

127. Ely, Cathedral, Dean and Chapter 1/1

Held at Cambridge University Library

“Liber Eliensis”

[Ker 113; Gneuss --]

HISTORY: An early 13c manuscript containing “*Historia Eliensis Insulae*,” a charter-chronicle of the abbey and cathedral of Ely from its beginnings until the early 13c. This manuscript is Blake’s “F”. Book 1 has the form of a “Life of St. Etheldreda” fleshed out with historical materials; Books 1 and 2 draw on Bede, “Florence” (John) of Worcester, William of Poitiers, and other historical sources, identified and unidentified; Book 2, chs. 1-49, is based on “*Libellus quorundam insignium operum beati Æthelwoldi*,” preserved also in BL Cotton Vespasian A.xix [252], ff. 2r-27v, and Cambridge, Trinity College O.2.41, pp. 1-[64v], a work, according to Blake (1962: xxxiv, li-liii; Prologue and Chs. 1-3 from O.2.41, pp. 395-99), originally written in OE; the later part of Book 2 is based on a “*Gesta Herwardi*”; Book 3 is composed almost entirely from Ely sources, with materials in Books 2 and 3 depending heavily on material drawn from Ely cartularies (cf. Blake 1962: xxxix-xlii). A slightly earlier copy, differing in details, exists in Cambridge, Trinity College O.2.1 [87] (late 12c, Blake’s “E”), and still another, in rather more altered form, in Oxford, Bodleian Library Laud Misc. 647 (14c, Blake’s “O”). Numerous other manuscripts preserve parts of “*Liber Eliensis*” (see Blake 1962: xxv-xxvi). Blake (xlv-xlix) attributes the composition of the whole to a single monk of Ely and dates the composition of Book 1 to after 1131, of Book 2 to after 1154, and of Book 3 to 1169 x 1174.

A late 13c/early 14c hand, perhaps that of TCC O.2.1, has made important additions on ff. 47r and 92v; 13c notes on ff. 59v and 61v (Blake 1962: xxiv). Other annotations in medieval and early modern hands, including comparisons and corrections, on e.g., ff. 2v, 40v, 134r; on f. 2r in the top margin there is the library mark: ‘: 6 : 6O’ (or ‘G’).

Leather binding of 18c; a note records that this binding was repaired in 1930. The manuscript is now housed at Cambridge University Library.

CODICOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION: [i] + 189 + [ii] (f. 1 is medieval paper flyleaf, final flyleaves modern paper). There is an ink foliation in late medieval arabic numerals and a modern pencil foliation, 1–188, with frequent errors, especially in ‘20–30’, where it occasionally lapses into agreement with the medieval foliation, and numbers 78 and 84 duplicated. The medieval foliation is more accurate (including the omission of the paper flyleaf), but subsequent references are to the pencil foliation, which is used by Blake in his edition (1962).

Page size 265–275 x 185–195 mm. Writing area 187 x 128 mm., two columns, 30 lines per page, 14 mm. between columns. F. 1r is ruled for 32 long lines. On f. 98v the b-column consists of 32 lines; an extra line is written below the normal writing area, and lines 21b–23b are written over an erasure in an area originally ruled for two lines. Prickings visible on the outer edges of the sheets, and sometimes in the gutter. Arrangement HFHF.

Ink is brown with headings in red, initials in red and green, and occasionally blue. Blake distinguishes four main hands: A, ff. 2–21r; B, ff. 21v–108v; C, ff. 109r–111v; D, f. 112r to the end; “there are important additions in a hand of the later thirteenth or fourteenth century, perhaps that of [Oxford, Bodleian, Laud. Misc. 647]” (Blake 1962: xxiv). Initials: f. 1r/1a Initial ‘C’ has within it a sketch of a monk kneeling before a seated figure, hooded and apparently bearded, holding a crozier. There is no coloring in letter or illustration. There are quite elaborate green and red “I”s at f. 5v/26a (beginning of Bk I); f. 20v/22b (**De aduentu bea|te sexburge in hely**); f. 23v/21b.

Quire V, ff. 34–38, is misbound. Ff. 36–38 should be in the order 37, 38, 36. At the bottom margin of f. 38v, beneath the b-column, a hand contemporary with the text-hand has written ‘req(ui)re capit(u)la q(uae) h(ic) deficiu(n)t i(n) fol(io) iii^o p(re)cede(n)te’; this is copied, with abbreviations expanded, by a hand of 18c, which has also written at the top of f. 36r ‘transponuntur folia.’ Quire V consists of four bifolia and a singleton; the latter should have been bound at the end of the quire, but was erroneously placed in the middle, as the current f. 36. The folios are numbered as follows:

Medieval numbering:	35	—	36	38
Ink correction:	37	35		
Modern pencil numbering:	36	37	38	39

Blake suggests that the misplacement occurred in the rebinding in 1930 (1962: xxiv fn. 4), but it is clear that it was a feature of the MS in the Middle Ages, and may well have been a mistake in the original binding.

COLLATION: 1 flyleaf (f. 1, paper, smaller in size than most); **I–IVⁿ** (ff. 2–33); **V⁺¹** f. 36 a singleton placed at middle of quire rather than end (ff. 34–38); **VI–VIIⁿ** (ff. 39–54); **VIII–IX¹⁰** (ff. 55–74); **X–XIⁿ** the numbers 78 and 84 are duplicated in the pencil foliation (ff. 75–88); **XII–XIII¹⁰** (ff. 89–108); **XIV–XVIⁿ** (ff. 109–132); **XVII¹⁰** (ff. 133–142); **XVIIIⁿ** (ff. 143–150); **XIX–XXI¹⁰** (ff. 151–180); **XXIIⁿ** (ff. 181–188); two modern paper flyleaves.

[**Note:** Most quires have catchwords at bottom right verso of last folio of the quire; on f. 81v there are traces of a catchword which has mostly been cut away in the trimming of the MS, and presumably other catchwords have been so lost. On f. 98v, the catchword erroneously reproduces the last words of the folio, rather than looking forward. At bottom center verso of folios 116, 124, 142, 150, 160, 170, are written ‘.i.’, ‘.ii.’, ‘[iii]’ (mostly trimmed away), ‘.iiii.’, ‘.vi.’, ‘.vii.’ and ‘.viii.’, medieval quire signatures which begin with Book 3.]

CONTENTS:

English Contents:

- a. f. 72r/24b–27b Four lines of late OE/early ME verse: ‘Merie sungen ðe muneches.’ ends: ‘7 he | re we þes muneches sæng’ (cf. Robbins 1975: 1640, no. 1.I.8).

[**Note:** Uses the characters “þ,” “ð,” “wynn,” “æ” and the Insular (tironian) ampersand (which is also used in Latin charters); scribe writes ‘chut’ for “cnut” and ‘chites’ for “c(h)nites”.]

- b. f. 77r/14b–31b OE Writ of King Edward “announcing that he has appointed Wulfric to the office of abbot of Ely with full privileges” (1045 x 1066): **Stabilitas loci | a rege robōrata** (red) ‘Ædward cy|ninc gret ealle mine bisco|pas’ [initial “Æ” in red]; ends: ‘þæs ic him geunnon habbe | god eow gehealde’ (ed. Harmer 1952/1989, no. 49; cf. Sawyer 1968, no. 1100).

[**Note:** Uses special characters as item 1, except does not use “ð,” and has insular forms of “r” and long “s”. The Latin text of the writ follows on f. 77v.]

- f. 1r/1–7 (14/15c?) ‘Isti su(n)t confessor(e)s chr(ist)i q(uorum) corp(or)a iace(n)t’ (lists Archbishop Wulfstan of York, a Bishop Osmund of Sweden, Bishops Ælfwine and Ælfgar of Elmham, Eadnoth of Dorchester, Æthelstan of Elmham and Ealdorman Bryhtnoth, each of these being subject of a chapter in Book 2) (pr. Bentham 1812: 85; cf. Blake 1962: xxxviii).
- f. 1r/8–32 (15c) Note on the convent’s rights of jurisdiction in the Isle of

Ely: 'In cronicis anglicis 7 latinis rep(er)it(ur) quodmonast(er)iu(m) ap(ud) Ely fabricatu(m) fuerat te(m)p(or)e | Etelbriti Regis'.

3. f. 1v/1–4 (15c) Verses: 'hic liber insignis etheldrede memoratur | Qui monachis dignis eliensibus attitulatur | Rex edmunde fouens semper monachos beriensens | Regraciando regens esto monachos eliensens' (pr. Ker, *Cat.*).
4. f. 1v/5–8 (hand of 15c) 's(anct)o m(ona)st(eri)o i(n) solida iurisd(i)cione toti(us) insule & eandem vsurpando'.
5. "Historia Elyensis Insulae" (ed. from this manuscript, Blake 1962):
- f. 2r/1a–27a "Incipit prologus de historia Eliensis insule": 'C|VM animadu(er)tere(m) excellen~~ti~~am elyensis insule' (in initial 'C' a line drawing of a monk kneeling before a seated woman, presumably St. Etheldreda).
- f. 2v/27a–4r/2a **Incipit De Situ | elyensis insule.** | 'OMnes preclari & nobiles' (initial "O" green).
- f. 4r/2a–4v/9b Prologue to Book 1: **INcip(it) p(ro)log(us) i(n) uita(m) s(ancte) u(ir)g(inis) | ætheldreðe** 'Nonnullos apud | ueteres floruisse diuersis ar|tib(us)'.
ff. 4v/9b–4v/23a Capitula to Book 1 (50 chs. which have been numbered by an early modern hand): **Incipiu(n)t capi|tula** 'De quib(us) uirgo ætheldretha | carnis origine(m) duxit. 7 quomodo | pat(er) ei(us) anna Estanglor(um) suscepit regnum'.
- ff. 4v/23a–35r/15b Book 1: **Incipit textus | seque(n)tis libelli ...** | 'IGitur angli s(e)c(un)d(u)m ueteres histori|as temp(or)e martiani p(r)incipis'; ends: '& ut | loquendi | uires int(er)im p(er) silentiu(m) reparent(ur)' **Explic(it) liber prim(us) de hystoria | elyensis insule. 7 de gloriosa u(ir)gi|ne etheldreda 7 succede(n)tib(us) ei | s(an)c(t)is ui(r)ginib(us) quib(us)ue infortu|niis eccl(es)ia s(u)biacuit usq(ue) ad in|gressione(m) monachor(um) in Ely.**
- f. 35r/16a; f. 37r Prologue to Book 2: **Incipit p(ro)hemiu(m) libri secundi** || [f. 35r/17–30 blank, f. 35v blank] **P(ro)hemium libri. secundi. in hystoria | elyensis insule. & q(u)om(od)o eccl(es)ia e(st) restau|rata, u(e)l a quib(us) ditata. | IN p(re)cedente monstratum e(st)**.
- f. 37v, 38rv, 36rv Capitula to Book 2 (150 chs., numbered in early modern hand): f. 37v [1] '[Q]vom(od)o eccl(es)ia de ely p(er) s(an)c(tu)m ædelwoldum | resta|u|rata fuit rege p(er)cipiente ædgaro'; f. 38v to 36r [103] 'Q(uo)d Sigand(us) archiep(is)c(opus) fugiens a || facie

reg(is) i(n) ely deuenit. & q(u)om(od)o | s(an)c(t)i albani reliq(u)ie
illuc su(n)t dela|te'; ends (f. 36v) [150] 'Quom(od)o Ricar(dus)
abb(as) moriens uidit be|ata(m) Withburga(m) s(ibi) assist(e)re'
(added explicit: **expl(iciunt) | cap(itu)la lib(r)i s(e)c(un)di**).

[Note: Entered on blanks in a different hand from the main texts in order: f. 36rv chs. 103-150, f. 37v-38v chs. 1-103 (see Blake 1962: 64).]

ff. 39r-106v/31a Book 2: **Quomodo ecclesia de hely per | s(an)c(t)um
ædelwoldu(m) restaurata fuit.** | 'Nunc quoq(ue) restat
sc(r)ibendum | de reparatione elyensis eccl(es)ie'; ends: 'da(n)s iures
(recte uires) univ(er)sor(um) inbecilli|tati' **Explicit lib(er) .ii. de
hystoria | elyensis insule. consta(n)s de te(m)porib(us) |
abb(atu)m 7 monachor(m) in Ely usq(ue) | ad mutac[i]o(n)em
abbacie in ep(iscop)atu(m).**

ff. 106v/1b-107r/15 Prologue to Book 3: **Incipit p(ro)log(us) libri .iii. de
eode(m) te(m)|pora & euentus episcopor(um) denuntia(ns).** |
'Tam nunc tractandu(m) i(n)stat'.

ff. 107r/15-108v Capitula to Book 3 (numbered 1-105 [to 110 in Blake's
edition], the rest missing: early modern note in bottom margin, 'Huic
Indici desunt Capitula 32 | quæ in Libro continentur 137'): **Incipiunt
Capitula** | 'Qvom(od)o po(st) morte(m) Ricardiabb(at)is heruei(us)
| bangornensis ep(iscopu)s ...'; ends imperfectly: [105] 'Mandatu(s)
d(omi)ni pape cap(itu)lo elyensi q(uo)d lib(er)e | suscipiant
possessione(m) sua(m) de steuechewrð[a]'.

ff. 109r/1a-188v/7a Book 3: **Incipit liber t(er)c(ius) in historia | elyensis
insule constans de duor(um)** ('duor' lined through in different ink)
| **temp(or)ibus ep(iscop)orum. q(u)id plus u(e)l | minus utile
gesserint plene insi|nuans. Q(u)om(od)o po(st) mortem Ricardi
| abb(at)is ep(iscopu)s pangornensis herue(us) | de sua sede
eiect(us)...** 'POST morte(m) ig(itur) Ricardi | abb(at)is mittit(ur) a
Rege'; ends: 'q(ui) | solus est benedictus in se|cula et triumphat in
sa[nctis] | SUIs'.

6. f. 188v/8a-12b A charter of Prior Hugh (ca. 1200): 'Hugo p(ri)or Elyen(sis)
eccl(es)ie & tot(ius) con|uent(us) ... Nicholao Tonsor. Elya | pastore.
Et multis aliis' [early modern note in margin: 'intra 1198 & 1220'].

7. f. 188v/14b-31b An illegible note in a hand of 15c (hand same as or similar
to that on f. 1rv).

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