. Lapidge, ‘Oswald the Younger’, *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. M. Lapidge, J. Blair, S. Keynes and D. Scragg, 2nd edn (Chichester, 2014), p. 356.

²² *Historia ramesiensis sive liber benefactorum ecclesiae ramesiensis*, ch. 64, in *Chronicon abbatiae ramesiensis*, ed. W. D. Macray (London, 1886), p. 112.

²³ *Historia ramesiensis sive liber benefactorum ecclesiae ramesiensis*, ch. 95 (ed. Macray, pp. 159–61); M. Lapidge, ‘The Hermeneutic Style in Tenth-Century Anglo-Latin Literature’, *ASE* 4 (1975), 67–111, at 106–7; P. Dronke, M. Lapidge and P. Stotz, ‘Die unveröffentlichten Gedichte der Cambriger Liederhandschrift (CUL Gg.5.35)’, *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 17 (1982), 54–95, at 66–8.

²⁴ Oxford, Lat. Misc. c. 75, 155ra. ‘Therefore, it should be known that this aforementioned man [Abbo] composed a famous book concerning the Gospels, which perfectly and fully contains the spiritual categories. He who reads it is able to know how difficult a life he led. Indeed, he wrote this book in the monastery of Ramsey, as we have learnt from many people’s account. That book is called “Abbo”, just as he was.’

This Gospel commentary by Abbo is also attested in a mid-fourteenth-century library catalogue from Ramsey, which mentions the ‘Liber Abbonis super quaedam euangelia’ (Abbo’s book upon some of the Gospels), and Michael Lapidge has speculated that the verses by Abbo which Byrhtferth tells us were inscribed in the front of Ramsey’s Bible pandect originally came from this work.²⁵ Unfortunately, this work by Abbo is now lost. There is no evidence that it was known at Fleury and, despite an otherwise lengthy discussion of Abbo’s compositions, Aimo appears unaware of its existence. Since the Oxford manuscript claims that this work was written while Abbo was at Ramsey, Fleury’s ignorance of Abbo’s commentary may be due to a circulation limited to Ramsey alone.

Biblical exegesis was an intellectual endeavour outside of Abbo’s usual areas of scholarly activity, namely *computus* and canon law.²⁶ Just as he wrote his only hagiographical composition, the *Passio sancti Eadmundi*, at the request of an English audience, so too did Abbo’s time at Ramsey compel him to embark upon the novel exercise of Biblical commentary.²⁷ Ramsey may have been a new foundation without an established academic pedigree, but his time as its schoolmaster compelled Abbo to broaden his intellectual portfolio. The Oxford witness’s claim that from his commentary one might know how hard a life Abbo had lived is peculiar, as Biblical commentary is rarely a format conducive to autobiographical reflection. However, since Abbo’s *Quaestiones grammaticales* – also written for a Ramsey audience – contains remarks on his unhappiness in England, it is possible that his Gospel commentary did similarly, especially if it were a relatively informal work compiled from his teaching notes.²⁸ In the years following his time at Ramsey, this work appears to have become a fundamental component of Abbo’s intellectual legacy there, as attested both by the Ramsey reviser’s interpolation of the *Vita Abbonis* and that the Gospel commentary had its own name, ‘Abbo’. Despite access at Ramsey to Gospel commentaries by Augustine and Jerome, Abbo’s work apparently remained influential into at least the eleventh century.²⁹

Although it is not possible to definitively identify when Aimo’s *Vita Abbonis* reached Ramsey, contextual evidence suggests this occurred relatively shortly

²⁵ *English Benedictine Libraries: the Shorter Catalogues*, ed. R. Sharpe, J. P. Carley, R. M. Thomson and A. G. Watson, *Corpus of Brit. Med. Lib. Catalogues* 4 (London, 1996), 349 and 370; Byrhtferth of Ramsey, *Vita S. Oswaldi*, v. 10, in *Byrhtferth of Ramsey: the Lives of St Oswald and St Egwine*, ed. and trans. M. Lapidge (Oxford, 2009), p. 172; Lapidge, *Byrhtferth of Ramsey*, p. 173, n. 105.

²⁶ For the Abbonian corpus, see A. Van de Vijver, ‘Les œuvres inédites d’Abbon de Fleury’, *Revue Bénédictine* 47 (1935), 125–69; M. Mostert, *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury* (Hilversum, 1987), pp. 40–64.

²⁷ Abbo of Fleury, *Vita S. Eadmundi*, Prologue, in *Three Lives of English Saints*, ed. M. Winterbottom (Toronto, 1972), pp. 67–8.

²⁸ Abbo of Fleury, *Quaestiones grammaticales*, ch. 2–3 and 42, in *Abbon de Fleury. Questions grammaticales*, ed. A. Guerreau-Jalabert (Paris, 1982), pp. 209–11 and 263. Cf. Theodric of Fleury/Amorbach’s commentary on the Catholic epistles from the 1010s, which contains lengthy personal digressions. T. Orth-Müller, ‘Si ad plenum apostolica verba nequaquam valeam explanare: Theodericus von Fleury (Theoderich von Amorbach) und sein Kommentar zu den katholischen Briefen’, *Medialatinitas. Ausgewählte Beiträge zum 8. internationalen Mittellateinerkongress*, ed. C. Ratkowsch (Vienna, 2021), pp. 75–90.

²⁹ M. Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford, 2016), p. 125.

after its composition. Abbo's time in England localised already existing connections between English ecclesiasts and Fleury into an inter-communal Ramsey–Fleury relationship which would survive both Oswald's death in 992 and Abbo's in 1004.³⁰ The circulation of individuals, such as Oswald the Younger, and the gift of manuscripts, such as the 'Ramsey Benedictional' (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MS lat. 987), attest to the continued vibrancy of intellectual exchange between the two communities during the early eleventh century.³¹ The Fleury monks also remained interested in the veneration of saints at Ramsey: the feasts of Oswald of Worcester's death and of his translation in 1002 are recorded in the martyrology contained in Fleury's chapterbook, while the feast of Eadnoth 'the Younger', bishop of Dorchester and former abbot of Ramsey (d. 1016), is entered in the margin by a later hand.³² The transmission of Aimo's *Vita* probably forms another piece of this continued connection. From the dedicatory epistle to the *Vita*, we know that Aimo sent a copy to Hervé, treasurer of the canons of St Martin at Tours and former student of Abbo; did the Life reach Ramsey as a gift to Byrhtferth and Oswald, Abbo's former students there?

The Ramsey transmission of the *Vita Abbonis* also illuminates how the cult of Abbo's sanctity developed in the years following his death. Although the historians Rodulfus Glaber (c. 980–c. 1046) and Ademar of Chabannes (c. 989–1034) both described Abbo's death as a martyrdom and claimed that he worked posthumous miracles, Abbo was never widely venerated as a saint.³³ A combination of factors hindered the spread of his cult: the contentious nature of the claim that his death at La Réole was a martyrdom for monasticism; an apparent dearth, according to Aimo, of miracles; an aversion in West Francia to the cults of 'modern' saints; and that his feast fell on the same day as that of the already-popular St Brice.³⁴ This lack of popularity is seen both in liturgical calendars and the limited dissemination of Aimo's *Vita*. Anselme Davril's survey of catalogues of French liturgical manuscripts reveals that celebration of Abbo's feast was limited to Fleury itself, though a small group of later martyrologies associated with Winchester mention Abbo's feast.³⁵ Similarly, Abbo's absence in the pre-1100 English calendars

³⁰ M. Mostert, 'Relations between Fleury and England', *England and the Continent in the Tenth Century: Studies in Honour of Wilhelm Levison (1876–1947)*, ed. D. Rollason, C. Leyser and H. Williams, Stud. in the Early Mid. Ages 37 (Turnhout, 2011), 185–210; M. Mostert, 'Le séjour d'Abbon de Fleury à Ramsey', *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 144 (1986), 199–208.

³¹ Lapidge, 'Oswald the Younger'; R.-H. Bautier and G. Labory, *Andréde Fleury. Vie de Gauzlin, Abbé de Fleury* (Paris, 1969), p. 95, n. 4.

³² Orléans, Médiathèque MS 322 (273), pp. 40, 67 and 214. For a detailed palaeographical analysis, see *Catalogue des manuscrits médiévaux de la bibliothèque municipale d'Orléans*, ed. É. Pellegrin and J.-P. Bouhot (Aubervilliers, 2010), pp. 454–61.

³³ Rodulfus Glaber, *Historiarum libri quinque* III, 11, in *Rodulfus Glaber: the Five Books of Histories and the Life of St William*, ed. J. France (Oxford, 1989), p. 112; Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon* III, 39, in *Ademari Cabannensis Chronicon*, ed. P. Bourgain, R. Landes and G. Pons, CCCM 129 (Turnhout, 1999), 159–60. Given Glaber's connections to Saint-Bénigne de Dijon and the similarity of his account to Aimo's, it is possible he had access to the exemplar of Montpellier 68.

³⁴ Aimo, *Vita S. Abbonis*, Prologue (ed. Bautier and Labory), pp. 38–40; T. Head, *Hagiography and the Cult of the Saints: the Diocese of Orléans, 800–1200* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 251–5.

³⁵ A. Davril, 'Le Culte de Saint-Abbon au Moyen âge', *De Fleury-sur-Loire à Saint-Pierre de La Réole. Mille ans d'histoire monastique (977–1977)*, ed. C. Higounet (Bordeaux, 1980), pp. 142–58, at 147.

examined by Rebecca Rushforth further demonstrates that, despite Abbo's English connections, his veneration was not widespread there either.³⁶ The Oxford manuscript of the *Vita Abbonis* thus reveals that, even if Abbo received minimal attention in Ramsey's house history or liturgical commemoration, the monks remained interested in Abbo's life into the twelfth century.³⁷

In conclusion, the witness to Aimo's *Vita et miracula s. Abbonis* contained in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Lat. Misc. c. 75 illuminates both the textual transmission of Aimo's text itself and the intellectual world of eleventh-century Ramsey more widely. Against a backdrop of continued early-eleventh-century interaction between the Fleury and Ramsey monastic communities, the Oxford witness demonstrates that the *Vita* found English readers interested in Abbo's legacy and desirous to make the text their own through the interpolation of passages concerning Abbo's time at Ramsey. And in revealing that readers at eleventh-century Ramsey are likely to have had access to the *Vita Abbonis*, it raises further questions about possible Continental models which eleventh-century English authors of hagiography about recently-deceased ecclesiasts could draw upon. To those considering the nascent cults of murdered bishops, such as Eadnoth the Younger and Ælfheah of Canterbury, Aimo's treatment of Abbo's violent death could have provided an interesting comparison.³⁸

Appendix

Textual Variants in the *Vita et Miracula sancti Abbonis* found in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Lat. Misc. c. 75

The text of the *Vita Abbonis* as found in Oxford Lat. Misc. c. 75 does not vary greatly from that printed by Bautier and Labory. However, since Bautier and Labory did not know of the Oxford witness, a supplement to their edition which marks where the two diverge will be useful for scholars interested in Ramsey and the textual transmission of Aimo's *Vita*. Here the text of the Oxford witness is collated with the edition's main text in order to provide a list of variants. Only textually significant variants are included and as a result this list does not mark common orthographic variants (e.g., *ae/e*, *t/th*, *c/t*) nor the variety of onomastic forms which generally accrue as a text is copied (e.g. on 152ra, *Dionisii* for *Dyonisii*, *Ernulfo* for *Arnulfo*). The Oxford manuscript has received the attention of a correcting

³⁶ R. Rushforth, *Saints in English calendars before A.D. 1100* (Woodbridge, 2008). The only exception, an entry in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MS lat. 7299, is an addition to a tenth-century Ramsey calendar made at eleventh-century Fleury.

³⁷ *Historia ramesiensis sive liber benefactorum ecclesiae ramesiensis*, ch. 22 (ed. Macray, pp. 42–3). Abbo's absence from the Ramsey Metrical Calendar is inconclusive since Lapidge dates the Calendar to 992 × 1005. M. Lapidge, 'A Tenth-Century Metrical Calendar from Ramsey', *Revue bénédictine* 94 (1984), 326–69 at pp. 351–2. 13 November is designated St Brice's feast, rather than Abbo's, in London, British Library Cotton Galba E. x, 7r (s. xiii, copied at Ramsey) and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 468, 6r (c. 1250, copied at Ramsey). The early-thirteenth-century Ramsey Legendary Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodl. 285 does not contain the *Vita Abbonis*.

³⁸ I would like to thank Emily Clarke, Christoph Haack and *Early Medieval England and its Neighbours*'s anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments on versions of this article, Eleanor Smith for manuscript advice, Laura Phillips for help with formatting the stemma and the librarians at the Bodleian for their valuable assistance. Any mistakes and oversights remain my own.

hand; since these corrections are limited to remedying simple copying errors, they are taken as authoritative.

The text of the Oxford manuscript is primarily collated with the text of the *Vita et miracula Abbonis* as printed by Bautier and Labory in their 2004 edition and this edition provides the majority of the lemmata. At two points, however, the Oxford manuscript copies texts – namely *Otto valens* and Abbo's epitaph – which were excluded from Bautier and Labory's edition, but which survive in other manuscripts. For these the text of the Oxford manuscript has been collated against Gwara's edition of *Otto valens* and Bautier and Labory's edition of Abbo's epitaph.³⁹

In order to facilitate comparison, when readings in the Oxford witness which differ from the printed editions are shared with other manuscripts, this is indicated through an expanded version of the sigla proposed by Bautier and Labory (Dijon 1118 = D, Montpellier 68 = M, Paris 12606 = P, Vatican 1864 = V). The insights which these shared readings offer into the manuscripts' textual relationships are discussed more fully above, but it is worth briefly noting that some caution is required when approaching them. In creating their edition, Bautier and Labory followed a 'best text' approach and primarily replicated the *Vita Abbonis* as it is found in Dijon 1118. In doing so, they sometimes prioritized Dijon 1118's errors over what was likely Aimo's original text. For example, in chapter 6 they print *lectabatur*; all other witnesses have *letabatur*, which makes far more sense and which they follow in their translation.⁴⁰ As a result, a shared set of readings between Oxford Lat. Misc. c. 75 and MP is not necessarily diagnostic of these witnesses sharing any closer exemplar than the text's archetype.

Key to Textual Variants

Chapter in 2004 <i>Vita Abbonis</i> Edition (Noted When Other Editions Used)				
Edition		Reading in Printed Edition] Oxford Variant <i>Other Witnesses with Same Reading</i>	Oxford MS	
Page	Line		Folio	Line

Textual Variants

Preface/Dedicatory Epistle				
p. 34	1–3	INCIPIT PREFATIO SUPERIUS NOMINATI AYMOINI, SAPIENTISSIMI VIRI, IN VITA ET PASSIONE SANCTI ABBONIS, MARTYRIS ET ABBATIS] Incipit epistula haymonis floriacensis monachi ad herueum sancti martyni thesaurarum de uita et martyrio sancti abbonis abbatis floriaci cenobii ⁴¹ P	148va	1–5
p. 36	15	EXPLICIT PROLOGUS] Explicit epistula MP	148vb	7

³⁹ Gwara, 'Three Acrostic Poems', p. 227; Bautier and Labory, 'Vie d'Abbon', p. 142.

⁴⁰ Bautier and Labory, 'Vie d'Abbon', pp. 58.

⁴¹ 'The preface of the above-mentioned Aimo, a most wise man, on the life and passion of St Abbo, martyr and abbot, begins'] 'The letter of Aimo, monk of Fleury, to Hervé, treasurer of St Martin [St Martin's Basilica, Tours] concerning the life and martyrdom of St Abbo, abbot of the monastery of Fleury, begins'.

Prologue				
p. 38	1	INCIPIT PROEMIUM] Incipit prefatio	148vb	8
	11	rusticano licet sermone] rusticano sermone licet		28–29
	11	Nec] Hec		30
p. 40	13	om.] Explicit praefatio <i>P</i>	149ra	13
Chapter 1				
p. 42	1–2	INCIPIT VITA VEL PASSIO SANCTI ABBONIS, ABBATIS ET MARTIRIS] Incipit vita ⁴²	149ra	13
p. 44	6	mandate] mandata	149rb	2
Chapter 2				
p. 44	11–12	in hoc sacratissimo Floriacensi loco] in sacratissimo Floriacensi loco ⁴³	149rb	12
	12	abba Vulfaldus vocabulo] abbas wlfaldus nomine		13
p. 46	15	Nec] hec	149va	6
Chapter 3				
p. 48	1	om.] Item	149va	17
	24	editas] ineditatas	149vb	16
Chapter 4				
p. 50	11	fuere] fuerunt	149vb	39
p. 52	3	Morinos] marinos <i>P</i>	150ra	21
	15	vero] uere	150rb	4
	16	reprobaretur] reprobare <i>MP</i>		4
	19	proficiendum] proficiscendum <i>MP</i>		11
	22	delfinos] <i>om. DP</i>		14
p. 54	2–3	ad orationem] ad orationum <i>MP</i>		19

⁴² ‘The life and passion of St Abbo, abbot and martyr begins’] ‘The life begins’.

⁴³ ‘in *this* most sacred place of Fleury’ (discussed above).

Chapter 5				
p. 54	9	Tandem post] Tandem uero post	150rb	29
	14	ex hoc sacro Floriacensis assumptus monasterio] ex sacro Floriacensis assumptus monasterio ⁴⁴		37–38
	16	om.] Inter quos erat unus nomine oswoldus uir per omnia doctissimus atque benignissimus ⁴⁵	150va	1
Chapter 6				
p. 56	8	maturet] mutaret	150va	25
p. 58	4	lectabatur] letabatur <i>MP</i>	150vb	8–9
	4	noster Benedictus] uester Benedictus ⁴⁶ <i>MD</i>		9
Chapter 7				
p. 58	20–21	proferretur] perferretur <i>P</i>	150vb	39
p. 60	12	intermitebat tempus quin] permittebat tempus quo non	151ra	21
Chapter 8				
p. 64	17	desideravit] desiderat <i>P</i>	151va	15
p. 66	1	saluum esse] saluum esset		27
	2–3	abscondi omnino misericordiam] abscondi misericordiam omnino		30–31
	16	si vere catholicos esse nescimus ⁴⁷ si nos catholicos esse scimus <i>DMP</i>	151vb	11

⁴⁴ ‘Received from *this* sacred monastery of Fleury’ (discussed above).

⁴⁵ ‘Among those monks, there was one by the name Oswald, a man most learned and kind in all things’ (discussed above).

⁴⁶ The question of the correct reading here is complicated by the survival of Abbo’s letter (here quoted by Aimo) in an independent copy with the reading ‘vester’, on which see ‘Vie d’Abbon’, pp. 58–59 and Mostert, ‘Le séjour d’Abbon’. Like all the witnesses to *Vita Abbonis* the Oxford Lat. Misc. c. 75 reads ‘Benedictus’ in full; in contrast the version of the letter contained in Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Reg. lat. 1586 simply reads ‘B’.

⁴⁷ This reading has been supplied by Bautier and Labory on the basis of manuscripts of Abbo’s *Apologeticus*, which Aimo quotes here (‘Vie d’Abbon’, p. 66, n. j).

Chapter 9				
p. 70	6	om.] Item	152ra	16
	6	In illis diebus sane] In illis sane diebus		17
	7	quamplurium] quamplurimorum <i>M</i>		19
p. 72	16	pertulisse] pertigisse	152rb	10
	20	infula] insula <i>D</i>		16

Chapter 10				
p. 76	1	om.] Item	152rb	48
	6	litteris] om.	152va	5
p. 78	15	redemit suo] redemit eam suo		40
	17	hujuscemodi] huiusmodi		41
	24	Quod] si quidem	152vb	1
	27	suo] sue		8
p. 80	13	vite] uie <i>MP</i>		33

Chapter 11				
p. 88	15	optime] optimis	153va	23
p. 90	5	regionibus] regionibus quae dicitur anglia terra ⁴⁸	153vb	2
	7	ei] eius		6
	8	omnem] omne <i>MP</i>		9
p. 92	13	habire] ire	154ra	7

⁴⁸ 'In regions, which land is called England' (discussed above).

Chapter 12				
p. 92	16	Quem] Quod	154ra	14
	18	timiamate] thimiate ⁴⁹		17
p. 94	6	ex epistolis] exemplis		32
	13	Quo] Quod P		43
p. 96	9	sustinerere] sustinere MP	154rb	22
p. 98	1	vestris] uestri MP	154va	7

Otto valens (Collated with Gwara's Edition)

p. 247	6	pacis] facis V	154v	21
	10	scanditet occultis] scanditit occuitis ⁵⁰		25
	24	describere] describere		39
	32	amictu] amicte		47
	33	diro] uiro		48
	34	vivens] inueni		49

⁴⁹ Classically, *thymiana*, 'incense'.

⁵⁰ This appears to me simply to be garbled.

Chapter 13 (Collated with 2004 <i>Vita Abbonis</i> edition)					
p. 98	14	nullis] nulli <i>DPV</i>	154vb	10	
	18	desinebat] desinit <i>V</i>		52	
	18	incipiebatur] incipit <i>PV</i>		52	
	19	fiibat] fit <i>PV</i>	155ra	1	
	21	incederet] incedat <i>PV</i>		3	
	21	carmini] carminis <i>MPV</i>		4	
p. 100	1	contingebat] contingit <i>PV</i>		5	
	1	legeretur] legatur <i>PV</i>		6	
	2	faceret] faciat <i>PV</i>		7	
	3	legebantur] leguntur <i>PV</i>		8	
	4	sonarent] sonent <i>PV</i>		11	
	5	recitabantur] recitantur <i>PV</i>		12	
	5–6	hanc epistolam ab his qui eam viderunt in hunc modum compositam fuisse didicimus] Cuius series epistole huiusmodi continetur ordine. ⁵¹ <i>PV</i>		12–13	
	12	tegantur] teganm		21	
	16	nobis] <i>om.</i>		28	
	18	<i>om.</i>] Sciendum est ergo quod ipse predictus uir de euuangelis composuit insignem librum continentem pleniter exammusim categorias spirituales. Quem qui legerit noscere quiuerit quam arduam uitam duxit. Hunc namque ut relatu multorum didicimus dictauit in Ramesyensi cenobio. Qui liber nuncupatur <i>ABBO</i> ut ipse. ⁵²		31–37	
	Chapter 14				
	p. 102	11	Illic] Illi <i>P</i>	155rb	7
15		Audiens haec] Audiensque		12	
19		persancte] persancta		18	
19		dejerat] degerat <i>DM</i>		18	
p. 104	2	precipue] precipua		29	
	16	quamdiu] quam	155va	6	
	17	exemplum est] est exemplum		8	
	21	augmentoue] agmentoue		13	

⁵¹ 'We have learnt that this letter was composed in this manner from those who have seen it' 'the text of that letter is likewise included in due course' (discussed above).

⁵² Translated and discussed above.

Chapter 16				
p. 108	8	nostri loci] loci nostri	155vb	32
	10	is] his <i>M</i>		37
	19	tam] tunc	156ra	5
p. 110	12	se] se <i>MP</i>		31

Chapter 17				
p. 110	14	secundo iter] secundo die	156ra	34
	16	tum] tu		39
	18	colloquii] colloqui	156ra	1
p. 112	11	quinta aeque] quintaque		29
	16	Dominus nobis] nobis Dominus		38

Chapter 19				
p. 116	3	prefactum] prefatum <i>MP</i>	156vb	6
	4	lintres] lintrem <i>MP</i>		8
	5	introsus lutoso littore] ea introsus a lutoso littore <i>MP</i>		10
	13	bellici erant] bellaciant <i>DP</i>		24

Chapter 20				
p. 120	4	aliter ei] aliter quam ei	157ra	41
	4	inutilis] utile fuit <i>MP</i>		41–42
p. 122	6	ictu humi] ictum humi <i>P</i>	157rb	35
p. 126	2	mētatum] motatum	157vb	31
	7	claustrō] e claustrō <i>MP</i>		39
	27	om.] Huius iusti de quo locuti sumus epitaphii iste est textus. ⁵³	158ra	33

⁵³ 'This is the text of the epitaph of this just man, concerning whom we have spoken'.

Abbo's Epitaph (Collated with Bautier and Labory's 2004 Epitaph Edition)				
p. 142	3	legit] elegit	158ra	37
	Between 6 and 7	om.] Hunc populi reges monachorum celitus ordo ⁵⁴		41
Chapter 21 (Collated with 2004 <i>Vita Abbonis</i> edition)				
p. 128	1	a tumulatione] ad tumulationem	158rb	17
	5–6	retineret] retinere <i>M</i>		26
	18	decembris] decembri <i>P</i>	158va	8
p. 130	14	EXPLICIT VITA SANCTI ABBONIS, ABBATIS ET MARTIRIS] <i>om. MP</i>		39
Miracula				
p. 132	1	ITEM MIRACULA EJUSDEM] Incipiunt miracula sancti ABBONIS	158va	40
	18	om.] Item	158vb	25
p. 134	8	om.] Item	159ra	1
	15	om.] ALIVD		12
	17	Dominus] <i>om.</i>		16
p. 136	3	carnis] <i>om.</i>		38

⁵⁴ In full, 'Hunc populi reges monachorum celitus ordo | pontifices summi, clerus et ipse simul | offensum timuit', 'The kings of the people, the heavenly order of monks, the bishops and all the clergy itself feared to offend this man [i.e., Abbo]'.
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