

**248. London, British Library Cotton Vespasian D. xxi**

1. "Historia Brittonum"; 2. OE Prose Guthlac; 3. Sedulius

(Part 2 belongs with **395** Oxford,  
Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 509)

[(Part 2) Ker 344, Gneuss 657]

**HISTORY:** A compilation of three originally distinct manuscripts of diverse origins, combined by Sir Robert Cotton, probably no later than 1606. Rebound, February 1965.

**Part 1:** Early 12c, "Historia Brittonum," attributed to Nennius, Mommsen's "K". This was once part of London, BL Royal 15 A. xxii, from Rochester; it is item number 823 in the old Royal inventory (Public Record Office, Augmentation Office, Misc. Books 160 [E. 315/160]): "Solinus de mirabilibus mundi. Historia Troianorum. Pergesis de situ terrae. Prophecia Sybillae. Segardus de miseria hominis et historia Britonum." A medieval list of contents in Royal 15 A. xxii, f. 1v, shows roughly the same contents followed by the erased titles "Historia Britonum" and "De miraculis Britannie" (see Carley 1992: 64–65).

**Part 2:** Late 11c, the OE translation of "Vita S. Guthlaci". This was previously part of a manuscript that also contained the OE version of the Pentateuch (now Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 509 [399]). Before that, it was part of the Old Royal collection, in the pre-1542 Westminster inventory of which item 129 is listed as "Bookes written in tholde Saxon tonge two. thone of the Pentatuiuk and saints Lyves, thother of medicine": the latter is "Bald's Leechbook" (BL Royal 12 D. xxvii [298]), which shows "129" on f. 1r (Carley 1992: 63). Tite (1992: 136–37, n. 18) and Carley (1992: 64) have deduced that Cotton separated the original manuscript between 1603 and December 1606. The new combined manuscript, now Cotton Vespasian D. xxi, "Nennius and vita Sancti Guthlaci 8<sup>(o)</sup>" (plus Sedulius), was loaned out to Camden on 20 December 1606 (BL Harley 6018, f. 154r). The part containing the Pentateuch migrated into Archbishop Laud's possession and subsequently into the Bodleian in 1638. In 1621 it was on loan to William Lisle, but the migration is not certainly due to that event. In the 1621 Cotton catalogue (Harley 6018) the separated parts are numbers 81 (Laud) and 80 (Vespasian).

Laud and Vespasian each have their separate Cottonian tables of contents, which reflect the present states of the manuscripts. (See also "History" Section of 399.)

**Part 3:** Sedulius. Early 10c? NW France? History before 1606 unknown.

**CODICOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION:** A Cottonian compilation of three distinct and unrelated manuscripts, trimmed down to about the same page size and with similarly-sized writing areas. Page size 190/191 x 133/131 mm. 'Robertus Cotton Bruceus' at top of f. 1r and f. 18r, top (beginning of Guthlac). The Cottonian table of contents is on the second old flyleaf.

Five modern paper front flyleaves. A quire of six old parchment flyleaves scored on both sides for two columns of 31 lines, foliated [i], 1x, 1-4, blank except for Cottonian table of contents on sheet 2 (f. 1x [the recto]). Two blank parchment back flyleaves (2 half-sheets) of the same sort and prepared the same way as the parchment front flyleaves.

Text pages foliated 1-71 (Part 1, Nennius, 1-17; Part 2, Guthlac, 18-40; Part 3, Sedulius, 41-71). Ff. 1r-18r have been paginated 1-34; page numbers on rectos cancelled. "Page 1" has been appropriated as the first folio number. Another hand began the pagination with '35' on f. 18r but did not continue. This system was used in the latter part of Laud as well: on ff. 120-141 the pages are numbered 1-43 (versos only, 1-5) and cancelled on rectos.

**Part 1:** "Historia Brittonum" (ff. 1-17). Parchment uniform, limp and matte. HFHF. Scored on hair side, double bounding verticals. Ruled before folding and written for 30 lines (f. 1r has 29 lines of writing). Writing area 158 x 95 mm. Written in a 12c square Anglo-Caroline minuscule. Inked-in bounding lines, ff. 12r-15r. One scribe writing in brown to dark brown ink; red, green, and black initials.

**Part 2:** Guthlac (ff. 18-40). Parchment matches that in Laud Misc. 509, somewhat stiff, with a sheen on hair side. Scored on hair sides with double bounding verticals, ruled before folding, 26 lines (same as Laud). Writing area 152 x 95 mm. One scribe, the same elegant expert hand as in Laud. Blackish ink, initials in red and silver, silver titles. 13c/14c title 'incipit p(ro)log(us) alfrici monachi vita s(a)n(cti) guthlaci' (f. 18r). Running heads added in same late hand that added title. Cotton signature on f. 18r, top.

**Part 3:** Sedulius (ff. 41-71). Parchment is stiff, dark, and coated on hair sides with a residue of dried grease. Trimming of pages has cropped many top lines of text. FHFH. Scored on hair side before folding, pricked and ruled for 26 to 33 lines; the writing does not always follow the rulings and the ruling is

sometimes on a slant. Double bounding verticals in outer margins. Writing area approximately 180 x 105 mm. A practiced but informal continental Carolingian minuscule hand in dark brown ink which appears also responsible for the Latin glossing and crude initials, including one in Franco-Saxon style. There is no apparent effort to maintain a hierarchy of capitals to indicate larger and smaller divisions. Decoration and initials have frequently been retraced in black by another, cruder hand. Extensive Latin glosses and corrections in a finer continental hand. Intervention by a much later hand (f. 57v, bottom). Decorative capitals and verse-line initials are drawn in the same ink as the text with some (now darkened) touches in metallic greens and reds. Reagent damage on ff. 57r and 71r (latter page almost entirely illegible, but in a different hand from the rest).

**COLLATION:** The book has been reset in its 19c binding since the photographs were taken, so that now the quires are attached to projecting pasteboard guards. Collation of ff. 1–71: **I-II**<sup>8</sup> (ff. 1–16); **III**<sup>1+4</sup> 1 an added half-sheet from Part 1, sheets 2–5 a quire in 4 from Part 2 (see below) (ff. 17–21); **IV**<sup>2</sup> two half-sheets (ff. 22–23); **V**<sup>8</sup> (ff. 24–31); **VI**<sup>8+1</sup> 9 added after f. 39 (ff. 32–40); [Part 3] **VII-VIII**<sup>8</sup> (ff. 41–56); **IX**<sup>10</sup> (ff. 57–66); **X**<sup>6</sup> 1 sheet gone (6?) (ff. 67–71). Quires VII–X are arranged FHFH with rulings on hair sides but often reruled on both. The earlier quires are HFHF, ruled on hair.

[**Note:** Quires III and IV are artificial gatherings made after the Pentateuch and Guthlac were separated. Sheets 2–5 of III were originally part of a quire in eight consisting now of sheets 9 and 10 of XVII in Laud 509 and III (less sheet 1) in Vespasian plus the two half-sheets of IV. The center sheet of Vespasian III and of the original quire is Vespasian ff. 19–20 (see Ker 1937–38: 133).]

### CONTENTS:

1. ff. 1r–17v “Historia Brittonum” and “De mirabilibus Britanniae, Monae, et Hiberniae” in the “Harleian” recension (see Mommsen 1898: 135): ‘BRITTannia insula a quoda(m) bruto consu|le romano dicta. Hęc consurgit ab affri|co boreali ad occidente(m) uersus’; ends f. 17v/20: ‘& in capite anni lapis repperitur . & | uocatur luch echach.’ (ed. Mommsen 1898: 147–219; ed. and trans. Morris 1980).
2. ff. 18r–40v/2 Felix, “Life of St. Guthlac,” OE prose version: ‘VRVM WEALDENDE RIHT GELYFENDV(M) AWORVLD | aworuld min-um þam leofestan hlaforde ofer | calle oðre men eorðlice kyningas alfwold’ (f. 18r, top, a title and false attribution has been added by a later

- hand: 'incipit p(ro)log(us) alfrici monachi | vita s(a)n(cti) Guthlaci'; f. 40v/3–5 alphabet in a different, later hand and prayer in another: 'Pat(er) nost(er) qui es in cel(is) sanctificet(ur) nomen tuu(m) adueniat | regnu(m) tuum. fiat.' (ed. Gonser 1909).
3. ff. 41r–68v/26 Sedulius, "Carmen Paschale": **incipit Praef(atio) Sedulii** 'Paschale quicu(m)q(ue) dapes c(on)uiua requiris' (ed. Huemer 1885: 14–146) [omits "Epistle to Macedonius" and capitula].
  4. ff. 68v/27–70v/12 Sedulius, Hymn I: 'Cantemus socii d(omi)no cantemus honore(m)' (ed. Huemer 1885: 153–62).
  5. ff. 70v/13–71r Sedulius, Hymn II: 'A solis ortus cardine' (ed. Huemer 1885: 163–68).
  6. f. 71v Excerpt from Prudentius, "Psychomachia" (lines 826–54): '[Aurea] planitie(m) spat[us] [percurr]it [har]undo. . . I[ng]ens [chrys]olitus natiuo inte(r)litus auro' (ed. Bergman 1926: 207–8) (on back flyleaf [72] 1884 foliation note; on [73] 'cons: fol: (72) 71.').

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