Chapter 10

Historical Literacy in the Archive: Post-Conquest Imitative Copies of Pre-Conquest Charters and Some French Comparanda*

J. Crick

This chapter examines an aspect of historical activity whose association with the long twelfth century is well established but which has no acknowledged place within received models of the twelfth-century discovery of the past. It was not

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triggered by changes in education or exposure to the Latin classics. It cannot be claimed to be a novel activity because it belongs to a continuum, but it does attest important historical processes: archival control, the sorting and processing of information about the Anglo-Saxon past, and, in an unusually literal sense, how contemporaries viewed English antiquity. I refer to the production of imitative copies of Anglo-Saxon charters.2

The immense importance of the English past to twelfth-century devotion is attested in literary output so voluminous that much remains unedited, although the effort of writing and rewriting saints' lives has been well studied.3 This work of renewal is an activity closely analogous to another, also well attested and well recognised: the need to maintain and, indeed, to stabilise the archives whose contents documented and protected the material resources which sustained cult sites.4 The status and even survival of individual religious communities was jeopardised by the destruction of the assumptions which had sustained territorial and jurisdictional rights before the Norman Conquest. The death or exile of senior patrons left English institutions exposed to the threat of predation by newly appointed bishops attuned to the different expectations and standards of religious life in vogue on the Continent. Although the dangers posed to monastic communities were particularly acute in William's reign, the contested succession of subsequent monarchs, up to and including Henry II, will have destabilised some secular patronage networks on a lesser scale, as new men were preferred and dissenters deprived of landed property.5 In the post-Conquest era communities had to keep rewriting their documents in order...

2 The production of imitative charters in the long twelfth century has been established in a series of published studies: below, Table 10.1, nn. a–r.


5 For an example, see J. Sayers, “Original”, cartulary and chronicle: the case of the abbey of Evesham, Fälschungen im Mittelalter (MGH Schriften xxxiii, 1988), iv. 371–95, at...
to fight obsolescence. As Frank Barlow showed more than sixty years ago, charters could not be expected to perform their work indefinitely, but needed to be adapted to changing circumstances. Fresh copies were required when draftsmen improved existing documents through interpolation or fashioned new texts outright from reclaimed textual material. Some of these creations survive in the form of imitative copies, although the possibility remains that unimproved texts, too, were preserved in replacement copies.

Sir Richard Southern in the last of his presidential addresses to the Royal Historical Society encouraged scrutiny of archival evidence as a process central to understanding the historical movement of the twelfth century:

The mistake is often made of looking for evidence of a historical revival only in the histories which it produces; and this mistake has obscured the character of the work done by these monastic scholars. Just as the finest work of the modern historical movement is to be found in editions of texts, catalogues of material and critical notes on sources, symbols, and social habits, so in the twelfth century the historical revival is to be seen as a continuous process of collecting and arranging charters, transcribing documents, and carrying out minute investigations into chronology and topography, studying monastic buildings and inscriptions, assembling the texts of ancient learning, writing estate-histories, chronicles, and biographies – and only at the end of the day the histories which we all know.

In other words, the familiar and celebrated historical edifices of the twelfth century were buttressed by an accumulation of mundane data whose acquisition, by collecting, auditing, surveying and ordering, attests significant historical awareness and skill. It is well known that monastic historians in the Middle Ages used charters to construct narratives of monastic houses and chronologies of office-holders. Some charters in themselves attest the ordering of the past,


8 Southern, ‘Aspects’, 249, with my emphasis.

either in the shape of text fabricated by a process of archival research, or in their physical form in which scribes altered one or more of their usual repertoire of scripts in response to, or in imitation of, a pre-Conquest model. Either situation bears out Stenton’s observation that ‘any medieval text which claims to be a copy of an ancient charter represents in itself an elaborate framework of local circumstance’.

A doubly complex process, of palaeographical as well as textual bricolage, must be presupposed when, as sometimes was the case, forged charters were copied in archaising script.

Scribal archaism suggests both a consciousness of the past and a distance from it. Just like forgery, which is its textual equivalent, it required modification of the practitioner’s usual habits. As a matter of routine any draftsman or scribe will have constructed his text using elements learned from past practice, whether in the form of vocabulary and textual tags, or in the shape of letter-forms, marks of abbreviation and so forth. The draftsman of a spurious charter, by contrast, adopted a consciously discontinuous relationship with the past, importing formulae alien to his normal repertoire, and so introducing the anachronistic elements upon which the detection of a forgery by modern critics depends. The archaising scribe likewise deliberately modified his script to mimic the letter-forms and sometimes the ligatures and even the aspect of one or more distant historical targets. The phenomenon occurs across Europe from the copie figurée recognised by French diplomatists, to Carlrichard Brühl’s observation that charters were frequently written in deliberately antique, often completely archaising script.

Archaising script occurs not uncommonly in books as well, and Michelle Brown has usefully defined the deliberate modification of script by ‘imitation and forgery’ as ‘a conscious attempt on the part of an artist or scribe to alter the usual appearance of their work to resemble that of another, whether for purpose of homogeneity or for motives of expediency’.

The tension between the scribe’s normal practice and the model being imitated can be so poorly resolved that the results can be baffling: it is very difficult to reconstruct the processes associated with the creation of an archaising charter.

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which led to their formation. On the other hand, some scribes mimicked their exemplars so successfully that their work can barely be distinguished from antique (i.e. pre-Conquest) models. Both types of imitation attest an engagement with older documents, the influence of exemplars one or more centuries old being easier for the critic to detect than that of documents closer in date to the imitator’s own time of writing.

Such encounters between medieval scribes and potentially ancient exemplars allow the scholar to assess the acuity of the scribe’s observation of historical difference and the skill with which he was able to alter his own writing habits to imitate those of the older scribe. Later medieval and Continental examples have been investigated in the last generation by Malcolm Parkes, Peter Lucas and, most recently, Jean Vezin. Examples from pre-Conquest England have also been discussed in print. This chapter represents a foray into the immediate post-Conquest era and beyond, and involves the study of scribes working on both sides of the English Channel. In almost all cases the examples of imitation discussed here have previously been identified in print, most commonly by editors. Some of these identifications have been widely accepted but others remain controversial.

During the long twelfth century, defined for the purposes of this chapter as extending from the start of the reign of William I to the end of that of John, scholars working in numerous English monastic archives processed pre-

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14 For an example of the former, see J.C. Crick, ‘St Albans, Westminster and some twelfth-century views of the Anglo-Saxon past’, ANS xxv (2003 for 2002), 65–83, at 67–70 and pl. 1. For examples of more successful imitation, see below, 172–7.


17 For the English material discussed here, the palaeographical judgements are my own but I am largely dependent on others for assessments of textual authenticity. I have been reliant to a greater extent on published discussion of the French material, although I have inspected, either in manuscript or in microfilm, examples housed in Paris.
Conquest documents as entries in cartularies and monastic chronicles. More than twenty monastic cartularies fit squarely into this period, with at least as many dating from the thirteenth century. Religious houses of substance possessed such books – Abingdon, Bury St Edmund’s, Christ Church and St Augustine’s Canterbury, Ely, Evesham, Eynsham, Peterborough, Rochester, St Albans, Sherborne, Winchester, Worcester – and these volumes preserve many pre-Conquest texts for which no single-sheet copy survives. Alongside these efforts of compilation stands a response to the pre-Conquest archival record of a different sort altogether. More than thirty single-sheet copies of purportedly pre-Conquest documents survive from the same period. Doubts attach to a much higher proportion of the texts than is the case for cartulary copies: indeed, only a few single-sheet copies are regarded as authentic texts. About half of the documents were copied in what looks like the scribe’s customary hand, unmodified to reflect the nature or age of the document being copied but that of the remainder has been identified as imitative by a series of authorities. This significant residue can be divided into three categories: first, blatant imitation of pre-Conquest script which clearly belongs neither to pre-Conquest nor post-Conquest scribal traditions; secondly, subtler modification which it may take longer to discern because it departs only in minor details from a recognisable scribal tradition of the post-Conquest era; finally, imitation so successful that scholars remain divided about whether certain charters should be classified as pre-Conquest originals or post-Conquest copies.


Table 10.1  Preliminary list of single-sheet copies of pre-Conquest diplomas and charters copied in the long twelfth century.20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Face Date</th>
<th>Archive</th>
<th>Date of copy</th>
<th>Facsimile</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Imitative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S 602</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>Burton</td>
<td>s. x or xi²</td>
<td><em>Facsimiles</em>, ed. Keynes, no. 4</td>
<td>Disputed²</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 768</td>
<td>968</td>
<td>Burton</td>
<td>s. x or xi²</td>
<td><em>Facsimiles</em>, ed. Keynes, no. 7</td>
<td>Disputed²</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 623</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>Burton</td>
<td>s. xi</td>
<td>OSF iii, Anglesey 1</td>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 360</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>NMWi</td>
<td>s. xi¹ or ? xi²</td>
<td>OSF ii, Winchester College, 1</td>
<td>Spurious</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 879</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>Burton</td>
<td>s. xi²</td>
<td><em>Charters</em>, ed. Sawyer, pl. II.b</td>
<td>Spurious²</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 906</td>
<td>1004</td>
<td>Burton</td>
<td>s. xi²</td>
<td>OSF iii, Anglesey 3</td>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 1536</td>
<td>1002 x 1004</td>
<td>Burton</td>
<td>s. xi²</td>
<td>OSF iii, Anglesey 2</td>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 794</td>
<td>974</td>
<td>Ely</td>
<td>s. xi²</td>
<td><em>Facsimiles</em>, ed. Keynes no. 25</td>
<td>Spurious</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 959, MS</td>
<td>1023</td>
<td>CaCC</td>
<td>s. xi²</td>
<td>OSF i.19</td>
<td>Disputed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 980, MS</td>
<td>1022 x 1023</td>
<td>Bury St Edmunds</td>
<td>s. xi×³</td>
<td><em>Facsimiles</em>, ed. Keynes no. 33</td>
<td>Spurious</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 1026, MS</td>
<td>1062 x 1065</td>
<td>Evesham</td>
<td>s. xi/xii</td>
<td><em>Facsimiles</em>, ed. Keynes no. 35</td>
<td>Spurious</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 779, MS</td>
<td>970</td>
<td>Ely</td>
<td>s. xi/xii</td>
<td>OSF iii.32</td>
<td>Disputed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)

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20 Omitted from this list are Exeter charters copied in the pontificate of Bishop Leofric (1050–72) or before, a number of which were written in modified or archaising script: S 386, S 387, S 388, S 389, S 405, S 433.1, S 433.3, S 669. Here the conventional abbreviations for pre-Conquest foundations will be employed: CaCC (Christ Church Canterbury), NMWi (New Minster Winchester), OMWi (Old Minster, Winchester).
Table 10.1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Face Date</th>
<th>Archive</th>
<th>Date of copy</th>
<th>Facsimile</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Imitative</th>
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<td>S 959 MS 2</td>
<td>1023</td>
<td>CaCC</td>
<td>s. xi/xii</td>
<td>OSF i.20</td>
<td>Disputed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 959 MS 4</td>
<td>1023</td>
<td>CaCC</td>
<td>s. xi/xii</td>
<td>Facsimiles, ed. Keynes no. 34</td>
<td>Disputed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 553</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>Wells (ex Glastonbury)</td>
<td>s. xi/xii</td>
<td>Facsimiles, ed. Keynes no. 32</td>
<td>Spurious</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 68</td>
<td>664</td>
<td>Peterborough</td>
<td>s. xi/xii</td>
<td>Spurious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 1029</td>
<td>1060</td>
<td>Peterborough</td>
<td>s. xi/xii</td>
<td>Spurious</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 1043 MS 1</td>
<td>1066</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>s. xii</td>
<td>Facsimiles, ed. Keynes no. 39</td>
<td>Spurious</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 959 MS 1</td>
<td>1023</td>
<td>CaCC</td>
<td>s. xii</td>
<td>OSF i.21</td>
<td>Disputed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 959 MS 3</td>
<td>1023</td>
<td>CaCC</td>
<td>s. xii</td>
<td>OSF iii.40</td>
<td>Disputed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 1011</td>
<td>1045</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>s. xii</td>
<td>BMF iv.30</td>
<td>Spurious</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 1043 MS 2</td>
<td>1066</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>s. xii</td>
<td>Facsimiles, ed. Keynes no. 38</td>
<td>Spurious</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 731, MS 1</td>
<td>964</td>
<td>Worcester</td>
<td>s. xii</td>
<td>Facsimiles, ed. Keynes no. 40</td>
<td>Spurious</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 124 MS 1</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>s. xii,mod.</td>
<td>Heslop, ‘Twelfth-century forgeries’, 54(b)</td>
<td>Spurious</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 1293</td>
<td>959</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>s. xii,mod.</td>
<td>Heslop, ‘Twelfth-century forgeries’, 53, 54(a)</td>
<td>Spurious</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 1060</td>
<td>1055 x 1060</td>
<td>Peterborough</td>
<td>s. xii,mod.</td>
<td>Spurious</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 774</td>
<td>969</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>s. xii,mod</td>
<td>Facsimiles, ed. Keynes no. 37</td>
<td>Spurious</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 645</td>
<td>957</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>s. xii</td>
<td>OSF ii. Westminster 3</td>
<td>?Authentic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes (Table 10.1)


b Identified as imitative in *Facsimiles*, p. 4.

c Identified as imitative by Dunville, 'English square minuscule script', 146 n. 71, with no indication of date given. Sawyer described it as a ‘very clumsy eleventh-century copy of an authentic charter': *Charters of Burton*, no. 14, p. 24. The palaeographical evidence for imitation (not discussed by Sawyer) resides in the highly variable formation of the letters, for example a and g, the irregular spacing, shape and size of the letters, and the repeated copying errors, including omitted words inserted interlinearly using signes de renvoie in lines 7 and 8. There are no specifically anachronistic letters, which lends weight to Sawyer's suggestion that the scribe was copying an original of 956. The ascenders are tagged, a symptom of eleventh-century production: N.R. Ker, *Catalogue of manuscripts containing Anglo-Saxon*, Oxford 1957, rev. imp. 1990, xxxii.

d *Charters of the New Minster, Winchester*, ed. S. Miller, Oxford 2001, no. 3. Nicholas Brooks dated this to the eleventh century ‘though we cannot yet define the date more precisely’: N.P. Brooks, 'The Micheldeven forgery', *Anglo-Saxon myths: State and Church, 400–1066*, London 2000, 239–74, at 243 (reprinted from R.A. Custance (ed.), *Winchester College: sixth-century essays*, Oxford 1981, 189–228). Examination of the single sheet (in August 2010) suggests a distance from the Old English sciribal tradition which might be consistent with a date later in that century: the scribe's inability to write a consistently square d, the poor formation of e-ligatures, the very variable size of d and forms of f, including a form in which the top rises above the succeeding letter, the unusual angling of the top of g at almost 45 degrees to the horizontal. The scribe wrote sociëtate, suggesting confusion about ae/e spellings of the sort common in the early twelfth century, some scribes drag leftwards on the top few lines as they do in vernacular script of the eleventh century, the rustic capitals used for display are clumsily written with horizontal feet on the base line and at the tops of strokes, and the *ond* form, with a very extended top stroke, looks alien to tenth-century practice.

e On the date, see *Charters of Burton*, no. 26, pp. 44–5. Sawyer described the script as ‘impure Caroline minuscule for the Latin’ and noted ‘many similarities’ with S 602 but he did not describe the script as imitative. The scribe employs monumental rotund insular minuscule for Latin, with round a, round-backed d, rounded c, long r and s, and occasional ligature of et, alongside Caroline a, h, tall s. Ligature of e with a, i, n, p, r, x is usually avoided, which indicates a post-tenth-century date, as does the degree of abbreviation. The execution of eth, Q and the ra ligature suggest that the scribe might be contemporary with that of the will of Wulfric Spot (S906/1536), s. xi.


g The authenticity was discussed in *Facsimiles*, p. 10. This version of the text remains unpublished until Dr Richard Mortimer completes his new edition of the Westminster charters. See meanwhile *Codex diplomaticus aevi Saxonici*, ed. J.M. Kemble, London, 1839–48, no. 801. On the script see below, 170–71.
The single-sheet copy was discovered by Professor Nicholas Vincent in Northamptonshire Record Office in October 2012 and I record its discovery here with Professor Vincent's kind permission. For the text, see *Charters of Peterborough abbey*, ed. S.E. Kelly, Oxford 2009, no. 1.


Heslop, 'Twelfth-century forgeries', 308, n. 36; Crick, 'St Albans', 68.


### Table 10.2 Preliminary list of single-sheet copies of purportedly pre-Conquest writs copied in the long twelfth century.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Face Date</th>
<th>Archive</th>
<th>Date of copy</th>
<th>Facsimile</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S 1120</td>
<td>n. d.</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>s. xii</td>
<td>OSF ii, Westminster 9</td>
<td>Spurious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 1121</td>
<td>1044 x 1051</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>s. xii</td>
<td>BMF iv.34</td>
<td>?Interpolated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 1124</td>
<td>1047 x 1065</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>s. xii</td>
<td>BMF iv.35</td>
<td>Spurious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 1125</td>
<td>1049 x 1066</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>s. xii</td>
<td>OSF ii, Westminster 17</td>
<td>?Authentic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 1137</td>
<td>1058 x 1066</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>s. xii</td>
<td>OSF ii, Westminster 15</td>
<td>Spurious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 1138</td>
<td>1053 x 1066</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>s. xii</td>
<td>OSF ii, Westminster 13</td>
<td>Disputed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 1140, MS 2</td>
<td>1062 x 1066</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>s. xii</td>
<td>OSF ii, Westminster 11</td>
<td>Forged copy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 1141</td>
<td>1042 x 1066</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>s. xii</td>
<td>BMF iv.36</td>
<td>Disputed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 1142</td>
<td>1053 x 1066</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>s. xii</td>
<td>OSF ii, Westminster 10</td>
<td>Authentic basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 1145</td>
<td>1042 x 1066</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>s. xii</td>
<td>OSF ii, Westminster 14</td>
<td>?Interpolated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the working definition to be adopted in this chapter, a scribe writing imitative script deliberately suspends his normal practices and temporarily modifies and distorts his taught repertoire of scripts. Script-imitation requires distance from the original, therefore. Few script-types represent a real break with the past, Caroline minuscule being a conspicuous exception. Most adopt familiar elements such as letter-forms and ligatures and some even indulge in deliberate throw-backs to the past, such as the early phases of English square minuscule in the tenth century, examples of which are discussed below.\(^{21}\) In such instances a scribe, or group of scribes, imported features from the past into a standard repertoire of graphic forms and so made them their own. Imitative script, on the other hand, is by definition the inverse of a settled scribal style – rather, it is a performance for an occasion, and so usually concocted as a response to a particular set of circumstances. Even when the same scribe has employed archaising script on two occasions, as in two different charters, often the modification will be subtly different.\(^{22}\) This degree of variation can be attributed in part to the subtlety of an individual scribe’s response to the models in front of him, but it also reflects the instability inherent in imitative script: the pretence cannot be maintained. Julian Brown wrote of faker’s palsy, a physical tremor caused by the mental and physical effort of copying something unfamiliar.\(^{23}\) Scribes rarely achieved consistency in their importation of alien script forms. Even an ambitious scribe who was able to execute ligatures or blocks of words brilliantly often failed to sustain the rhythm of his writing and so the aspect of the page. Moreover, imitative campaigns are often accompanied by elementary copying errors, as if the task of imitation occupied so much of the scribe’s concentration that he was unable to focus on the primary task in hand.\(^{24}\)

\(^{21}\) For example, Dumville, ‘English square minuscule script’, 135–6, 141. Below, 172–7, on S 624 and 646. The script is exemplified by the use of graphic features familiar in eighth-century insular script: letter-forms borrowed from insular half-uncial, such as **oa** and capital **N**, and capitals echoing the form of uncials and rustics in use in the eighth century.


\(^{24}\) For example, the scribe copying the imitative Exeter charter S 389 MS. 1 (Exeter, Dean and Chapter, MS. 2517), purportedly of AD 670 wrote *domice* for *dominicę* after ‘Anno’ in the opening line. Bischoff also identified scribal error as a symptom of forgery in charters: B. Bischoff, tr. D.Ó Cróinín and D. Ganz, Latin palaeography: antiquity and the Middle Ages, Cambridge 1990, 46.
interrupted his own habitual practices, observed those of the historic scribe(s) whose work he sought to imitate, and reproduced them to the best of his ability.

The charters listed in Table 10.1 include examples of all three categories of imitation just outlined. The first category, blatant imitation of pre-Conquest script which clearly belongs neither to pre-Conquest nor post-Conquest scribal traditions, embraces a great variety of possibilities. One is represented by S 1026, an Evesham charter purporting to be of AD 1055. The scribe copied the vernacular boundary clause in a form of insular minuscule employing features typical of the mid-eleventh century and later: descenders which drag to the left at their lowest extent, eth with a tall ascender looping over at the top, while the round a, hooked e and avoidance of e-ligatures are all consonant with an eleventh- or twelfth-century date. The script of the Latin text and attestations is altogether more curious, not least because the scribe pursues the anachronistic goal of copying the Latin text of a diploma of Edward the Confessor in insular minuscule. Royal diplomas were routinely copied in Caroline minuscule from the 980s. The form of insular minuscule employed is differentiated from that of the boundary clause by features borrowed from Caroline minuscule. Hence a ligature resembling ampersand is used instead of the et-nota, and the ct-ligature characteristic of Caroline minuscule is imperfectly reproduced by the addition of a semicircular stroke above those two letters. The ligature representing ct is confirmed as an imitation by comparison with the larger version of the same compendium employed in the attestations, where it represents Æ in initial position. This failure to differentiate between ae and et is a marked anomaly in the script. Long s is routinely positioned so that it has the tall form reminiscent of Caroline minuscule: the head is at approximately the same height as neighbouringascenders (for example, l and k). Norman influence is apparent in the use of W in Old English and Norman names in the attestations. In the middle of the twelfth century another Evesham scribe imitated insular script in the production of a forged papal bull of 713. On this occasion the scribe modified his normal bookhand by adding a flourished top to t, and by the use of round a, round d, long f, r and s, insular g and open-bowed p, all features suggesting imitation of an eighth- or ninth-century model. In other respects – the adoption of hook-backed

25 Ker, Catalogue, xxxi–xxxiii.
26 For the last square minuscule diplomas, see Dumville, 'English square minuscule script', 156 n. 125. The general rule that Latin was written in Caroline minuscule in the eleventh century was formulated by Ker, Catalogue, xxv–xxvi. Exceptions have been discussed by P.A. Stokes, 'English vernacular script, ca 990–ca 1035', unpubl. Ph.D. diss. Cambridge 2006.
27 For another example, see infra, B.R. O'Brien, 'Pre-Conquest laws and legislators in the twelfth century', 255 and n. 89 (on Paris, BnF, lat. 4771).
e and the leftwards drag of the descenders – he shows awareness of eleventh-century models and in the inappropriate addition of hairline extensions to the foot of minim letters he was probably influenced not by an English model, but possibly by Continental practice.\textsuperscript{29}

This first category of imitation also embraces examples which are much more extreme, as illustrated by a twelfth-century imitation whose scribe has departed so far from his training that at first sight the results are almost unintelligibly hybrid. This is Offa’s grant of Aldenham, Herts, to Westminster, AD 785 (S 124), which belongs to a series of feigned originals produced at Westminster in the middle years of the twelfth century in connection with a dispute over the estate.\textsuperscript{30}

The twelfth-century scribe successfully imitated a number of letter-forms of set-cursive minuscule of his target period, the later eighth or early ninth century, letting \textit{f}, \textit{r}, and \textit{s} fall below the baseline and reproducing with moderate success a pinched \textit{a} and open-headed \textit{q}, and the rising tops of \textit{e} and \textit{t}.\textsuperscript{31} However, the script utterly fails to convince. It is characterised by irregularity, inconsistency and some telling anachronisms. An eighth-century scribe would have ligatured \textit{e} with a following consonant, but our twelfth-century scribe shirks this. The \textit{e}-ligature characterised insular script from half-uncial downwards until the middle of the tenth century, but thereafter even scribes trained to write insular minuscule reproduced the compendium rarely, and a post-Conquest scribe unfamiliar with insular script would have found it complex to execute and difficult to imitate. The scribe adopted a leftward turn at the foot of descenders, a feature common in the eleventh century but quite alien to his target period, the eighth or early ninth century, which influenced other features of his imitation, and this feature apparently reflects the influence of models of different date. Our twelfth-century scribe wrote with a degree of lateral compression, for example in the letters constructed from minim strokes, which is uncharacteristic of an English scribal performance before the Norman Conquest.

The second category comprises examples written in post-Conquest script which has been only lightly modified, perhaps to reflect the purported antiquity of the text being copied. Here, it is important to bear in mind Ker’s observation that many scribes, even as late as 1160, copied charters in bookhand or in a

\textsuperscript{29} On the form of \textit{e} and the descenders, see Ker, \textit{Catalogue}, xxix, xxxii. For an example of trailing minims, see the purported confirmation of exemption and immunity to the monastery of Ebermünster, dated 12 August 801, scraped and rewritten in the twelfth century: F. Lot and P. Lauer (avec la collaboration de G. Tessier), \textit{Diplomata Karolingorum: recueil de reproductions en fac-similé des actes originaux des souverains carolingiens conservés dans les archives et bibliothèques de France}, 10 parts, Paris, 1936–, I, pl. xli (no. 24), Bibliothèque-Archives de Sélestat, Ebermünster B.

\textsuperscript{30} Above, Table 10.1, n. n.

\textsuperscript{31} See also Crick, ‘St Albans’, 68 and n. 23.
modification of it, with round-backed d and long f, r and s. One must also focus on the Latin text, as scribes throughout the twelfth century continued to use Old English letter-forms in the copying of Old English texts and name-forms. Candidates for classification as mildly imitative charters include S 731, a forgery copied in bookhand of the first half of the twelfth century, which employs frequent round d and long r, and occasional insular r in Latin in the attestations (archuntorum; dorouernensis); S 1043 MS 2, copied by a mid-twelfth-century scribe who perpetrated other imitations, as Heslop showed (in this instance r extends below the baseline and descenders trail to the left); and S 1043 MS 1, in which f and s also descend below the baseline.

So far this discussion has focused on relatively crude examples, but imitation can be remarkably sophisticated. The last purported pre-Conquest charter to be discussed here has attracted controversy and continues to do so. Most commentators have accepted the charter as an authentic tenth-century single sheet, but Peter Sawyer and Simon Keynes have suggested in print that it is an eleventh-century copy. The following discussion will set out palaeographical evidence which supports their judgement. The charter in question, S 602 from the archive of Burton abbey, purportedly dates from 956 and records King Eadwig’s gift to his thegn, Æthelnoth, of land at Darlaston, Staffs (see Figure 10.1). On first inspection, the charter bears a remarkable resemblance to authentic originals of 956 and 957, whose production Chaplais assigned to the fifth of eight ‘so-called royal scribes’ whose work he associated with the Winchester scriptorium of the period 931–63. They are S 624, King Eadwig’s grant to Ealdorman Edmund of land at Annington, Sussex, from the Abingdon archive, and S 646, from Ely, which records King Eadwig’s grant to Archbishop

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33 As Ker reported: *Catalogue*, xxvi–xxvii.

34 Above, Table 10.1, n. a.

35 The discussion here is based on purely palaeographical criteria. Any consideration of the authenticity of the text is a separate matter not entered into here. The identification of a single sheet as an imitative copy does not automatically condemn the text as fabricated, although it of course opens the possibility that it might be so: see below, 185. I am most grateful to Professors Nicholas Brooks and Simon Keynes for discussion of this matter.

36 P. Chaplais, ‘The origins and authenticity of the royal Anglo-Saxon diploma’, *Journal of the Society of Archivists* iii (1966), 160–76, repr. in F. Ranger (ed.), *Prisca munimenta: studies in archival and administrative history presented to Dr A.E.J. Hollaender*, London 1973, 28–42, esp. 41. Keynes doubted, with good reason, that the two charters were written by the same scribe: *Facsimiles*, p. 4.
Figure 10.1 S 602. King Eadwig’s grant to his thegn, Æthelnoth, of land at Darlaston, Staffs. Purported original of AD 956, from the archive of Burton, Stafford, William Salt Library, MS. 84/1/41 (230 × 360 mm), reproduced at a scale of 45% of the original size. Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the William Salt Library, Stafford.
Oda of forty hides at Ely, Cambs. (AD 957) (see Figure 10.2). Overlapping features link the three documents together, and these will be discussed below before any attempt is made to establish the chronological relationship between the Darlaston charter and its comparanda.

The three charters share a common format. All three open with a pictorial invocation in the form of a chi-rho monogram in the left-hand margin. The crosses which mark the attestations are aligned with the chi-rho, to the left of the text-block, and in the first column of attestations the word *Ego* begins with a square capital *E*. In all three charters the ministerial style is abbreviated *mis*, a common trait in charters of the mid-tenth century. Also unremarkable is the writing of a small cross above the word *crucis* where it occurs in episcopal attestations (S 602 lines 18–19; S 624 line 17; S 646 lines 9, 12). All three employ the same mixed capitals for the verbal invocation, the donor’s name, and in the dating clause, with uncial *d, e, g* and *m*, rustic capital *v* for *u* and *g*, but with frequent use of lower-grade letter forms, such as minuscule *e* and the characteristic half-uncial form of *a* in the shape of a conjoined *o* and *c*. The scribe of the Darlaston charter is noticeably more conservative than the scribes of the tenth-century originals, writing most of the dating clause in minuscule, and avoiding the lambda-shaped *A* imported from rustic capitals, which the other scribe(s) use in writing the king’s name in capitals on the first line of their texts. These eclectic majuscules are typical of tenth-century scribal inventiveness, and the use of the form of *G* terminating in a left-wards trailing descender is particularly favoured in that period.39 All three charters employ a variant form, with the tail of the *G* turning to the right (S 602 line 4 Eadwig; S 624 line 1 Eadwig; S 646 line 2 Eadwig).40 Such revivals are characteristic of the so-called decorative style of square minuscule which David Dumville associated with the court of Eadwig, his successor Edgar, and his predecessors Edmund and Eadred.41 All three charters show the deployment of features imported from the higher grades of eighth- and ninth-century insular minuscule: the so-called *oc*-form of *a* characteristic of insular half-uncial of the eighth century and hybrid minuscule of the ninth, the *ti* ligature with pendant *I*. They also employ an outsized round *S* which rises above adjacent minims letters (e.g. S 602 line 2 *concessum*; S 624 line 5 *scilicet*; S 646 line 5 *constructione*).

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39 Besides these three charters the form is found, for example, in S 470 (AD 940), S 512 (AD 943), S 497 (AD 943), S 528 (AD 947).
40 In S 602 and 624 the preceding ‘ego’ employed the variant form. In S 646 the parchment has been damaged and the word ‘ego’ lost so no comparison is possible.
41 Dumville, ‘English square minuscule script’, 144–51.
Figure 10.2 S 646. King Eadwig’s grant to Archbishop Oda of forty hides at Ely, Cambs. Original of AD 957, from the archive of Ely. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Eng. Hist. a. 2, no. V (190 x 490 mm), reproduced at a scale of 35% of the original size. Reproduced by permission of the Bodleian Libraries, the University of Oxford.
Certain features link two of the three charters. The two unambiguously tenth-century productions employ capitals more boldly than does S 602, for the names not just of the king but of the beneficiary and estate, and for the bulk of the dating clause. Their scribes wrote a fully rounded uncial e (S 624 line 1 Ego Eadwig; S 646 lines 13–17 Ego), a feature shirked in S 602 in which the scribe reproduces the effect using an enlarged minuscule e with the top compartment joined at the right to the cross-stroke. Other features of their script will be discussed in due course. S 624 displays a generic resemblance to the Darlaston charter, notably in the inclusion of a vernacular boundary clause. The link between S 646 and the Darlaston charter is much closer and more striking, marked by three rare, or unique, features. One is a particularly elaborate form of pictorial invocation. Each of the arms of the cross of the chi-rho terminates in two tendril-like flourishes and the rho descends straight, like a capital P, until level with the midpoint of the fourth line of text, at which point it trails leftwards in a long flourish. A second idiosyncrasy is the anachronistic use of the old insular compendium for autem (S 602 line 9; S 646, line 6) which occurs in only two other purportedly tenth-century charters, one also from Burton. A third is that both charters bear two purportedly contemporary endorsements, a feature logged in only one other charter.

There are a number of reasons for believing that these rare occurrences do not simply reflect contemporary practice but are explained by deliberate imitation, either of S 646 or of a lost charter very like it. First, the script of S 602 displays features far removed from the norms of the mid-tenth century. Even allowing for provincial production it is difficult to explain away the scribe’s inability not only to write flat-topped square minuscule but also to exercise consistency in his script. So, he attempts to use a flat-topped d, as would be normal in the 950s (and is standard in S 624 and S 646), but he regularly employs a tall-backed d as a variant; a is almost never square, as one would expect before the later decades of the tenth century, but round, as is common in the eleventh. Our scribe occasionally executes e-ligatures but he often avoids high e, as comparison of the boundary clauses of S 624 and S 602 indicates (also S 602 line 7 heredi derelinquat), and he occasionally wrote a high e where there was no possibility of, or attempt at, a ligature (line 2 restaurare; line 4 telluris). In fact, the failure of the scribe to write convincingly insular script in the boundary clause suggests that he was not familiar with the insular tradition, at least in its pre-Conquest guise. There are two marked and unconscious anachronisms in S 602 which

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42 Thompson, Anglo-Saxon royal diplomas, 35: she records it also in S 649.
43 S 768. Simon Keynes has suggested that S 768 might itself be an imitative copy: above, Table 10.1. n. b. The autem compendium occurs also in S 464: Thompson, Anglo-Saxon royal diplomas, 94.
44 S 163: Thompson, Anglo-Saxon royal diplomas, 50.
place it beyond doubt as a later, probably eleventh-century product. The first is the form of the *autem* abbreviation. Insular scribes, among them that of S 646, constructed the compendium from a hooked h, the base letter-form being invariably insular, whether half-uncial or insular minuscule. The scribe of the Darlaston charter, on the other hand, constructed his compendium using a Caroline h, indicating a primary familiarity with that script, which must place him late, possibly after the Norman Conquest. He abbreviated *misericordiam* using the contraction *miam*, which Bischoff recorded in his list of abbreviations for the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, although he reported that it was an older creation. Of forty-five occurrences of the word in Anglo-Saxon charters, only eight survive in pre-twelfth-century single sheets, usually unabbreviated. Apart from S 602 the only other occurrence of this abbreviation for *misericordia* occurs in another Burton charter, S 879, firmly established as a late imitative copy. The Continental abbreviation *qd* for *quod* is reported relatively rarely in the last Anglo-Saxon century, almost always written with a straight-backed d. In S 602 it is written with a round-backed d bisected by the abbreviation stroke, as is common after the Norman Conquest. A tenth- or eleventh-century scribe trained in the insular tradition is likely to have read this crossed round-backed d as the Old English letter eth (ð); indeed, it may be compared with the form of eth employed by this scribe (S 602 line 12 of ðæm). This muddying of the distinction between two different graphic forms suggests a scribe working after the Conquest. I conclude that the scribe of S 602 produced a remarkably faithful post-Conquest copy of an original diploma of Ædwig.

These eleventh- and twelfth-century examples represent only one segment of a longer and more widespread scribal tradition. Imitative charters are a phenomenon well recognised in France and identifiable in England from about the early tenth century onwards. The French tradition has been discussed in the writings of the great diplomatists of the École des chartes, notably in a series of case studies.


46 Bischoff, Latin palaeography, 153, 163. Lindsay associated it with Italy: W.M. Lindsay, Notae Latinae: an account of abbreviation in Latin MSS. of the early minuscule period (c.700–850), Cambridge 1915, 126–9 and D. Bains, A supplement to Notae Latinae (abbreviations in Latin MSS. of 850 to 1050 A.D.), Hildesheim 1963, 22–3.

47 The other occurrences are S 111, S 168, S 470, S 956, S 1064, S 1203 (all unabbreviated) and S 319 (*miscda*). On S 879, see above, n. 25.

48 Thompson reports six occurrences of this form of the abbreviation: Thompson, Anglo-Saxon royal diplomas, 96. To these may be added S 959 line 19. I have checked S 706 (line 10), S 892 (line 12), S 1003 (line 12), S 1027, listed by Thompson and all employ straight-backed d.

twentieth-century editors of the royal diplomas of the Carolingian kings amplified these findings. They listed numerous documents as pseudo-originais, that is, as single-sheet copies, describing some as copies figurées, indicating replica documents made for safe-keeping in imitation of the original, and identifying a small number of these as written in archaising or imitative script, often displaying the maladroitness, misinterpretation and poor spacing seen in imitative performances in England. A separate category of replacement document, which Giry dubbed ‘actes récrits’, describes later fabrications, sometimes passable imitations of older documents. More recently, Vezin and Atsma have undertaken a series of detailed studies of the replica documents forged at the abbey of Saint-Denis in the eleventh century, including a portfolio of royal and papal documents allegedly dating from the Merovingian and Carolingian eras, written in imitative script on papyrus obtained by pasting authentic Merovingian papyrus documents on to parchment and reclaiming the unwritten dorse.

Findings collated from these various campaigns of study are tabulated below (Tables 10.3 and 10.4). Table 10.3 will necessarily reflect the reporting habits of certain editors. Tessier, for example, made it his practice to describe in detail the script of copies figurées, while his fellow editors sometimes provided no palaeographical information.

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51 For an example of an unstable imitative performance, see the description by Giry, ‘La donation de Rueil’, 693–4. Giry defined copies figurées as transcriptions whose scribes attempted to imitate the originals in all particulars, and which are sometimes virtually indistinguishable from originals: Manuel, 14. The identifications listed here were checked against published photographs, notably in Lot and Lauer, Diplomata Karolinorum, and those housed in Paris were checked against microfilm in the Archives nationales (CARAN), and, where permitted, against originals in the Bibliothèque nationale de France in May/June 2010.

52 Giry, Manuel, 14–15, 867–70.

Table 10.3  Indicative list of published identifications of single-sheet imitative copies of Merovingian and Carolingian diplomas from the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

<table>
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<td>s. x or s. xi</td>
<td>Diplomata Karolinorum V.xxv</td>
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<td>13 April 870</td>
<td>Ghent</td>
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<td>Saint-Denis</td>
<td>1060–71</td>
<td>Atsma and Vezinqd</td>
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<td>Imitative script on papyrus</td>
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<td>Archives de Maine-et-Loire H 1836</td>
<td>5 June 881</td>
<td>Saint-Florent</td>
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<td>Grat et alq</td>
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<td>Copie figurée</td>
<td>Carloman</td>
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<td>Molesme</td>
<td>s. xi</td>
<td>Lauerh</td>
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<td>Marseille</td>
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<td>Psalmody</td>
<td>s. xi</td>
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(continued)
Table 10.3 (continued)

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<td>Levillain; Giry; Tessier</td>
<td>Forgery; imitative script; traces of seal</td>
<td>Charles the Bald</td>
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<td>Nôtre-Dame, Soissons</td>
<td>s. xi</td>
<td>Tessier</td>
<td>Forgery in imitative script</td>
<td>Charles the Bald</td>
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<td>9 October 873</td>
<td>Saint-Denis</td>
<td>s. xi</td>
<td><em>Diplomata Karolinorum</em> V.xxix</td>
<td>Giry; Tessier</td>
<td>Imitation of extant original of 27 March 875</td>
<td>Charles the Bald to St-Denis (Rueil)</td>
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<td>Angers, Musée Saint-Jean</td>
<td>17 July 847 (or 808)</td>
<td>Angers, Saint-Aubin, Saint-Florent</td>
<td>s. xi</td>
<td>Tessier</td>
<td>Forgery; imitative script</td>
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<td>8 June 848</td>
<td>Saint-Florent</td>
<td>Before c. 1040–60</td>
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<td>s. xi</td>
<td>Tessier</td>
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<td>Forgery; imitative script¹</td>
<td>Charles the Bald</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Notes (Table 10.3)

a Unless otherwise stated, the information in this column is derived from the published comments referenced in the preceding Identification column.
b Recueil des actes de Charles II, i. 383 n. 3 (no. 145), 527 (no. 208) and 528 n. 1.
c Recueil des actes de Charles II, ii. 244–5 (no. 337) and 244 n. 2.
d Atsma and Vezin, ‘Les faux’, pl. II.
e Ibid. 677, 687–8.
f Recueil des actes de Charles III le Simple, roi de France (893–923), ed. P. Lauer, Paris 1940, i. 24 (no. 14, MS B).
g Recueil des actes de Louis II le Bègue, Louis III et Carloman II, 140 (no. 55).
h Recueil des actes de Charles III, i. 192–3 (no. 86, MS B); imitation not described.
i Recueil des actes de Louis II le Bègue, Louis III et Carloman II, 185 (no. 72); also p. XVI, n. 1 and no. 55. No description.
j Le villain, ‘Les diplômes originaux’, 230 and n. 1; Recueil des actes de Charles II, ii. 593–4 (no. 479) and 594 n. 2.
k Quicherat, ‘Critique des deux plus anciennes chartres’, 535, 540.
l Recueil des actes de Charles II, ii. 655 (no. 499) and n. 1.
m Ibid. ii. 648–9 and n. 1 (no. 496); Giry, ‘La donation de Rueil’.
n Recueil des actes de Charles II, ii. 548 n. 1 (no. 467).
o Ibid. ii. 554–55 n. 1 (no. 470).
p Ibid. ii. 545 n. 1 (no. 466).
q Ibid. ii. 562–3 n. 1 (no. 472). Scribe identified in charters of Henry I (1058).
r The script may be compared with the aspect of Paris, Archives nationales, K 8 no. 6 (1), Lot and Lauer, Diplomata Karolinorum, ii, pl. xxvii, in the manner in which descending strokes are angled and the ascenders and descenders curve. p is pinched very acutely in both.
## Table 10.4  
Indicative list of published identifications of single-sheet imitative copies of non-royal documents from the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shelfmark</th>
<th>Face date</th>
<th>Archive</th>
<th>Date of copy</th>
<th>Facsimile</th>
<th>Identification</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paris, Archives nationales, K 7 no. 17²</td>
<td>811</td>
<td>Notre-Dame, Paris</td>
<td>s. xi</td>
<td>Lasteyrieᵇ</td>
<td>Imitating s. ix</td>
<td>Forged charter of Count Stephen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris, Archives nationales, K 1, no. 5</td>
<td>862</td>
<td>Saint-Denis</td>
<td>1060–71</td>
<td>Atsma and Vezin, ‘Les faux’, pl. I</td>
<td></td>
<td>Atsma and Vezin⁵</td>
<td>On papyrus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelfmark</td>
<td>Face date</td>
<td>Archive</td>
<td>Date of copy</td>
<td>Facsimile</td>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
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<td>----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris, Archives nationales, K 7 no. 8²</td>
<td>1 July 786</td>
<td>Saint-Denis</td>
<td>1060–71</td>
<td>Atsma and Vezin, ‘Les faux’, pl. VIII</td>
<td>Atsma and Vezin²</td>
<td>On papyrus</td>
<td>Forged bull of Adrian I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes (Table 10.4)

- Unless otherwise stated, the information in this column is derived from the published comments referenced in the preceding Identification column.
- Ibid. 688.
- Ibid. 689.
### Table 10.5  Documents in the names of English kings from the archives of Saint-Denis in script showing influence of English exemplars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shelfmark</th>
<th>Face date</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Facsimiles</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paris, Archives nationales, K 7 no. 10</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>s. xi&lt;sup&gt;med.&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Atsma and Vezin&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Atsma and Vezin&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>S 133</td>
<td>Offa, grant of privileges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris, Archives nationales, K 17 no. 3</td>
<td>960</td>
<td>s. xi&lt;sup&gt;med.&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Atsma and Vezin&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Atsma and Vezin&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>S 686</td>
<td>Edgar, restoration of property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris, Archives nationales, AE III.60 (K 19 no. 6)</td>
<td>1059</td>
<td>s. xi&lt;sup&gt;med.&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Facsimiles, ed. Keynes, no. 21a</td>
<td>Bishop, no. 20;&lt;sup&gt;e&lt;/sup&gt; Facsimiles, ed. Keynes, 7-8</td>
<td>S 1028</td>
<td>Diploma of Edward the Confessor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris, Archives nationales, AE III.60 (K 19 no. 6)</td>
<td>1053 x 1057</td>
<td>s. xi&lt;sup&gt;med.&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Facsimiles, ed. Keynes, no. 20</td>
<td>Facsimiles, ed. Keynes, 7</td>
<td>S 1105</td>
<td>Writ of Edward the Confessor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes** (Table 10.5)

- Atsma and Vezin, ‘Le dossier suspect’, pls I–III.
- Atsma and Vezin, ‘Le dossier suspect’, pls IV–VI.
- ‘The nerveless and presumably imitative work of a scribe who was unfamiliar with the O. E. minuscule, probably not an Englishman’: Facsimiles of English royal writs to A.D. 1100 presented to Vivian Hunter Galbraith, ed. T.A. M. Bishop and P. Chaplais, Oxford 1957, pl. XVIII (no. 20).
This body of documents offers an instructive comparison with the English material in a variety of respects, not least because of the superior volume of surviving evidence, both in the number of extant examples and in the richness of their archival context. Some texts extant in imitative copies have been preserved in other single-sheet forms in addition, as non-imitative copies and as originals, permitting an assessment of the fidelity of copying of text and script. Such multiple versions are extremely rare in English material of comparable date. Although the archives of Christ Church Canterbury preserve duplicate copies of two charters, in each case both copies have been identified as imitative and so no single-sheet original survives as a fixed point for textual or palaeographical comparison.  

Such contrasts reflect the very different ways in which charters were made and preserved on either side of the Channel. Thus, according to Giry, copies figurées constitute local copies of chancery documents, and carry no expectation of fraud or even of production after the face date of the charter. Even actes récîts could be relatively innocent. Different commentators report that copies did not enhance rights and claims documented elsewhere but that they simply replaced deteriorating charters. Three eleventh-century copies of a grant made in 811 by Count Stephen to the (cathedral) church of Paris, are extant, one in imitative script, which Lasteyrie argued represented the reconstruction of a lost charter of donation using Carolingian charters. Levillain noted that six original diplomas of Pippin I in favour of different religious houses were replaced by tenth- and eleventh-century imitative copies in their respective archives and, in a later study, he discussed ninth-century copies of charters of Chlothar I made to replace originals ‘qui étaient sans doute trop détériorés pour pouvoir être même encore utilisés’. The presence of imitative script does not necessarily connote fraud in the French scholarly tradition, but charters written in imitative script have been associated with a variety of archival practices. Early scholars established that imitative copying sometimes disguised manipulation of an early text. In a paper published in 1895 Giry discussed two copies of a charter of Charles the Bald to Saint-Denis giving valuable property on the Seine at Rueil (Paris, Archives nationales, Carton des rois, K.14.9). The imitative copy is almost identical with the other, except that the text of the imitative version has been subtly improved, the issue date has been changed to the feast of Saint-Denis, and the claims significantly enhanced by the insertion of a sentence clarifying the abbey’s rights to fisheries in the Seine.  

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54 S 175, of AD 814, and S 546, of AD 949; both survive as two non-contemporary single-sheet copies.  
57 Giry, ‘La donation de Rueil’.  
The French charters make an interesting comparison with the English material as a wider group, then, because they indicate that imitative script was a technique available to scribes when the occasion dictated. The Abingdon chronicler recorded that he had copied into his work the text of a charter whose state of physical deterioration made it almost illegible (in uetustissimis et pene consumptis litteris). The text is accepted as ‘entirely acceptable’ and its copying might have been occasioned by a post-Conquest dispute over Kingston Bagpuize, the estate to which it gives title.\(^59\) It is conceivable that the Darlaston charter was likewise created in order to preserve the text of a damaged original, but this time in the form of a replacement copy. Sawyer had reached much the same conclusion about S 623, another Burton charter of AD 956, whose apparently authentic text survives in a later imitative copy, as had Simon Keynes about S 768 and S 602.\(^60\)

The distribution and date of manufacture of French imitative charters fall into more distinct patterns, and these, too, offer material for cross-Channel comparison. The sample collected in Table 10.3 clusters in the eleventh century rather than the twelfth, and this bears out observations by Dufour and Giry, who associated the production of forged Carolingian charters with the tenth or eleventh century.\(^61\) Despite the association between forgery and the twelfth century upheld in the English historiographical tradition, the English evidence for imitative copying of charters likewise suggests a distribution earlier rather than later, with few instances dating from after the middle of the twelfth century.\(^62\) Another preliminary observation concerns the date of authority claimed. The bulk of the evidence for imitative copying filtered from editions of Carolingian charters fastens on Charles the Bald (ob. 877), and not the Merovingian or earlier Carolingian kings who were often the subject of forged charters.\(^63\) In the long twelfth century the creators of extant imitative charters in England,


\(^{60}\) Above, Table 10.1, n. c. Facsimiles, p. 4.


\(^{63}\) This finding may be skewed in part by the fact that different editors devoted varying degrees of space to palaeographical evidence (see above, 178), but Dufour noted that medieval forgers fastened particularly on Charles the Bald: ‘Actes faux’, 208. On the chronological distribution of forgeries, see Dufour, ‘Actes faux’ and also Brooks, ‘History and myth’, 12–13.
too, avoided remote antiquity. Pre-Conquest imitative copies tend to reach back into the distant Bedan past. Their equivalents made after the Norman Conquest focus on post-Alfredian kings – from Edward the Elder (possibly) but particularly from Eadwig (955–59) onwards.

Discussion

Although much work remains to be done on the texts and archival context of charters written in imitative script, some preliminary conclusions can be drawn:

1. Imitation went on before and after the Conquest in England and on the Continent, but the introduction of Continental-trained clerics and scribes from the reign of Edward the Confessor onwards created particular situations in which imitation was necessary or appropriate. It is entirely probable that established traditions of imitative copying in France renewed or changed the parallel English practice. Scribes trained outside the English tradition and encountering the archival remnants of the English tradition and needing to reproduce them for posterity had to imitate in order to reproduce graphic forms with whose formation or meaning they were unfamiliar. New incumbents viewing the ruined archives of old-established monastic houses might have sought to replace charters by the creation of imitation copies, as in the French tradition. Defence of ancient privileges occasioned the manufacture of suitable documentation in single-sheet form, some of it visibly antique, and native-trained scribes are likely to have been involved.

2. Sometimes the mimicry is of a very high order. Certain pre- and post-Conquest scribes, especially those with access to substantial resources of palaeographical material (charters and books), demonstrate careful observation and well-honed skills. So at Canterbury, Westminster and Saint-Denis, for example, scribes with plenty of models to hand could dip into the past and reproduce what they saw very accurately. Much less convincing imitative essays by scribes at Leofric’s Exeter presumably

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64 Crick, ‘Insular history?’, 522–6, 534–44.
65 Above, Table 10.1. Bruce O’Brien has pointed out in correspondence the marked absence of imitative copies in the names of Cnut and Edward the Confessor, the two most important pre-Conquest kings in later English legal precedent. I deduce from the distribution of donors that scribes worked largely within the parameters of their own local institutional histories.
reflect the poverty of appropriate archival material at their disposal.\textsuperscript{67} The quality of the imitative work at Burton attests scribal skill and access to one or more single-sheet originals from the mid-950s.

3. Imitation, I suggest, tells us something about training. An imitative performance takes a scribe outside what he has been trained to do, puts him under pressure – leads him to make mistakes or to hesitate, hence the instability symptomatic of imitative script.

So, I have been looking at the Anglo-Saxons across a caesura. Post-Conquest scribes independently and on multiple occasions recognised that tenth-century script looked distinct from their own, just as tenth-century scribes had looked back on the eighth century and recognised it as different. I am now going to take a very big step and move from a relatively modest set of data to two very bold conclusions, both influenced by studies of the early-modern past.

According to one established historiographical model, the creation of historical replicas can be interpreted as a mark of scholarly sophistication. Anthony Grafton has discussed the ‘new forgery’ of the Renaissance, in which technical scholarship was harnessed in the creation of faked antiquity. Thus Renaissance antiquaries produced faked inscriptions and leading Renaissance scholars, including Erasmus, were involved in the work of forgery.\textsuperscript{68} The work demanded skill and imagination because ‘[the forger] must give his text the appearance – the linguistic appearance as a text and the physical appearance as a document – of something from a period dramatically earlier than and different from his own.’ This, Grafton noted, marked the rediscovery of ancient critical techniques traceable to the fifth century, although ‘forgers had sought since antiquity itself to give their works the appearance of age’\textsuperscript{69} Grafton conceded that forgery continues throughout the Middle Ages but he associated ‘new [Renaissance] forgery’ with renewed sophistication and scholarly involvement. The care and skill with which the past was recreated constitutes a mark of historical sophistication.

More than forty years ago Peter Burke, in an influential study, commented on the ‘historical innocence’ of medieval attitudes to the past, noting that ‘there was no “sense of history” even among the educated’.\textsuperscript{70} Elizabeth Eisenstein, a decade later, argued that only after the advent of printing could the past be viewed from

\textsuperscript{67} For examples, see Crick, ‘Script and the sense of the past’, 16–19. For a list of charters, see above, n. 20.

\textsuperscript{68} A. Grafton, Forgers and critics: creativity and duplicity in Western scholarship, London 1990, 25–8, 44–5.

\textsuperscript{69} Grafton, Forgers, 54.

\textsuperscript{70} P. Burke, The Renaissance sense of the past, London 1969, 1.
a ‘fixed distance’. Printing created more uniformity about arranging historical materials but ‘Before then, there was no fixed spatial-temporal reference frame which men of learning shared’. More recently, another early modernist, Daniel Woolf, has consolidated earlier ‘orthodoxy’ about the pre-modern past, and explored the growing sense of distance from the present which scholars have discerned during the Renaissance. It was Woolf’s contention that ‘English men and women in 1500 were only dimly conscious, if at all, of the fact that the people, scenes, buildings and material culture of previous centuries would have looked different from those to which they were accustomed’. He argued that a ‘grasp of the visual dimension of the past’ developed in the post-medieval era.

Such contentions may have validity within the precise frame of reference within which their authors conceived them, but we should hesitate to deduce from them broader principles about a lack of temporal distance and sophistication in the Middle Ages. Contrary evidence for the long twelfth century lies not just in historical narrative but in the manuscripts which carry them – the additions and comments of annotators marking important reigns and events, certainly, but, most especially, the quantities of lists: kings, bishops, other office holders, genealogies, synchronisms. The works of Henry of Huntingdon, John of Worcester and Ralph Diceto all attracted such historical satellites, but they are only among the more famous examples of a much larger phenomenon.

Much of this material is unedited and too diverse and scattered to be readily editable and so it is essentially lost to scholarship except as an indistinct impression. Another core around which chronological information collected was documentary. Collections of charters attracted parahistorical texts: lists of

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74 Woolf, *The social circulation*, 220, see also 20, 182, 394.
75 For evidence that these views are beginning to be challenged, see Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, New York 2010, esp. 45–6.
estates, benefactors, abbeys; inventories. All served to order the past, to set it to
rights, to make it manageable.

One prevalent form of management of the past was, of course, forgery: the
creation of surrogate texts to replace lost texts or to displace inadequate ones.
These reconstructions were themselves often works of consummate scholarship.
To be credible, a forger had to have a sense of chronology, to know what
historical actors were alive when and where, what kinds of textual protocols were
appropriate. The best forgeries employed historical scholarship: their draftsmen
manufactured new texts out of original documents and scoured narrative sources
for additional information. Indeed, they constituted a form of historical
narrative in their own right. But the entire process bespeaks historical literacy:
the ability to order the past. Likewise the scribes who had occasion to create
replacement documents, whether the text were forged or not, had engaged in
a process of archival research and observation, locating examples of script of
equivalent date, more or less accurately depending on the available resources
and the scribe’s own skill. The process itself was well attested before the Norman
Conquest, though the quality of the best reproductions in the twelfth century
surpasses earlier efforts by some margin. The fabrication of imitative charters
indicates that their creators perceived historical difference, even anachronism,
and, most importantly, that they anticipated such perceptions on the part of the
audience for whom replica charters were intended.

Frank Barlow wrote of the ‘ornamental quality’ of Durham forgeries: They satisfied the craving for a long history and ancient titles; and they were
convenient and suitably distinguished for exhibition when in the later Middle
Ages episcopal visitations took on quo warranto characteristics, and claims to any
special privilege had regularly to be proved.

Products of the long twelfth century would have served this ceremonial function
admirably. At their best their makers had created near-perfect simulacra of
tenth-century originals calculated to deceive contemporaries and destined to
confuse future generations.

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77 For an early-thirteenth-century example, see BL, Cotton Nero A. i.
78 As Giry described: Manuel, 867.
79 ‘For a history to be asserted and acknowledged, it must be textualized’: A. Hiatt,
‘Forgery at the University of Cambridge’, New Medieval Literatures iii (1999), 95–118, at
103.
80 Barlow, Durham jurisdictional peculiaris, 150–51.