

= Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle =

The Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle is a collection of annals in Old English chronicling the history of the Anglo @-@ Saxons . The original manuscript of the Chronicle was created late in the 9th century , probably in Wessex , during the reign of Alfred the Great . Multiple copies were made of that one original and then distributed to monasteries across England , where they were independently updated . In one case , the Chronicle was still being actively updated in 1154 .

Nine manuscripts survive in whole or in part , though not all are of equal historical value and none of them is the original version . The oldest seems to have been started towards the end of Alfred 's reign , while the most recent was written at Peterborough Abbey after a fire at that monastery in 1116 . Almost all of the material in the Chronicle is in the form of annals , by year ; the earliest are dated at 60 BC (the annals ' date for Caesar 's invasions of Britain) , and historical material follows up to the year in which the chronicle was written , at which point contemporary records begin . These manuscripts collectively are known as the Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle .

The Chronicle is not unbiased : there are occasions when comparison with other medieval sources makes it clear that the scribes who wrote it omitted events or told one @-@ sided versions of stories ; there are also places where the different versions contradict each other . Taken as a whole , however , the Chronicle is the single most important historical source for the period in England between the departure of the Romans and the decades following the Norman conquest . Much of the information given in the Chronicle is not recorded elsewhere . In addition , the manuscripts are important sources for the history of the English language ; in particular , the later Peterborough text is one of the earliest examples of Middle English in existence .

Seven of the nine surviving manuscripts and fragments now reside in the British Library . The remaining two are in the Bodleian Library at Oxford and the Parker Library of Corpus Christi College , Cambridge .

= = Composition = =

All of the surviving manuscripts are copies , so it is not known for certain where or when the first version of the Chronicle was composed . It is generally agreed that the original version was written in the late 9th century by a scribe in Wessex . After the original Chronicle was compiled , copies were made and distributed to various monasteries . Additional copies were made , for further distribution or to replace lost manuscripts , and some copies were updated independently of each other . Some of these later copies are those that have survived .

The earliest extant manuscript , the Winchester Chronicle , was written by a single scribe up to the year 891 . The scribe wrote the year number , DCCCXCII , in the margin of the next line ; subsequent material was written by other scribes . This appears to place the composition of the chronicle at no later than 892 ; further evidence is provided by Bishop Asser 's use of a version of the Chronicle in his work Life of King Alfred , known to have been composed in 893 . It is known that the Winchester manuscript is at least two removes from the original Chronicle ; as a result , there is no proof that the Chronicle was compiled at Winchester . It is also difficult to fix the date of composition , but it is generally thought that the chronicles were composed during the reign of Alfred the Great (871 ? 99) , as Alfred deliberately tried to revive learning and culture during his reign , and encouraged the use of English as a written language . The Chronicle , as well as the distribution of copies to other centres of learning , may be a consequence of the changes Alfred introduced .

= = Surviving manuscripts = =

Of the nine surviving manuscripts , seven are written entirely in Old English (also known as Anglo @-@ Saxon) . One , known as the Bilingual Canterbury Epitome , is in Old English with a translation of each annal into Latin . Another , the Peterborough Chronicle , is in Old English except for the last entry , which is in early Middle English . The oldest (Corp. Chris . MS 173) is known as the Winchester Chronicle or the Parker Chronicle (after Matthew Parker , an Archbishop of

Canterbury , who once owned it) . Six of the manuscripts were printed in an 1861 edition for the Rolls Series by Benjamin Thorpe with the text laid out in columns labelled A to F. Following this convention , the three additional manuscripts are often called [G] , [H] and [I] . The surviving manuscripts are listed below .

= = Relationships between the manuscripts = =

The manuscripts are all thought to derive from a common original , but the connections between the texts are more complex than simple inheritance via copying . The diagram at right gives an overview of the relationships between the manuscripts . The following is a summary of the relationships that are known .

[A2] was a copy of [A] , made in Winchester , probably between 1001 and 1013 .

[B] was used in the compilation of [C] at Abingdon , in the mid @-@ 11th century . However , the scribe for [C] also had access to another version , which has not survived .

[D] includes material from Bede 's Ecclesiastical History and from a set of 8th @-@ century Northumbrian annals and is thought to have been copied from a northern version that has not survived .

[E] has material that appears to derive from the same sources as [D] but does not include some additions that appear only in [D] , such as the Mercian Register . This manuscript was composed at the monastery in Peterborough , some time after a fire there in 1116 that probably destroyed their copy of the Chronicle ; [E] appears to have been created thereafter as a copy of a Kentish version , probably from Canterbury .

[F] appears to include material from the same Canterbury version that was used to create [E] .

Asser 's Life of King Alfred , which was written in 893 , includes a translation of the Chronicle 's entries from 849 to 887 . Only [A] , of surviving manuscripts , could have been in existence by 893 , but there are places where Asser departs from the text in [A] , so it is possible that Asser used a version that has not survived .

Æthelweard wrote a translation of the Chronicle into Latin in the late 10th century ; the version he used probably came from the same branch in the tree of relationships that [A] comes from .

Asser 's text agrees with [A] and with Æthelweard 's text in some places against the combined testimony of [B] , [C] , [D] and [E] , implying that there is a common ancestor for the latter four manuscripts .

At Abingdon , some time between 1120 and 1140 , an unknown author wrote a Latin chronicle known as the Annals of St Neots . This work includes material from a copy of the Chronicle , but it is very difficult to tell which version because the annalist was selective about his use of the material . It may have been a northern recension , or a Latin derivative of that recension .

All the manuscripts described above share a chronological error between the years 756 and 845 , but it is apparent that the composer of the Annals of St Neots was using a copy that did not have this error and which must have preceded them . Æthelweard 's copy did have the chronological error but it had not lost a whole sentence from annal 885 ; all the surviving manuscripts have lost this sentence . Hence the error and the missing sentence must have been introduced in separate copying steps , implying that none of the surviving manuscripts are closer than two removes from the original version .

= = History of the manuscripts = =

= = The Winchester Chronicle = =

[A] : The Winchester (or Parker) Chronicle is the oldest manuscript of the Chronicle that survives . It was begun at Old Minster , Winchester , towards the end of Alfred 's reign . The manuscript begins with a genealogy of Alfred , and the first chronicle entry is for the year 60 BC . The section containing the Chronicle takes up folios 1 ? 32 . Unlike the other manuscripts , [A] is of early

enough composition to show entries dating back to the late 9th century in the hands of different scribes as the entries were made . The first scribe 's hand is dateable to the late 9th or very early 10th century ; his entries cease in late 891 , and the following entries were made at intervals throughout the 10th century by several scribes . The eighth scribe wrote the annals for the years 925 ? 955 , and was clearly at Winchester when he wrote them since he adds some material related to events there ; he also uses ceaster , or " city " , to mean Winchester . The manuscript becomes independent of the other recensions after the entry for 975 . The book , which also had a copy of the Laws of Alfred and Ine bound in after the entry for 924 , was transferred to Canterbury some time in the early 11th century , as evidenced by a list of books that Archbishop Parker gave to Corpus Christi . While at Canterbury , some interpolations were made ; this required some erasures in the manuscript . The additional entries appear to have been taken from a version of the manuscript from which [E] descends . The last entry in the vernacular is for 1070 . After this comes the Latin Acta Lanfranci , which covers church events from 1070 ? 1093 . This is followed by a list of popes and the Archbishops of Canterbury to whom they sent the pallium . The manuscript was acquired by Matthew Parker , Archbishop of Canterbury (1559 ? 1575) and master of Corpus Christi College , Cambridge , following the dissolution of the monasteries , and bequeathed to the college on his death . It now forms part of the Parker Library .

= = = The Abingdon Chronicle I = = =

[B] The Abingdon Chronicle I was written by a single scribe in the second half of the 10th century . The Chronicle takes up folios 1 ? 34 . It begins with an entry for 60 BC and ends with the entry for 977 . A manuscript that is now separate (British Library MS. Cotton Tiberius Aiii , f . 178) was originally the introduction to this chronicle ; it contains a genealogy , as does [A] , but extends it to the late 10th century . [B] was at Abingdon in the mid @-@ 11th century , because it was used in the composition of [C] . Shortly after this it went to Canterbury , where interpolations and corrections were made . As with [A] , it ends with a list of popes and the archbishops of Canterbury to whom they sent the pallium .

= = = The Abingdon Chronicle II = = =

[C] includes additional material from local annals at Abingdon , where it was composed . The section containing the Chronicle (folios 115 ? 64) is preceded by King Alfred 's Old English translation of Orosius 's world history , followed by a menologium and some gnomic verses of the laws of the natural world and of humanity . Then follows a copy of the chronicle , beginning with 60 BC ; the first scribe copied up to the entry for 490 , and a second scribe took over up to the entry for 1048 . [B] and [C] are identical between 491 and 652 , but differences thereafter make it clear that the second scribe was also using another copy of the Chronicle . This scribe also inserted , after the annal for 915 , the Mercian Register , which covers the years 902 ? 924 , and which focuses on Æthelflæd . The manuscript continues to 1066 and stops in the middle of the description of the Battle of Stamford Bridge . In the 12th century a few lines were added to complete the account .

= = = The Worcester Chronicle = = =

[D] The Worcester Chronicle appears to have been written in the middle of the 11th century . After 1033 it includes some records from Worcester , so it is generally thought to have been composed there . Five different scribes can be identified for the entries up to 1054 , after which it appears to have been worked on at intervals . The text includes material from Bede 's Ecclesiastical History and from a set of 8th @-@ century Northumbrian annals . It is thought that some of the entries may have been composed by Archbishop Wulfstan . [D] contains more information than other manuscripts on northern and Scottish affairs , and it has been speculated that it was a copy intended for the Anglicised Scottish court . From 972 to 1016 , the sees of York and Worcester were both held by the same person ? Oswald from 972 , Ealdwulf from 992 , and Wulfstan from 1003 , and this may

explain why a northern recension was to be found at Worcester . By the 16th century , parts of the manuscript were lost ; eighteen pages were inserted containing substitute entries from other sources , including [A] , [B] , [C] and [E] . These pages were written by John Joscelyn , who was secretary to Matthew Parker .

= = = The Peterborough Chronicle = = =

[E] The Peterborough Chronicle : In 1116 , a fire at the monastery at Peterborough destroyed most of the buildings . The copy of the Chronicle kept there may have been lost at that time or later , but in either case shortly thereafter a fresh copy was made , apparently copied from a Kentish version ? most likely to have been from Canterbury . The manuscript was written at one time and by a single scribe , down to the annal for 1121 . The scribe added material relating to Peterborough Abbey which is not in other versions . The Canterbury original which he copied was similar , but not identical , to [D] : the Mercian Register does not appear , and a poem about the Battle of Brunanburh in 937 , which appears in most of the other surviving copies of the Chronicle , is not recorded . The same scribe then continued the annals through to 1131 ; these entries were made at intervals , and thus are presumably contemporary records . Finally , a second scribe , in 1154 , wrote an account of the years 1132 ? 1154 ; but his dating is known to be unreliable . This last entry is in Middle English , rather than Old English . [E] was once owned by William Laud , Archbishop of Canterbury 1633 ? 1654 , so is also known as the Laud Chronicle . The manuscript contains occasional glosses in Latin , and is referred to (as " the Saxon storye of Peterborowe church ") in an antiquarian book from 1566 . According to Joscelyn , Nowell had a transcript of the manuscript . Previous owners include William Camden and William L 'Isle ; the latter probably passed the manuscript on to Laud .

= = = The Canterbury Bilingual Epitome = = =

[F] The Canterbury Bilingual Epitome : At about 1100 , a copy of the Chronicle was written at Christ Church , Canterbury , probably by one of the scribes who made notes in [A] . This version is written in both Old English and Latin ; each entry in Old English was followed by the Latin version . The version the scribe copied (on folios 30 ? 70) is similar to the version used by the scribe in Peterborough who wrote [E] , though it seems to have been abridged . It includes the same introductory material as [D] and , along with [E] , is one of the two chronicles that does not include the " Battle of Brunanburh " poem . The manuscript has many annotations and interlineations , some made by the original scribe and some by later scribes , including Robert Talbot .

= = = Copy of the Winchester Chronicle = = =

[A2] / [G] Copy of the Winchester Chronicle : [A2] was copied from [A] at Winchester in the eleventh century and follows a 10th @-@ century copy of an Old English translation of Bede 's Ecclesiastical History . The last annal copied was 1001 , so the copy was made no earlier than that ; an episcopal list appended to [A2] suggests that the copy was made by 1013 . This manuscript was almost completely destroyed in the 1731 fire at Ashburnham House , where the Cotton Library was housed . Of the original 34 leaves , seven remain , ff . 39 ? 47 in the manuscript . However , a transcript had been made by Laurence Nowell , a 16th @-@ century antiquary , which was used by Abraham Wheelocke in an edition of the Chronicle printed in 1643 . Because of this , it is also sometimes known as [W] , after Wheelocke . The appellations [A] , [A2] and [G] derive from Plummer , Smith and Thorpe , respectively .

= = = Cottonian Fragment = = =

The Cottonian Fragment [H] consists of a single leaf , containing annals for 1113 and 1114 . In the entry for 1113 it includes the phrase " he came to Winchester " ; hence it is thought likely that the

manuscript was written at Winchester . There is not enough of this manuscript for reliable relationships to other manuscripts to be established . Ker notes that the entries may have been written contemporarily .

== Easter Table Chronicle ==

[I] Easter Table Chronicle : A list of Chronicle entries accompanies a table of years , found on folios 133 @-@ 37 in a badly burned manuscript containing miscellaneous notes on charms , the calculation of dates for church services , and annals pertaining to Christ Church , Canterbury . Most of the Chronicle 's entries pertain to Christ Church , Canterbury . Until 1109 (the death of Anselm of Canterbury) they are in English ; all but one of the following entries are in Latin . Part of [I] was written by a scribe soon after 1073 , in the same hand and ink as the rest of the Caligula MS. After 1085 , the annals are in various contemporary hands . The original annalist 's entry for the Norman conquest is limited to " Her forðferde eadward kyng " ; a later hand added the coming of William the Conqueror , " 7 her com willelm . " At one point this manuscript was at St Augustine 's Abbey , Canterbury .

== Lost manuscripts ==

Two manuscripts are recorded in an old catalogue of the library of Durham ; they are described as *cronica duo Anglica* . In addition , Parker included a manuscript called *Hist . Angliae Saxonica* in his gifts but the manuscript that included this , now Cambridge University Library MS. Hh.1.10 , has lost 52 of its leaves , including all of this copy of the chronicle .

== Use by Latin and Anglo @-@ Norman historians ==

The three main Anglo @-@ Norman historians , John of Worcester , William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon , each had a copy of the Chronicle , which they adapted for their own purposes . Symeon of Durham also had a copy of the Chronicle . Some later medieval historians also used the Chronicle , and others took their material from those who had used it , and so the Chronicle became " central to the mainstream of English historical tradition " .

Henry of Huntingdon used a copy of the Chronicle that was very similar to [E] . There is no evidence in his work of any of the entries in [E] after 1121 , so although his manuscript may actually have been [E] , it may also have been a copy ? either one taken of [E] prior to the entries he makes no use of , or a manuscript from which [E] was copied , with the copying taking place prior to the date of the last annal he uses . Henry also made use of the [C] manuscript .

The Waverley Annals made use of a manuscript that was similar to [E] , though it appears that it did not contain the entries focused on Peterborough . The manuscript of the chronicle translated by Geoffrey Gaimar cannot be identified accurately , though according to historian Dorothy Whitelock it was " a rather better text than ' E ' or ' F ' " . Gaimar implies that there was a copy at Winchester in his day (the middle of the 12th century) ; Whitelock suggests that there is evidence that a manuscript that has not survived to the present day was at Winchester in the mid @-@ tenth century . If it survived to Gaimar 's time that would explain why [A] was not kept up to date , and why [A] could be given to the monastery at Canterbury .

John of Worcester 's *Chronicon ex chronicis* appears to have had a manuscript that was either [A] or similar to it ; he makes use of annals that do not appear in other versions , such as entries concerning Edward the Elder 's campaigns and information about Winchester towards the end of the chronicle . His account is often similar to that of [D] , though there is less attention paid to Margaret of Scotland , an identifying characteristic of [D] . He had the Mercian register , which appears only in [C] and [D] ; and he includes material from annals 979 ? 982 which only appears in [C] . It is possible he had a manuscript that was an ancestor of [D] . He also had sources which have not been identified , and some of his statements have no earlier surviving source .

A manuscript similar to [E] was available to William of Malmesbury , though it is unlikely to have

been [E] as that manuscript is known to have still been in Peterborough after the time William was working , and he does not make use of any of the entries in [E] that are specifically related to Peterborough . It is likely he had either the original from which [E] was copied , or a copy of that original . He mentions that the chronicles do not give any information on the murder of Alfred Aetheling , but since this is covered in both [C] and [D] it is apparent he had no access to those manuscripts . On occasion he appears to show some knowledge of [D] , but it is possible that his information was taken from John of Worcester 's account . He also omits any reference to a battle fought by Cenwealh in 652 ; this battle is mentioned in [A] , [B] and [C] , but not in [E] . He does mention a battle fought by Cenwealh at Wirtgernesburg , which is not in any of the extant manuscripts , so it is possible he had a copy now lost .

= = Importance = =

The Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle is the single most important source for the history of England in Anglo @-@ Saxon times . Without the Chronicle and Bede 's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (the Ecclesiastical History of the English People) , it would be impossible to write the history of the English from the Romans to the Norman conquest ; Nicholas Howe called them " the two great Anglo @-@ Saxon works of history " . It is clear that records and annals of some kind began to be kept in England at the time of the earliest spread of Christianity , but no such records survive in their original form . Instead they were incorporated in later works , and it is thought likely that the Chronicle contains many of these . The history it tells is not only that witnessed by its compilers , but also that recorded by earlier annalists , whose work is in many cases preserved nowhere else .

Its importance is not limited to the historical information it provides , however . It is just as important a source for the early development of English . The Peterborough Chronicle changes from the standard Old English literary language to early Middle English after 1131 , providing some of the earliest Middle English text known . Howe notes , in " Rome : Capitol of Anglo @-@ Saxon England " , that many of the entries indicate that Rome was considered a spiritual home for the Anglo @-@ Saxons , Rome and Roman history being of paramount importance in many of the entries ; he cites the one for AD 1 , for instance , which lists the reign of Octavian Augustus before it mentions the birth of Christ .

The Chronicle is not without literary interest . Inserted at various points since the 10th century are Old English poems in celebration of royal figures and their achievements : " The Battle of Brunanburh " (937) , on King Æthelstan 's victory over the combined forces of Vikings , Scots and the Strathclyde Britons , and five shorter poems , " Capture of the Five Boroughs " (942) , " The Coronation of King Edgar " (973) , " The Death of King Edgar " (975) , " The Death of Prince Alfred " (1036) , and " The Death of King Edward the Confessor " (1065) .

= = History of editions and availability = =

An important early printed edition of the Chronicle appeared in 1692 , by Edmund Gibson , an English jurist and divine who became Bishop of Lincoln in that year . Titled *Chronicum Saxonicum* , it printed Latin and Old English versions of the text in parallel columns and became the standard edition until the 19th century . It was superseded in 1861 by Benjamin Thorpe 's *Rolls* edition , which printed six versions in columns , labelled A to F , thus giving the manuscripts the letters which are now used to refer to them .

John Earle wrote *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel* (1865) . Charles Plummer edited this book , producing a *Revised Text* with notes , appendices , and glossary in two volumes in 1892 and 1899 . This edition of the A and E texts , with material from other versions , was widely used ; it was reprinted in 1952 .

= = Editions of the individual manuscripts = =

Beginning in the 1980s , a new set of scholarly editions have been printed under the series title "

The Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle : A Collaborative Edition " . Some volumes are still projected , such as a volume focusing on the northern recension , but existing volumes such as Janet Bately 's edition of [A] are now standard references . A recent translation of the Chronicle is Michael Swanton 's The Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle , which presents translations of [A] and [E] on opposite pages , with interspersed material from the other manuscripts where they differ .

A facsimile edition of [A] , The Parker Chronicle and Laws , appeared in 1941 from the Oxford University Press , edited by Robin Flower and Hugh Smith . A recent scholarly edition of the [B] text is The Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle : A Collaborative Edition , 4 , MS B by S. Taylor (Cambridge , 1983) . The [C] manuscript was edited by H.A. Rositzke ; The C @-@ Text of the Old English Chronicles , in Beitrage z. engl . Phil . , XXXIV , Bochum @-@ Langendreer , 1940 ; and the [D] manuscript in An Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle from British Museum Cotton MS. , Tiberius B. iv , edited by E. Classen and F.E. Harmer , Manchester , 1926 . Rositzke also published a translation of the [E] text in The Peterborough Chronicle (New York , 1951) . The [F] text was printed in F.P. Magoun , Jr . , Annales Domitiani Latini : an Edition in " Mediaeval Studies of the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies " , IX , 1947 , pp. 235 ? 295 . The first edition of [G] was Abraham Whelock 's 1644 Venerabilis Bedae Historia Ecclesiastica , printed in Cambridge ; there is also an edition by Angelica Lutz , Die Version G der angelsächsischen Chronik : Rekonstruktion und Edition (Munich , 1981) .