‘In Loco Amoenissimo’: Fifteenth-Century St Albans and the Role of Place in Thomas Walsingham’s Description of Wales

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‘In general it seems that space provides the context for places but derives its meaning from particular places.’ 1 (Edward C. Relph)

At the foot of a manuscript page of the Chronica Maiora, a chronicle attributed to Thomas Walsingham (d. c. 1422), is a jotting under the year 1403 by an unknown writer which reads:

Christe, Dei Splendor, tibi supplico, delta Gbendor.
Iste versus fuit scriptus in fine chori Monachorum Sancti Albani. 2
[Christ, Splendour of God, I beseech you, destroy Glyndŵr.
This verse was written in the choir of the Monks of St Alban.]

This brief jotting is a reaction to a rebellion currently unfolding in Wales under the leadership of Owain Glyndŵr, a notable distance from the Benedictine Abbey of St Albans in Hertfordshire. The jotting expresses an anxiety so deep-seated that an individual was moved to deface a manuscript page. Written in dactylic hexameter, it is testimony of the level of education at the Abbey of St Albans from which it can be assumed that the writer came. 3 How this jotting came to exist, however, is somewhat clouded; two possibilities present themselves, although both are speculative. It is possible that the jotting on the manuscript is the original and that it was written down within the parameters of the church choir; 4 another possibility is that the jotting on the manuscript page is a copy of a piece of graffiti no longer in existence which was scribbled on a pew or stonework somewhere within the choir. 5 If this is the case, the second line of the jotting was a later addition in order to denote the location of the graffiti. Regardless of the correct interpretation, the Abbey of St Albans is pivotal in understanding the significance of this jotting. Its point of creation has a described locus

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3 This paper is accompanied by nine images. They can be accessed online at http://www.elsewhereonline.com.au


5 Corpus Christi College MS 7, fo.3.r; this is available in print under the title of the Annales Ricardi Secundi et Henrici Quarti, Regum Angliae in Chronica Monasterii S. Albani, ed. by Henry Thomas Riley (London: Rolls Series, 1866), p. 374.

6 The jotting and comment is the work of one person as it was written in one hand. It should be noted that only the first line scans as a dactylic hexameter and even then the scansion is not entirely correct, in that the ‘o’ in supplico is treated as short when it should be long.

7 The modern position of the choir in the cathedral is the same as it was in the fifteenth century. For more information see Eileen Roberts, The Hill of the Martyr: An Architectural History of St Albans (Dunstable, UK: Book Castle, 1993), p. 57.

8 One possible place would be on the choir stalls constructed in the reign of Edward II, with funding from the monarch. These are no longer extant; Roberts, The Hill of the Martyr, p. 122.
which is outside the traditional place for writing, the scriptorium; it is thus a blurring of the demarcated spaces of functional, monastic life.\textsuperscript{6}

It is only through the physical realities of the St Albans Abbey complex that the significance of this jotting takes shape. In the first scenario, composition of the jotting involves the deliberate movement of the manuscript between two buildings in the abbey, the choir and the scriptorium. This would have involved considerable effort to move the manuscript, as the distance between the choir and the scriptorium is significant, as a recent reconstruction of the abbey shows (Fig. 1: Reconstruction of St Albans Abbey); the scriptorium was located away from the main cloister and accommodation block.\textsuperscript{7} The second and more likely option, that the jotting is a copy of an already existing piece of graffiti, means that a historical artefact has made its way into the historical text. The jotting serves to explicate the narrative and certainly the page on which the jotting sits was deliberately chosen within the chronicle as a whole: the page is a discussion of the request by English king Henry IV (reigned 1399 to 1413) to the abbots of England to donate money in order to sustain his fight against the Welsh rebellion.

Whatever its history, the jotting expresses a fear that events unfolding in a distant place (Wales) could impact upon the security of the Abbey of St Albans, whether physically through violence or by contributing to financial hardships; disruption on the manuscript page, caused by the insertion of this comment is a reflection of disruption in the place of its creation caused by fear of the Welsh revolt. This fear has resulted in several actions within the abbey and was probably written to incite further reaction outside the abbey walls; it is most probable that the writer assumed an outside audience and hence needed to specify ‘in the choir of the monks of St Albans’ rather than simply ‘in the choir’ which would have sufficed for the internal reader.

This essay has modest objectives: to explore how understandings of a foreign and distant place could be moulded by the author’s own surroundings; in other words how an author’s place can impact upon a historical narrative. Rich in archive materials and archaeological evidence, the Abbey of St Albans in the fifteenth century offers an excellent case-study, as the jotting illustrates. St Albans was a very important centre for the production of books and the dissemination of literature in Medieval England; in existence since around the year 1100, the historical school at St Albans, as it was commonly known, included such noteworthy chroniclers as William of Malmesbury (d. 1143), Matthew Paris (d. 1259) and Roger Wendover (d. 1236).\textsuperscript{8} In the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century the St Albans historical school was as strong as ever with a significant number of chronicles being produced; many of these have been attributed to the chronicler Thomas Walsingham (d. c.1422) including the \textit{Chronica Maiora},\textsuperscript{9} the


\textsuperscript{7} Claude Jenkins, \textit{The Monastic Chronicler and the Early School of St Albans: A Lecture} (London: Macmillan, 1922), p. 25.


\textsuperscript{9} The \textit{Chronica Maiora} was a continuation of Matthew Paris’s chronicle of the same name, which had been extended once already by William Rishanger to the year 1307. Walsingham was thought to have started this chronicle in the year 1376. See Gransden, \textit{Historical Writing,} Vol. II, pp. 124–126. The \textit{Chronica Maiora} was published in the Rolls series, but unfortunately the text was dissected into three
Historia Anglicana, The Chronicon Angliae, the Ypodigma Neustriae (The Symbol of Normandy) and finally the Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani (Deeds of the Abbots of the Monastery of St Albans) of Matthew Paris, which Walsingham extended up until the year 1393. While Walsingham was certainly involved in the composition of many historical texts in the Abbey’s scriptorium the degree of his involvement is questionable and debate is ongoing. This is highlighted by the recent publication of two very different versions of the Chronica Maiora. Arguments surround which of the existing manuscripts was Walsingham’s original version or whether Walsingham had anything to do with the text at all; debate is likely to continue for many years to come. For my part, I will be referring to Thomas Walsingham as the creator of these chronicles throughout this essay, though in doing so I fully acknowledge that there is evidence for and against such an assertion.

The chronicles composed at St Albans in the early fifteenth century were written in an era characterised by changes in government and rebellions within England; the deposition of Richard II by Henry of Lancaster (later Henry IV) in 1399 set off a chain of revolts which were to mar Henry’s reign; one of the most significant rebellions was

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parts: the years 1376–7 are printed in the Chronicon Angliae pp. 68–147; 1377 to 1392 are in the Historia Anglicana, Vol. 1, pp. 329–484 and Vol. 2 pp. 1–211; and 1393 to 1406 is printed as the aforementioned Annales Ricardi Secundi et Henrici Quartii, Regnum Angliae in the Rolls Series (1866); the remaining years 1406 to 1420 were not published by the Rolls Series, but appear as The St Albans Chronicle 1406 to 1420, ed. by V. H. Galbraith (Oxford: Clarendon, 1937.)

10 Historia Anglicana covers 1272 to 1422 and was written between 1400 and 1420; printed in Thomae Walsingham, Quondam Monachi S. Albani, Historia Anglicana, ed. by Henry Thomas Riley, 2 Vols (London: Rolls Series, 1863.)

11 Covers the history of the years 1328 to 1388 and is printed as Chronicon Angliae ab anno Domini 1328 usque ad annum 1388, ed. by E. M. Thompson (London: Rolls Series, 1874.)

12 This was thought to be Walsingham’s last chronicle, it was written c.1420 and was dedicated to King Henry V; printed as Ypodigma Neustriae a Thoma Walsingham, ed. by Henry Thomas Riley (London: Rolls Series, 1876.) See Gransden, Historical Writing, Vol. II, p. 126.

13 Walsingham wrote the Gesta between 1390 and 1393. The editors of the Rolls Series decided to combine Matthew Paris’ and Walsingham’s texts into one publication; this is printed as The Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani, ed. by H. T. Riley (London: Rolls Series, 3 Vols, 1867–9). It should be noted that there was a third and unknown continues of the Gestus after Walsingham, who is also included in the same Rolls Series publication. This writer took the history up until the year 1411.


16 For example, in his introduction to the Chronica Maiora (2005) James G. Clarke believes that the Rolls Series version (published as the Annales Ricardi Secundi et Henrici Quartii, Regnum Angliae in 1866) is not by Walsingham, but instead suggests another monk by the name of William Wintershill as an alternative (p. 19.)


the Welsh revolt of Owain Glyndŵr, which lasted for over ten years.\textsuperscript{19} Owain Glyndŵr’s revolt drained Henry’s finances and diverted much-needed resources.\textsuperscript{20} The revolt itself aimed at formulating a Welsh nation independent of English rule; at his home in Glyndyfrdwy, north Wales, in September 1400 Owain Glyndŵr was proclaimed the Prince of Wales and for the duration of the revolt he set about establishing permanent national borders, alliances with foreign kings (including the King of France),\textsuperscript{21} and fostering Welsh culture through the establishment of universities in Wales and by ensuring that clerics could speak Welsh.\textsuperscript{22} Naturally this involved armed conflict with English landholders in Wales and the borderlands, which included wealthy and influential families such as the Mortimers and the Greys and the disempowerment of English administration and military strength in Wales, such as that centred in Harlech. In 1403 Owain Glyndŵr entered into an alliance with the Percy and Mortimer families (commonly referred to as the Tripartite Indenture) and so allied Wales with an anti–Henry IV movement which aimed at replacing the English king with the young Edmund Mortimer, the Earl of March.\textsuperscript{23} This was a direct threat to the English crown and resulted in the crushing defeat of Henry Percy (Hotspur) at the Battle of Shrewsbury in the same year.

Thomas Walsingham articulates in his writings a multifaceted understanding of concepts of place when describing Wales, and yet we can be fairly sure that he did not ever visit Wales.\textsuperscript{24} As shall be discussed, Walsingham describes Wales as an inaccessible landscape with inhospitable mountains and bad weather; the people who inhabit this place are barbaric and violent and their proclaimed leader Owain Glyndŵr has demonic powers that allow him to transcend nature and use it against the English. For Walsingham Wales is a place of alterity. It is Walsingham’s engagement with Wales that is the subject of this essay and it will be my argument that the Wales of Walsingham’s narrative is an imagined place and one which is linked more to St Albans than to Wales itself.

\textsuperscript{19} Although it should be noted that the rebellion lasted until 1415, Owain Glyndŵr was fairly ineffectual after 1409 because of constant military pressure from Henry, Prince of Wales (later Henry V). By 1409 Owain Glyndŵr had lost possession of the important centres of Harlech and Aberystwyth Castles and most of his immediate family and followers had been imprisoned or killed. For further information about particulars and events of the revolt, see R. R. Davies, _The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr_ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); also the older but fundamental work by J.E. Lloyd, _Owen Glendower (Owen Glyn Dŵr)_ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1931.)


\textsuperscript{21} For example a treaty was signed between Owain Glyndŵr and the king of France, Charles VI, which states that ‘The king and the prince ...[became] mutually joined, confederated, united and leagued by the bond of true covenant and real friendship and of a sure, full and most powerful union against Henry of Lancaster, an adversary and enemy of both parties ...’, in ‘The Ratification of the Treaty between Owen, of Wales, and Charles VI, King of France, January, 1405’, _Welsh Records in Paris_, ed. by T. Matthews (Carmarthen: Spurrell, 1910), p. 76.

\textsuperscript{22} In a letter to the French King Charles VI, Owain Glyndŵr writes of his desire to establish ‘two universities or places of general study ... one in north Wales and one in south Wales, in cities, towns or places to be hereafter decided ...’ in ‘Owen, Prince of Wales, to Charles VI., King of France, Promising Obedience to Pope Benedict XII, March 1406’, _Welsh Records in Paris_, ed. by T. Matthews, p. 98. For further discussion of Owain Glyndŵr’s policies for strengthening Welsh culture, see Davies, _The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr_, pp. 169–172.

\textsuperscript{23} Certainly the young Edmund Mortimer (d.1425) had a solid claim to the English crown, however it was through the female line: his grandmother Philippa (on his father’s side) was the daughter of Lionel of Clarence, the second eldest son of Edward III (d. 1377).

\textsuperscript{24} Certainly there is no archival evidence for this, and analysis of his writings does not reveal a direct knowledge of Wales, as will be discussed.
Walsingham’s Imagined Wales

Walsingham’s description of the Welsh revolt in his *Historia Anglicana* and *Chronica Maiora* is not large, occupying about five pages as a whole between the two chronicles; however the imagery and language he employs are rich and multifaceted. Walsingham describes the landscape of Wales as fearful and alarming, take for instance his account of Henry IV’s expedition into Wales:

> When the King had set up camp in a most idyllic place, where nothing fearful but rather the most deep rest was expected, suddenly in the first watch of that very night winds blew and rains came down so heavily that they threw down the very tent of the king, and the wind overthrew the king’s lance, and set it down into his armour. That very night would have been the last for the king, if he had not slept armed. And the English did not remember, although they were accustomed to war-like affairs, ever being so harassed or exposed to such dangers in any expedition.

Wales emerges as an inhospitable and alien place, it is rugged, stormy and unpredictable. The camp (considered a secure area) is transformed from a place of tranquillity to one of danger within a short passage of time. This is one of several examples Walsingham provides of the English inability to read the Welsh landscape. The king is continually harassed by the weather and his army forced to retreat; when they do engage in combat the English suffer heavy losses as a result of not being able to interpret this alien terrain; they have to defend themselves against guerrilla warfare employed by the Welsh and are not able to engage in the pitched battle that they are accustomed to. All Henry IV can do effectively is burn parts of Wales and pilfer livestock to take back to England.

In contrast the Welsh experience of the mountains is favourable: the landscape is hospitable and homely, providing shelter. On several occasions Walsingham mentions that the Snowdonia Mountains and forests of Wales provide refuge for the rebels, where they can ‘[withdraw] at once from impending vengeance’ to their ‘known lurking places.’ This is a landscape which allows for and harbours rebellion; Walsingham is not alone in his opinions of Snowdonia, echoes of which are found in the chronicle of Adam of Usk, a contemporary of Walsingham and a Welshman, who writes that Snowdon is ‘the source of all evils in Wales.’

The inhabitants of Wales are described by Walsingham as a reflection of the wild landscape in which they dwell; the Welsh soldiers kill their English rivals with the utmost ‘cruelty and savagery’ and are exceptionally violent, raiding and plundering

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25 For a further discussion see Yi–Fu Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear* (New York: Pantheon, 1979.)
28 *Historia Anglicana* (Vol. 2), p. 246. The movement of the animals from Wales to England can be read as an attempt at removing Welsh provisions, but also as a way of altering the rural landscape and leaving the area unproductive and barren.
31 The *Chronicle of Adam of Usk* 1377–1421, ed. and trans. Chris Given–Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), p. 173. Adam of Usk (d.1430) was born in the town of Usk in Monmouthshire c.1350; Adam’s comments were made at a time when he was seeking royal patronage and favour, and thus the comments should be considered within this context.
without mercy, causing ‘great damage to the English.’

While this damage is directed at ‘the English’ people collectively it has consequences for individuals too, as this passage illustrates:

When more than a thousand of our men had been killed, the following crime was perpetrated, unheard of in all the ages, for the women of the Welsh, after the conflict, cut off the genitalia of the slain. They placed the genitals, in the mouths of the slain man. And they made the testicles hang down from the chin, and they pressed the noses into the anus of the same men; and they did not allow the bodies of the slain to be given their last rites without a great price.

This exceptionally rich passage constructs an image of the perpetrators as an unsympathetic, uncivilised, demented and irrational group, and while this is a strong outcome it is reached via a series of subtle points. It is significant that the main agents are women as it creates an image of Wales which is contrary to the norms of society; here the women are taking an active role in an event which is enacted within the public sphere. Traditionally, women’s role in warfare was passive and enacted within a private setting, commonly awaiting news and the soldier’s return. When actively on or near the battlefield, the women’s role was common for the tending of wounded soldiers and general care, not deliberate and callous mutilation.

The purposeful selection of the genitals and the nose as the body–parts to be removed and the mouth and anus as the location of their re–attachment is significant. The women remove the two most distinguishing physical features of the male corpus, his genitals and part of the face, and place them in locations considered in medieval thought to be perilous and liminal, the mouths and anus; both are openings and passages to the interior regions of the body and were associated with wastes and the entry and exit points of humours. The end result is a body that is denatured and devoid of male form. Grotesque and monstrous, these newly rearranged bodies are comments on Welsh society and nation: the Welsh are barbaric and lacking in civility and morality. Naked, vulnerable and unable to defend themselves, the dead English soldiers are indicators of the balance of civility between the two warring factions. They are microcosms to the macrocosms of England and Wales; the mutilated bodies represent the body politic of England which is under attack by rebellion. As has previously been noted by Miri Rubin and Sarah Kay in their discussion of the body in medieval thought, ‘the body was a privileged site, vehicle and metaphor of political struggle.’ In this instance the dismembered body is a metaphor for a government facing numerous rebellions which has resulted in an inability to act effectively against the Welsh through military means; hence the bodies are de–masculinised by the women on the battlefield.

34 ‘occisio de nostratibus amplius quam mille viris : ubi perpetrator est facinus saeculis inauditum, nam feminae Wallencium, post conflictum, genitalia peremptorum absciderunt, testiculosque a mento dependere fecerunt; nasosque praecisos in culis presserunt eorumend; nec patiabantur corpora peremptorum sine grandi pretio supremis exequis commendari.’ Historia Anglica (Vol. 2), p. 250.
35 For instance Corinne Saunders argues that ‘[t]he world of medieval warfare—battle, arms, the tournament, jousting—was undoubtedly a world of men, one of the interconnected public spheres of medieval society, which found their opposites in the public and domestic spheres inhabited by the lady—the bedroom, the castle, the garden. Such contrasts between male and female, public and private, domestic and worldly lie at the heart of the medieval understanding and presentation of gender.’ (pp. 187–188), ‘Women and Warfare in Medieval English Writing’, Writing War: Medieval Literary Responses to Warfare, ed. by Corinne Saunders, Françoise Le Saux and Neil Thomas (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), pp. 187–212
It is notable that this event is enacted on a battlefield in Wales and not in England as it serves to reinforce boundaries between the two places: Walsingham’s Wales and England are poles apart, both culturally and physically; Walsingham’s narrative of the battle of Bryn Glas falls immediately after a description of the execution of eight Minorite Friars (Franciscans) in London for treason. The friars are ‘dragged, hung up and decapitated’\(^{38}\) for rebelling against the English king.\(^{39}\) Here Henry IV is shown to act forcefully and legitimately against rebellion within England; the mutilation of the English soldiers shows him to be powerless outside of England. When read together as part of a larger structural frame the mutilation of the English soldiers is juxtaposed against the mechanisms of good government; there are two acts of violence, one is justifiable\(^ {40}\) and enacted in the name of law and order and the other is simply violent. It is the innocent victims who undergo public humiliation and torture, and not the guilty party and this cannot be escaped from even after death.

The term with which Walsingham labels the Welsh, using \textit{Cambri} (Camry) as opposed to the usual Latin \textit{Wallici}, creates a sense of distance and alterity.\(^ {41}\) Camry is the term the Welsh use to refer to themselves and literally means ‘compatriots’. Walsingham uses \textit{Cambri} and \textit{Wallici} interchangeably\(^ {42}\) and is the only chronicler amongst his contemporaries and later chroniclers to do so.\(^ {43}\) Reference to the Welsh as ‘Camry’ creates and enforces barriers between the English and Welsh based around language and culture; it is not a word in common English usage.\(^ {44}\) It emphasises difference and results in the alienation of the English reader as it is outside the ‘linguistics net’;\(^ {45}\) in other words the English have no historical attachment to the word Camry. Moreover, the use of Camry places an emphasis on the Welsh as a communal group rather than providing a territorial base or a locus; and while Walsingham does provide a name for Wales, \textit{Wallia},\(^ {46}\) he does not give a geographical location; there is no orientation in relation to England or to St Albans. In comparison Scotland is provided with a location


\(^ {39}\) The Minorite Friars were arrested and eventually executed for their part in a wider movement which proclaimed that Richard II was still alive and set to overthrow Henry IV. For further discussion see Peter McNiven, \textit{Heresy and Politics in the Reign of Henry IV: the Burning of John Badby} (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1987.)


\(^ {41}\) It should be added that Walsingham appears to have been fond of unusual names; he calls the people of the peninsula of Brittany in France ‘Bretones Armorici’ which was the name for Brittany when it was part of Gaul. It is thus archaic. See \textit{Chronica Maiora}, printed as the \textit{Annales Ricardi Secundi et Henriici Quarti}, p. 275.

\(^ {42}\) In the \textit{Historia Anglicana} (Vol. 2) Walsingham refers to the Welsh as \textit{Wallici} (p. 242), \textit{Cambri} (p. 246), \textit{Wallenciaeus} (p. 248) \textit{Wallicos} (p. 248), \textit{Cambremium} (p. 250), \textit{faeminae Wallencium} (p. 250), \textit{Wallicus} (p. 250), \textit{Wallici} [genitive singular, referring to Owain Glyndŵr](p. 250), \textit{Wallicorum} (p. 253), \textit{Wallicis} (p. 262) \textit{Wallici} (p. 262, p. 272).

\(^ {43}\) My survey has included English chronicles up to the year 1600, such as that written by John Capgrave (d.1464), Edward Hall (d.1547) and John Stow (d.1605).

\(^ {44}\) It is tempting to speculate where Walsingham could have come into contact with this term; it is possible that it was during his student days at Oxford, which was favoured by Welsh students over Cambridge due to its proximity to Wales. During the revolt of Owain Glyndŵr many Welsh students left Oxford for Wales in droves. See R. A. Griffiths, ‘Some Partisans of Owain Glyndŵr at Oxford’, \textit{Conquerors and Conquered in Medieval Wales} (New York: St Martins Press, 1994), esp. p. 93. It is also possible that Walsingham encountered the term Camry through visitors to St Albans.

\(^ {45}\) ‘Linguistics net’ is a term coined by Yi–Fu Tuan in which the act of naming a landscape creates an ownership. Tuan writes, ‘an environment that is familiar to them not because they have materially transformed it but because they have named it.’ ‘Language and the Making of Place: A Narrative–Descriptive Approach’, \textit{Annals of the Association of American Geographers}, Vol. 81, 4 (1991), 686.

\(^ {46}\) For example, in his \textit{Historia Anglicana} (Vol. 2) Walsingham refers to Wales as \textit{Wallia} (p. 250, p. 246, p. 254, p. 271, p. 273–twice.)
to the north of England.\(^{47}\) Walsingham’s Wales is located in an undisclosed and unknown place, but one which is clearly removed from England.

The main events of the revolt narrated by Walsingham further emphasise the alterity of Wales and its inhabitants; the overall picture is of a purposeless, directionless, opportunistic, wasteful and violent rebellion. Blame for the initiation of the revolt is laid solely with Owain Glyndŵr and is, significantly, centred around land; Owain Glyndŵr wants to expand the perimeters of his ancestral home in northern Wales and so attacks his neighbour Reginald Lord Grey, burning his land and killing his household.\(^{48}\) After succeeding in this initial venture, Walsingham tells us that Owain Glyndŵr and his Welsh followers maintain momentum and formulate a large-scale rebellion which expands to include a majority of Wales. While Walsingham’s narrative includes numerous accounts of raids against the English, a majority of these are successful because of acts of trickery or chance occurrence, for instance:

Owain Glyndŵr, with his Welshmen plundered, burnt and destroyed the regions bordering on his; and by tricks, by ambushes, and open warfare, captured many, killed very many of the English; he levelled some captured castles, and some he saved for protection.\(^{49}\)

Referred to as ‘arrogant’\(^{50}\) and twice described as ‘insolent’\(^{51}\), the Welsh act deviously and underhandedly; Owain Glyndŵr takes Aberystwyth by ‘deceitfully entering the castle’ and replacing the English custodians with his own men.\(^{52}\) Edmund Mortimer is tricked into joining the Welsh rebellion when he is captured at the Battle of Bryn Glas and is forced to marry Owain Glyndŵr’s daughter, a marriage which was, according to Walsingham, well beneath Mortimer’s social status.\(^{53}\) The overall outcome is the portrayal of the revolt as having no internal logic or cohesion.

Owain Glyndŵr personifies the rebellion that he is leading; emerging as an unskilled military tactician, he is portrayed by Walsingham as deceitful and malevolent. The only personal information provided is that Owain Glyndŵr was educated at Westminster and was a shield-bearer of the English crown, in other words that he served as a knight.\(^{54}\) This serves to highlight Owain Glyndŵr’s treachery, formally linking the Welshman to the English crown, thus reinforcing his actions as rebellious and treasonous. Furthermore, this lack of information avoids providing Owain Glyndŵr with any humanising characteristics which could create sympathy for his actions.

\(^{47}\) ‘Reversus Rex de partibus Borealis’ [The King, having turned back from the northern parts i.e. Scotland], Historia Anglicana (Vol. 2), p. 259.

\(^{48}\) Historia Anglicana (Vol. 2), p. 246.


\(^{50}\) ‘quod infortunium Walllicos exutilit in superbiam, et insolentiam auxit eisdem’ [misfortune (of the English) led the Welsh to arrogance and it increased their insolence], Historia Anglicana (Vol. 2), p. 259.


\(^{53}\) Walsingham explains that the marriage with Owain Glyndŵr’s daughter was beneath Mortimer, describing the wedding celebration as humble and unbecoming of his generosity, Historia Anglicana (Vol. 2), p. 253–254.

\(^{54}\) ‘Hic primo apprenticus fuit apud Westmonasterium, deinide scutifere Regis moderni’ [This man was first an apprentice near Westminster and then later the shield–bearer of the current king], Historia Anglicana (Vol. 2), p. 246. For further discussion of Owain Glyndŵr’s career and family connections, see Davies, The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dwîr, p. 129–152.
The most striking imagery Walsingham provides is centred on the Welsh leader: Owain Glyndŵr is depicted as a magician who practices the dark arts and uses them freely against his enemies; we are told that:

[Owain Glyndŵr] almost destroyed the king by the art of magic, along with the army he was leading, by means of rains, snows, and hails, called up, as it is believed, by diabolic art.55

Owain Glyndŵr’s ability to control the weather explains why the English are unable to subdue the Welsh rebellion and are forced to retreat to the safety of England, and how their king is nearly killed by a lance knocked over suspiciously. The English are unable to read the landscape because it is infused with evil as are its inhabitants; Owain Glyndŵr’s power is formulated unnaturally and is demonic. The Welsh women on the battlefield too display magical abilities in the rearrangement of the human body to create a new and monstrous form. It is an act of cruelty. Elsewhere I have argued that the women’s actions were in line with discourses of witchcraft, particularly the stealing of men’s private parts discussed in such texts as the *Malleus Maleficarum.*56

In Walsingham’s text Wales emerges as a place that is subversive and transgressive; it is within this defined space that the Camry (as Walsingham denotes them) are taking action against a dominant nation and government, a place with, according to Walsingham, superior moral social fabric. Walsingham’s Wales is a place of alterity; measured against this ‘otherness’ of Wales, which Walsingham creates so intricately, is an ideological centre against which these constructions are measured and against which they react.

**Thomas Walsingham, St Albans and Wales**

In this section I would like to explore the idea that Walsingham’s own setting at St Albans was central in his understandings of place, most especially in his understandings of Wales and the Welsh. For Walsingham St Albans was a ‘contact zone’, a term coined by Mary Louise Pratt for ‘social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other’.57 In this section I will argue that Walsingham encountered Wales through three main points of contact, all of which revolve around the Abbey of St Albans and its community. Walsingham’s Wales is a product of encounters with people visiting St Albans on their way to and from Wales; encounters with members of the English aristocracy, most notably those attached to the English king and the Lancastrian dynasty, who were patrons of the Abbey and expected the history written at St Albans to reflect their policies towards the rebelling Welsh and the Lancastrian entitlement to rule; and lastly Walsingham encounters Wales through the library at St Albans.

The city of St Albans, located 30km northwest of London, has a rich and multi-layered history; from its origins in the Iron age (as Verulamion) through the Roman era (as Verulamium), the medieval (St Albans) to the present day, each different epoch has a

57 Mary Louise Pratt, ‘Arts of the Contact Zone,’ *Profession,* 91 (1991), 35.
Wealth of historical documentation and archaeology testimony to the town’s importance. In the Roman era the city was the third largest in England after Londinium (London) and Eboracum (York) and was located on the Roman road to the north and north–west of England, now known more commonly as Watling Street. Evidence of the Roman city can still be seen at St Albans today; foundation stones and walls of various buildings (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3: Walls of Verulamium), a theatre, a hypocaust and various other artefacts of antiquity are housed in the Verulamium Museum. In the middle of the 3rd Century CE a citizen of Verulamium called Alban was martyred by Roman soldiers and a Christian church was built on the spot where he was buried, just east of the Roman town centre. The town shifted focus to this new site and received the name St Albans. Around the shrine of St Alban, who was England’s protomartyr, developed an abbey, which was formally established by King Offa of Mercia in 793, from the middle of the 10th century the town of St Albans flourished around the abbey. Much of the Norman–era abbey buildings, and specially the church itself, was constructed using stones from remnant Roman buildings and walls and are thus an interesting blend of historical epochs (Fig. 4: The Abbey Church and Cathedral of St Albans).

The shrine of St Albans held within the abbey church was an important site of pilgrimage in the middle ages and continues to be so today, particularly for people with illnesses (Fig. 5: Shrine of St Albans). Visitors to St Albans were a major source of income for the town, evidence of which are the number of inns built for pilgrims and visitors in the middle ages. While the cathedral dominates the town to this day, the abbey buildings are no longer extant; in 1539 St Albans Abbey was surrendered in the dissolution and its buildings were destroyed. Today the space alongside the cathedral where the Abbey once stood has not been re–built upon and remains an open reserve and parkland which is much utilised by the local community (Fig. 6 and Fig. 7: St Albans Abbey Site). All that remains of the Abbey are some sections of stucco where the abbey was attached to the outside of the church, along the west side of the long nave. (Fig. 8: Remnants of the Abbey on the South Side of the Cathedral Wall) The fourteenth–century Great Gate still stands. (Fig. 9: the Great Gate). Extensive archaeological surveys have been conducted on the site and as a result reconstructions, such as that of Figure 1, can be created. A significant amount of archival material on the abbey has survived to this day, providing insight into the community that inhabited St Albans in the early fifteenth century. In Thomas Walsingham’s lifetime the abbey of St Albans was prosperous; it is likely that at its height the abbey had around 100 monks and a further 200 lay workers. The abbey had a good income with twelve daughter

58 The Roman road is commonly referred to as Inter III; for further information on Watling Street see Roberts, The Hill of the Martyr, p. 9.
61 Tim Tatton–Brown, ‘The Medieval Building Stones of St Albans Abbey: A Provisional Note’, Alba

62 J.T. Smith, ‘Nine Hundred Years of St Albans’, pp. 4–11
63 For example, excavations of the Chapter House were undertaken in 1978. See especially the three fascinating photographs of the excavation taken from a height, which are documented in Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjoby–Biddle, ‘England’s Premier Abbey: The Medieval Chapter House of St. Albans Abbey and its Excavation in 1978’, Expedition, 22, 2 (1980), 17–32; esp. p. 20.
houses and royal patronage, and the scriptorium was producing significant numbers of manuscripts for distribution throughout England.

Thomas Walsingham’s writings provide valuable information about fifteenth–century St Albans and also allow for examination of the author within his own locational context. Walsingham himself appears several times in his texts; in the Liber Benefactorum,\(^64\) which Thomas compiled in 1380, he is listed as twentieth in rank out of a community of around sixty monks.\(^65\) In the Gesta Abbatum Walsingham tells us of the part he played in the building of the St Albans scriptorium: ‘built at the abbot’s expense and by the efforts of Thomas Walsingham’.\(^66\) He also records his occupation within the monastic community as the ‘precentor and chief scribe’\(^67\) and records his absence from the Abbey from 1394 and his recall by the new Abbott John de la Moote in 1400.\(^68\) Other than these snippets of information not a great deal is known about the life of Walsingham; modern research suggests he may have been born in the town of Walsingham in Norfolk in the 1340s and that he was ordained as a priest in 1364, having been educated at the University of Oxford, finishing around the year 1376. However, these dates are not certain.\(^69\) After university Walsingham devoted himself to the scriptorium at St Albans and appears to have stayed at the abbey for a majority of his life, except between 1394 and 1400 when, as he mentions in the Gesta Abbatum, he served at Wymondham,\(^70\) a priory of St Albans near Norwich.

The location of the abbey of St Albans contributed significantly to the uniqueness of Walsingham’s narrative and evidence suggests that the chronicles were composed while events were unfolding in Wales.\(^71\) Walsingham was in direct contact with people travelling to and from Wales; St Albans is in close proximity to London and is connected via a good road which runs from Dover to London and St Albans and then proceeds towards Worcester, via Leicestershire, finishing in northern Wales.\(^72\) Naturally, a variety of people would have used this road between London and St Albans; of note are the aforementioned pilgrims to the shrine of St Albans, a major pilgrimage centre throughout the middle ages. Eye–witness accounts and evidence from soldiers or high–ranking officials from Wales who stopped at St Albans on the way to London would have been a major source of information for Thomas Walsingham’s narrative on the Welsh revolt; certainly Walsingham himself alludes to this within his text, using the construction ‘ut fertur’ (literally ‘it is said’) twice in his narrative of the Welsh revolt. In the first instance ut fertur is used to describe the portents that surrounded the birth of Edmund Mortimer (1376–1409), who had joined Owain Glynedd’s rebellion; it seems most likely that its usage here is to denote a rumour.\(^73\)

\(^{64}\) British Library, Cotton Nero D VII, fol. 82v.
\(^{65}\) James G. Clark, ‘Thomas Walsingham Reconsidered’, 838. David Knowles and R. Neville Hadoock estimate that there were between 46 to 54 monks living at St Albans at any one time in the fifteenth century; in 1396 there were 51 monks at St Albans, Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales, p. 74.
\(^{68}\) The Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani, Vol. 3, pp. 393.
\(^{72}\) See Brian Paul Hindle, ‘The Road Network of Medieval England and Wales’, Journal of Historical Geography, 2, 3 (1976), 207–221.
\(^{73}\) Walsingham describes the birth of Edmund Mortimer, who had just joined Owain Glynedd’s rebellion as: ‘Hujus, ut fertur, nativitatis exordia dira comitata sunt prodigia’ [It is said prodigies accompanied the dire beginnings of this man’s birth], Historia Anglicana, p. 254;
The second usage of *ut fertur* occurs when Walsingham describes the capture of Lady de Spencer and her son who were fleeing to Owain Glyndŵr after her husband Lord Thomas de Spencer had been executed in Bristol by Henry IV for his role in the Revolt of the Earls; it is entirely possible that this information was given to Walsingham at St Albans. Naturally, it is tempting to speculate on the specific information which Walsingham received via this communication network and included within his narrative of the revolt, but it is difficult to isolate these with any degree of certainty. At the very least the use of *ut fertur* implies the use of oral sources. Comparisons with other contemporary chronicles reveal several unique points: Walsingham is the only chronicler to provide an account of the atrocities committed by the women at the battle of Bryn Glas in 1402 and while Walsingham and the author of the *Dieulacres Chronicle* portrays Owain Glyndŵr as a magician, other major chronicles of the period such as Adam of Usk’s *Chronicon*, the *Continuatio Eulogii* and *Historia Vitae et Regni Ricardi Secundi* do not. Welsh raids over the English border are also recorded more frequently in Walsingham’s chronicle and he is the only chronicler to mention that the French landed at Milford Haven with the aim of helping Owain Glyndŵr.

The position of St Albans in the broader community of English nobility also impacted on Walsingham’s historical narrative. St Albans Abbey was the premier abbey of medieval England, its abbot was ranked above all other abbots of the realm and was essentially a ‘mitred parliamentary abbot’. The Abbey of St Albans had strong ties with English royalty. The monks at St Albans fostered and promoted their royal foundation by King Offa in 793 and their continuing royal patronage. The Lancastrian dynasty was no exception: Henry IV’s sons proved to be generous with their donations, in particular the fourth son of Henry IV and Mary Bohun, Humphrey Duke of Gloucester (1390–1447). Humphrey was a great literary patron to such writers as John Lydgate, John Capgrave and many of the Italian humanists such as Tito Livio dei Frulovisi. Evidence of his lavish patronage to the Abbey of St Albans can still be seen today; his funeral monument is held within the Abbey church, adjacent to the shrine of St Alban. Called the Chantry Chapel of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, it was commissioned in 1448, four years before Humphrey’s death.

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74 ‘Domina de Spencer, relictia Domini Thomae de Spencer nuper occisi Bristoliae, dum fugit, ut fertur, ad Howenun Glendor, cum filio octemni, capta est …’ [Lady de Spencer, the widow of lord Thomas de Spencer who had recently been killed in Bristol, was captured with her eight year old son while fleeing, it is said, to Owain Glyndŵr …], *Historia Anglicana* (Vol. 2), p. 268.


76 This is printed in volume three of the *Eulogium (Historiarum sive Temporis): Chronicon ab Orbe Condito Usque ad Annun Domini M.CCCC.LXVI., A Monacho Quodam Malmesburiensi Exaratum. Accedunt Continuationes duae, Quarum una ad annum M.CCCC.XIII. Altera ad Annun M.CCCC.XC. Perducta Est*, ed. by Frank Scott Haydon (London: Rolls Series, 1858), pp. 333–421.

77 Printed as *Historia Vitae et Regni Ricardi Secundi*, ed. by George Stow (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977.)


80 See Julia Crick, ‘Offa, Ælfric and the Refoundation of St Albans’, *Alban and St Albans: Roman and Medieval Architecture, Art and Archaeology*, p. 78. For the miracles at the Abbey’s foundation see the *The Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani*, Vol. 3, pp. 365–72.


82 For more information on the design of the Chantry, see John Goodall and Linda Monckton, ‘The Chantry of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester’, *Alban and St Albans: Roman and Medieval Architecture,*
While St Albans was a monastic institution it should be noted that members of this community did participate in worldly affairs and commonly its abbots were influential people from rich baronial families. Account rolls, letters, registers and records of burials for the monks provide insight into this network. For instance Abbot Thomas de la Mare (1349–1396) was the godfather of Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester (1355–1397), the fifth surviving son of Edward III. Members of the royal family, including the king himself, frequently visited the monastery; Richard II often stayed at St Albans with a great entourage. In 1381, Walsingham tells us that St Albans was used for ‘the king’s parliaments, convocations and assemblies of nobles and clergy ... and the nobles and magnates of the realm [were] entertained at the monastery, to its great cost and loss’, Henry IV resided at St Albans in March and April 1405, mid–September 1406, and March 1408. Certainly Walsingham was in a privileged position in relation to the royal court and the impact of this on the historical narrative should be noted. The information that Walsingham presents is selective and purposeful, as patronage and prestige from wealthy benefactors were at stake for the whole abbey community. The Lancastrian dynasty certainly interacted with chroniclers; Walsingham notes that in 1399 Henry IV sent letters to all monasteries ordering that they send their chronicles to him for examination, the purpose of which was to prove the validity of Henry IV’s claim to the throne. Adam of Usk, a contemporary of Walsingham, also alludes to this, and records that he was one of several responsible for their examination. Evidence suggests that royal patronage could prompt textual changes: in the late 1390s a draft of the Chronicon Angliae, a chronicle frequently attributed to Thomas Walsingham, was revised by the monks of St Albans because of its negative portrayal of the Duke of Lancaster, John of Gaunt which in the first version read:

Unhappy man, you who regard yourself as prosperous and believe yourself most blessed, how your miseries oppress you and your lust tortures you, never satisfied with what you have, never fearing the none too distant future!

The problem was that John of Gaunt’s eldest son Henry was growing in political influence and eventually deposed Richard II in 1399, becoming Henry IV; hence a need for revisionism. In the Liber Benefactorum there is a noticeable interpolation within the text: Henry IV’s entry was added at a date much later than its compilation in the 1390s, perhaps added after his death in 1413. The entry itself celebrates the life of Henry IV, and tells us that:

Art and Archaeology, pp. 231–255.
86 See James G. Clark, ‘Thomas Walsingham Reconsidered’, 832–860. For registers see BL MS Harley 602 and Cambridge University Library MS Ee.4.20. For registers of burials see MS Harley 3775, fols. 129r–137r.
90 Calendar of Signet Letters of Henry IV and Henry V, ed. by J. L. Kirby (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1978); letters written by King Henry IV from St Albans Abbey p. 65 (three letters); pp. 69–70 (four letters); p. 136 (one letter); pp. 147–148 (one letter)
91 Annales Ricardi Secundi et Henrici Quarti, p. 252.
93 Thomas Walsingham, Chronicon Angliae p. 75; cited in Gransden, Historical Writing in England, Vol. II, p. 129. Small sections on John of Gaunt must have been missed in the revision process, for example in Chronicon Angliae, p. 107, Walsingham suggests that John of Gaunt was not the son of Edward III (1327–1377) but that in infancy this child, the real John of Gaunt, died and was replaced by an unknown Flemish child; in the Chronicon Angliae p. 115 ff, John of Gaunt was a supporter of Wyclif.
He stood out as a particular admirer of this place [i.e. St Albans] and as a most gracious renewer of our liberties and of our privileges. May the elemency of our saviour be propitious to his soul.⁹¹

The position of this entry within the text is significant: it has been squeezed between that of Richard II and John of Gaunt, and is thus out of chronological sequence. What this illustrates is that a chronicle narrative could be altered to suit a particular point of view and that previously Walsingham’s narrative had been changed.

Although Walsingham’s chronicle is certainly richer for the input of visitors to St Albans, the narrative was inevitably filtered through a network or smokescreen which aimed at presenting Henry IV in the best possible light. Taken as a whole Walsingham’s narrative is most definitely pro–Henry IV; as a result the Welsh revolt is portrayed as disruptive, violent and unnecessary. Walsingham depicts all of Henry IV’s supporters favourably, for instance Reginald Lord Grey emerges as an innocent party in the initiation of the revolt, although evidence suggests otherwise.⁹² Walsingham’s construction of Wales was influenced by events unfolding in the political sphere of England, and this has resulted in the framing of the overall narrative by a dichotomy of hegemonic, rational England vs. rebellious, demonic Wales. Moreover, this informed more specific details within Walsingham’s constructions, of which the Welsh use of magic is one example. Alongside the rebellions Henry IV encountered in his first years as king, a rise in heretical movements appeared, particularly Lollardy. The Lollards were active in England in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century.⁹³ In 1401 Henry IV introduced new laws against heresy, which resulted in several people being burnt at the stake.⁹⁴ For instance, in 1414 William Murlee was hanged and burnt at St Albans.⁹⁵ Walsingham encountered several Lollard sympathisers while studying at Oxford; in his chronicle he denounces these people and also the University of Oxford for allowing John Wyclif (d. 1384) to study there.⁹⁶ He describes Wyclif as: ‘that limb of Satan, idol of heretics, mirror of hypocrites and fabricator of lies, John Wyclif’.⁹⁷ The order of Minorite Friars (Franciscans) were caught up in this heretical movement, with many monks accused of heresy and rebellion; Walsingham records that in the year 1402 alone, nine Minorite Friars were executed⁹⁸ and accuses the Minorites of using black magic. Walsingham describes how a diabolic apparition appeared in Danbury in Essex in the form of a Minorite Friar.⁹⁹ Interestingly enough, Walsingham links the Welsh rebellion to the Minorites, reporting that the friars favoured the Welsh cause.¹⁰⁰ This connection is significant as it aligns the Welsh rebellion with sorcery and heresy; both

⁹² Davies, The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dwr, p. 102.
⁹⁴ See McNiven, Heresy and Politics in the Reign of Henry IV, pp. 79–93.
⁹⁵ Historia Anglicana (Vol. 2), pp. 298–299.
⁹⁷ Historia Anglicana (Vol. 2), p. 119.
⁹⁹ Historia Anglicana (Vol. 2), p. 249.
¹⁰⁰ Historia Anglicana (Vol. 2), p. 251. In the ten years following the deposition of Richard II by Henry IV in 1399 there were around sixteen executions throughout Britain, a majority of these were clerics from the Franciscan Order; for further discussion of this see Peter McNiven, ‘Rebellion, Sedition and the Legend of Richard II’s survival in the reigns of Henry IV and Henry V’, Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester, 76, 1 (1994), 93–117.
groups use magic for their own ends. Moreover, Walsingham describes a ripple of supernatural activity around England as a result of the Welsh revolt and the Minorite Friars: in the year 1402, a comet appears,\textsuperscript{101} the devil is sighted in a church in Danbury, and this same church is struck by lightning and threatened by a terrible storm.\textsuperscript{102} Walsingham’s description of the Welsh women mutilating English soldiers and Owain Glyndŵr’s ability to control the weather can be understood within this context. On a larger–scale, Walsingham is emphasising the alterity of the Welsh; Wales is established as an epicentre for portents and magical activity.

The library of St Albans played a significant part in Walsingham’s specific constructions of the Welsh; he was an integral member of the literary community at St Albans which had one of the largest monastic libraries in medieval England, with an impressive 133 books surviving to this day. Fortunately for the modern scholar, a detailed list of books from the medieval library at St Albans was prepared by N. R. Ker, who catalogued and recorded the texts’ current locations in collections throughout England and the world.\textsuperscript{103} Some of the more popular texts held in the library include works of chronicle history such as Bede\textsuperscript{104} and the Flores Historiarum\textsuperscript{105} and the chronicles of Matthew Paris;\textsuperscript{106} there is a surprisingly large number of classical texts, including Cicero,\textsuperscript{107} Seneca\textsuperscript{108} and Cassiodorus;\textsuperscript{109} not surprisingly the hagiographic collection is dominated by texts recounting the martyrdom of St Alban, such as the Passio Albani\textsuperscript{110} and the Vita S. Albanii.\textsuperscript{111} Other hagiographies include a History of St Edward.\textsuperscript{112} There are also many religious and philosophical texts, editions of the bible and early church fathers and medieval religious thinkers, such as Peter Damien.\textsuperscript{113}

Exploring these texts as points of contact between Thomas Walsingham and Wales is an exciting prospect, and while a detailed discussion is outside the scope of this essay, I would like to comment on one text which I believe to be influential on Thomas Walsingham, The Travels of Sir John Mandeville.\textsuperscript{114} As its title suggests this text is an


\textsuperscript{102} Walsingham, Historia Anglicana (Vol. 2): devil p. 249; lighting hits church p. 250.


\textsuperscript{104} King’s College Cambridge, MS 19 (12\textsuperscript{th} Century)

\textsuperscript{105} Manchester, Chetham, MS 6712 (13\textsuperscript{th} to 14\textsuperscript{th} Century)

\textsuperscript{106} Corpus Christi Cambridge, MS 16 and MS 26 (both 13\textsuperscript{th} Century); and British Museum Nero D.v. (13\textsuperscript{th} Century).

\textsuperscript{107} British Museum, Harley MS 2624 (12\textsuperscript{th} Century)

\textsuperscript{108} British Museum, Egerton MS 654 (12\textsuperscript{th} Century)

\textsuperscript{109} British Museum, Royal MS 13 C.XIV (13\textsuperscript{th} Century) and El Escorial, MS P.i.5 (12\textsuperscript{th} Century)

\textsuperscript{110} Trinity College, Dublin, MS 177 (13\textsuperscript{th} Century)

\textsuperscript{111} Mount Stuart, Marquess of Bute (14\textsuperscript{th} to 15\textsuperscript{th} Century)

\textsuperscript{112} ‘Estoire de S. Aedward’ Cambridge University Library, Ee.3.59 (French, 13th Century)

\textsuperscript{113} Christ Church Oxford, MS 115 (12\textsuperscript{th} Century)

\textsuperscript{114} I intend to discuss the literary influences on Thomas Walsingham and the connection to the Abbey of St Albans in another context; this section is intended only as a preliminary exploration of some themes raised. In addition to Mandeville’s Travels some other texts with which Walsingham certainly engaged include the thirteenth–century life of St Alban on which Walsingham based his own Tractatus de Nobilitate, Vita et Martyrio S.ctorum Albani et Amphibali. This is found at BL MS Cotton Claudius E IV, fols. 334va–336vb, and is printed as John Lydgate, ‘Appendix A’, The Life of Saint Alban and Saint Amphibiel, ed. by J. E. Van der Westhuizen (Leiden: Brill, 1974), pp. 277– 285; and finally the
account of the travels allegedly undertaken by Sir John Mandeville, written around the year 1356. Walsingham refers to Mandeville in his Liber Benefactorum, as having been born and educated at St Albans and significantly a manuscript copy of Mandeville’s Travels has been found bound with Walsingham’s Historia Anglica; this is a text we can link to Walsingham directly and with which we can be sure that he engaged. The travels take Mandeville to the Holy Land via the eastern European countries and Greece; he then proceeds to travel around the Middle East, describing the cultures and landscapes along the way; he then describes his journey to Java and Indo–China. Mandeville’s text falls squarely in the genre of paradoxography, and it appears that, like Walsingham, Mandeville did not ever visit the places he describes. He encounters on his journeys strange beings living in unknown regions, and it is here that parallels can be drawn with Walsingham’s construction of Wales’ alterity. Certainly both texts have allochronic frameworks which stress the backwardness and primitiveness of the foreign people they describe; the use of magic and marvels are also parallel. Emphasis is placed on physical differences of the various races, although for the English soldier this physical difference occurs through the actions of the Welsh women; Walsingham sought to highlight the paradoxical nature of the locale of Wales. Evidence suggests that not only did Walsingham engage with the alterity constructed by Mandeville in his Travels but wrote his own text in the tradition of the Alexander Romances; popular throughout the medieval era, the Alexander Romances are a collection of the more fabulous accounts of Alexander the Great’s campaigns and journeys in the East. He was thus very much aware of the ancient tradition of literary paradoxography, and was moreover a highly skilled scholar in the classics: Walsingham composed a commentary on Ovid’s Metamorphoses entitled the Archana Deorum, and others on Lucan’s De Bello Civili and Seneca’s Tragedies. He also wrote an account of the Trojan War based on the work of Dictys of Crete, a text little read in England at this time. Walsingham’s output was noteworthy and his literary expertise by no means limited to historical composition: he wrote a text on mensural music in which he drew on the knowledge acquired in his position as precentor at St Albans. The great range of Walsingham’s writings are a testimony to his education and the level of learning at St

Alicia Marchant, ‘Fifteenth–Century St Albans.’

Chronica Maiora of Matthew Paris, which Walsingham continued to the year 1422. In his extension, Walsingham mimics the style and structure of Matthew Paris.


116 The manuscript is British Library MS. Royal 13 E IX. However it is unclear who bound these texts together. For further discussion see Gransden, Historical Writing in England Vol II, p. 127.

117 The travels of John Mandeville have appeared in multiple publications, including Mandeville’s Travels, ed. by M. C. Seymour (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967.)


119 Though the textual transmission of the Alexander Romance is exceptionally fluid (as it often the case with sub–literary works) a translation of one of the major recensions is available as Pseudo–Callisthenes, ‘Alexander Romance’, in Collected Ancient Greek Novels, ed. by B. P. Reardon and trans. by Ken Dowden, Trans., (Berkley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 650–735.


121 For a detailed study of Walsingham’s classical studies and commentaries see James G. Clark, A Monastic Renaissance at St Albans: Thomas Walsingham and His circle c.1350–1440 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.)

122 This treatise is printed in Opera omnia de Musica mensurabili, ed. by Johannes Hothby (Neuhausen–Stuttgart: Häussler, 1983.)
Albans in the fifteenth century; certainly this knowledge is apparent in Walsingham’s narrative and informs his specific and careful constructions of the Welsh.

**Concepts of Place: St Albans, Walsingham, Wales**

In recent years the issue of place and its role in cultural and social discourses has proved fertile ground in academic quarters; definitions of place, commonly linked to the field of archaeology and the study of material remains and landscape, have been expanded to include cultural and social considerations. The construction of identity, both individual and communal, has frequently been investigated, within both macro and micro frameworks, and yet definitions of place are difficult because of its very nature: a locale with attached cultural constructions and understandings which can be determined by a variety of factors including the author’s affiliations, nationality, economic status and location, to name only a few. A place is commonly considered to have a degree of intimacy and attachment for an individual or a group of people; it requires people to define it, possibly inhabit it, and maybe even provide the locale with a name. However allochroic considerations provide a further challenge to scholars of medieval history. Localised understandings of place are difficult for modern historians to access, due to, amongst other things, enormous gaps in time between the date of composition of a historical document and the modern scholar, raising the question of whether it is possible to access medieval understandings of place. The modern and medieval understandings are not one and the same.

Analysis of the imagery Thomas Walsingham uses to describe Wales, its inhabitants and Owain Glyndŵr offer opportunities to examine understandings of place within a set locational context, community and chronological framework; more broadly however the connection between Wales and St Albans allows for discussions of the usefulness of theories of place (both modern and medieval understandings of the term) within medieval studies. While this essay is intended as an initial exploration and not a definitive study, there are several points that I would like to make with regards to what I perceive to be central in Thomas Walsingham’s understanding of place.

Walsingham’s narrative strategy is centred on constructing Wales as unfamiliar and alien, and he does this using two crucial points of reference: natural landscape and humanity. The constructions are themselves complex but their ideological implications are clear: Wales emerges as a place of alterity. The two points of reference through which Walsingham constructs the alterity of Wales are, moreover, very much interconnected: nature affects the human nature of the place’s inhabitants. The Welsh environment determines society and national characteristics. There is a blurring of the distinction between nature and culture; the landscape and the people are wild, rugged, harsh, and brutal. There are several examples of the English experiencing this landscape in physical terms; they are forced to retreat and they suffer from the Welsh weather. Moreover the transformed bodies of the English soldiers are a reflection of the alterity of the landscape; the bodies embrace the ‘otherness’ of the landscape and are transformed into something very different from what they were when they left England. The English soldiers’ bodies have come to resemble Wales itself: unnatural, unreadable and unrecognisable.

While the Welsh people are a reflection of their landscape, they are also able to transform their place physically, and can transcend and control nature and natural processes. This can be seen most clearly in Walsingham’s depiction of the Welsh leader.

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Owain Glyndŵr, who has the ability to use magic which he had gained from demonic sources. As a result the English are unable to read the landscape and are ineffectual and powerless within the space of Wales. The Welsh women too show a degree of agency in controlling the landscape, in this instance a battlefield; the Welsh women take possession of the battlefield space and mutilate the dead bodies, thus re–arranging the overall appearance of the scene. Their actions of mutilation are in line with contemporary opinions of witchcraft, and in their actions the Welsh women have transgressed boundaries of morality and humanity, as well as nature.

The Wales that exists in Thomas Walsingham’s chronicle narrative is complex, the imagery is intricate and his descriptions colourful. Thomas Walsingham’s Wales is an imagined and constructed place. Walsingham appears not to have any personal ties with Wales, however a lack of information regarding his life hampers this line of inquiry. Likewise, there is no evidence that he actually visited Wales; while Thomas Walsingham’s sense of Wales as a place cannot be pinned down to his own experiences and interactions with the landscape, he does encounter Wales and hold opinions of the place. Walsingham provides Wales with a name and establishes it as a defined space. Boundaries are constructed on the basis of morality and rationality; the people who inhabit this place, whom Walsingham names the ‘Camry’ are strange. Walsingham’s attachment to Wales is filtered though St Albans; his life revolved around St Albans and particularly its scriptorium, and while Walsingham’s world–view was fairly limited in terms of actual experience and interaction with the place as it existed, his engagement with Wales was no less real. Walsingham’s Wales is a product of the place of its creation, its communities, and the individual who composed it. It is a reflection of a community attached to a monastic institution from which one unknown monk was so moved by the threat of the Welsh Revolt led by Owain Glyndŵr that he defaced a manuscript page with the words “Christ, Splendour of God, I beseech you, destroy Glyndŵr.”

Conclusions

The imagery Walsingham uses to describe Wales and the Welsh derives its meaning from St Albans and its position relative to London and to Wales, its social, patronage, political and economic networks; and while there are numerous networks overarching the narrative and encouraging specific narrative strategies, it would be reductive to assume that Thomas Walsingham (or at least the creator if Walsingham is doubted) did not have any part in shaping the historical narrative; the author describes the dimensions, creates the space and a sense of place. He selects from a range of options which are available to him, combining material from written and oral sources within the chronicle framework. It is through one known place, its library and its connections to the outside world that he was able to construct another place, not known at first hand, which stands as a defining contrast to the familiar centre.

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In earlier centuries it had been usual for women to work alongside husbands and brothers in the family business. Living "over the shop" made it easy for women to help out by serving customers or keeping accounts while also attending to their domestic duties. As the 19th century progressed men increasingly commuted to their place of work — the factory, shop or office. Wives, daughters and sisters were left at home all day to oversee the domestic duties that were increasingly carried out by servants. From the 1830s, women started to adopt the crinoline, a huge bell-shaped skirt that made it virt The patron saint of Wales, St. David was a Welsh bishop of the Catholic Church during the 6th century and was buried in the site's original structure. Construction for the existing cathedral was begun in the 1180s using purple-colored sandstone. Now part of the Church of Wales, the Norman cathedral houses numerous treasures, including 800-year-old bishop staffs gilded with gold, 13th-century silver chalices and a 1620 edition of the Welsh Bible. The mountains of the Snowdonia National Park in North Wales are one of the most popular places to visit in Wales. Few of Snowdonia's peaks top 900 meters (3,000 feet), but their steeply wooded slopes lend them a heightened sense of drama. They also provide a stunning backdrop to the park's estuaries, lakes, rivers, slate mines and villages.