LONGLEAT HOUSE MS 55:
AN UNACKNOWLEDGED *BRUT* MANUSCRIPT?

Erik Kooper

IN his unsurpassed standard work on the Prose *Brut* chronicles, published in 1998, Lister Matheson discusses, or at least mentions, every manuscript then known to contain an Anglo-Norman, Latin or Middle English version of the text.[1] Due to his thoroughness only a few manuscripts have since then been added to his list, for example by Lister himself and by Edward Donald Kennedy.[2] But exactly because of that thoroughness we must assume that Matheson did in fact see the manuscript that is the subject of this essay: Longleat House MS 55; after all, he discusses Longleat 183A, a manuscript of the Common Version to 1419. Then why did he not include Longleat 55? It is the purpose of the present essay to try and shed some light on this.

MS Longleat 55

MS Longleat 55 is a parchment manuscript of sixty-eight folios generally known as *Liber Rubeus Bathoniae* (the Red Book of Bath), kept in the library of Longleat House in Wiltshire, the ancestral home of the marquesses of Bath. It contains thirty-eight texts mostly of historical, legal and ecclesiastical content, in Latin prose (the vast majority), Middle English and Anglo-Norman.

From the contents of the manuscript both its place of origin and the date of its production can be deduced with a fair amount of certainty: it was probably compiled

---

[1] L. M. Matheson, *The Prose* Brut: *The Development of a Middle English Chronicle*, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies 180 (Tempe AZ, 1998).

[2] In an Appendix to his paper read at the 2011 conference at Dartmouth College on the rediscovered and digitized 'Dartmouth *Brut*' (formerly MS Foyle, Beeleigh Abbey, Maldon, Suffolk, one of the 'Unlocated Manuscripts'), Matheson describes one new manuscript, some fragments and three so-called 'king-lists'; see his 'Contextualizing the Dartmouth *Brut*: From Professional Manuscripts to "The Worst Little Scribbler in Surrey"', *Journal of Digital Philology* 3 (2014), 215–39; E. D. Kennedy, 'Glastonbury', in *The Arthur of Medieval Latin Literature*, ed. S. Echard (Cardiff, 2011), pp. 109–31. The genealogical roll discussed by Jaclyn Rajsic in this volume should be added to the list as well.

Disclaimer:
Some images in the printed version of this book
are not available for inclusion
in the eBook. To view these images please refer to
the printed version of the book.

Plate 1
Beginning of the Latin *Brut* chronicle in Longleat House MS 55, fol. 35v, with, in
the second paragraph, the story of the founding of Totnes

in Bath for use by the town's magistrates between 1412 and 1430,[3] and written almost in its entirety by one copyist, in a clear *cursiva anglicana* with Secretary admixtures.[4] According to the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Middle English* the language of the Middle English pieces is predominantly southwestern, more precisely Somerset.[5]

The text from this manuscript with which this essay is concerned is a Latin Prose *Brut* chronicle; it is preceded by a Latin genealogy of Mary and Christ, and followed by a Latin genealogical tree supporting the English claim to the French crown, with, on the same page, the three prerequisites for the just cause of war (*Tria requirimenta ad iustum bellum*).[6] The main body of the manuscript consists of eight quires.[7] The text of the Latin chronicle runs from the middle of the fourth quire to the middle of quire six (fols. 35v–53v). It is interrupted by a poem in Middle English, known as *Arthur*, which tells the life and death of King Arthur, straddling quires five and six (fols. 42v–46r), after which the Latin chronicle is resumed. In 2011 Marije Pots and I published an edition of this poem,[8] which in 2012 was followed by an article by Julia Marvin and me in which we presented evidence that the Oldest Version of the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut* was its most important source.[9] While attention in these two essays was directed at the English text, this time the focus will be on the Latin one, although the poem cannot, of course, be completely ignored.

---

[3] See M. W. Bryan, ed., 'A Critical Edition and Verse Translation of *Arthur*' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alabama, 1978), p. 5; R. W. Ackerman, 'English Rimed and Prose Romances', in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History*, ed. R. S. Loomis (Oxford, 1959), pp. 480–519 (p. 484); B. Schmolke-Hasselmann, *Der arthurische Versroman von Chrestien bis Froissart: Zur Geschichte einer Gattung* (Tübingen, 1980), p. 57; M. Pots and E. Kooper, ed., '*Arthur*. A New Critical Edition of the Fifteenth-Century Middle English Verse Chronicle', *The Medieval Chronicle* 7 (2011), 239–66. Bryan also discusses the dating proposed by nineteenth-century German scholars. For a more detailed list of the manuscript's contents, see M. Pots, 'Re-evaluating King Arthur. A New Critical Edition of the Fifteenth-Century Middle English Chronicle *Arthur*' (unpublished M.Phil. dissertation, Utrecht University, 2007), pp. 101–10.

[4] Only the first two folios are in a different and probably later hand.

[5] See *Arthur*, ed. F. J. Furnivall, 2nd edn, EETS OS 2 (London, 1869), p. vi; Bryan argues this much more fully and calls the language 'basically Southern, specifically South-Western' ('Critical Edition of *Arthur*', p. 11). This southwestern nature of the dialect was further defined as 'Somerset' in A. McIntosh, M. L. Samuels and M. Benskin, *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, 5 vols. (Aberdeen, 1986), I, 137: 'Main hand of English items' LP 5280. It has been suggested that it was compiled in Bath Cathedral Priory, roughly around the time of John Tellesford, Prior of Bath from 1411 to 1425.

[6] Pots, 'Re-evaluating King Arthur', pp. 107, 108.

[7] Ibid., pp. 20–5.

[8] *Arthur*, ed. Pots and Kooper. The text had been edited twice before, in 1869 by Furnivall, and as a Ph.D. thesis in 1978 by Bryan. Furnivall's edition is now available on the internet as part of the Gutenberg Project (https://www.gutenberg.org/files/16845/16845-h/16845-h.htm; accessed October 2014), but it lacks a satisfactory introduction, explanatory notes and glossary. Bryan's dissertation was never formally published.

[9] E. Kooper and J. Marvin, 'A Source for the Middle English Poem *Arthur*', *Arthuriana* 22.4 (2012), 25–45.

The Arthur Poem and its Latin Context

Unlike most Prose *Brut* texts, the Latin chronicle opens with the arrival of Brutus in Britain, skipping the often detailed account of his earlier exploits, and the Albina legend.[10] The text continues in the traditional manner with a history of the British kings from Brutus and his sons up to the time of Uther Pendragon. Uther's life and actions are described briefly, ending with the well-known story of the begetting of Arthur. After Uther's death we learn that Arthur is crowned, and for another page and a half we are given a fairly detailed account of his exploits, ending with the battle with Cheldericus, a Germanic leader who had come over from Germany to side with the Scots and the Irish against Arthur. After defeating their combined forces, Arthur returns to York for the winter. In the concluding lines on fol. 42r we are told that he rewards his men and decides to have the Round Table made. The page breaks off just after the first word of a new sentence, 'Et', and at the top of the next page, fol. 42v, the poem *Arthur* begins.

As a look at the manuscript reveals, the poem ends halfway down the second column of fol. 46r with the word 'Amen'. The remaining space of the page is neatly filled out by the scribe with ten lines of verse containing the promise that he will continue by enumerating all subsequent kings and their names. So, where the change from Latin chronicle to English poem was abrupt and unprepared for, the scribe here takes great care to provide his audience with a smooth return to the Latin chronicle, which resumes on fol. 46v. Its opening sentence reads:

> Post Arthurum regnauit Constantinus, filius Cador, Comitis Cornubie, nepos Arthuri; iste Constantinus interfecit duos filios Mordredi spurios, qui moverunt bellum contra eum propter patrem eorum.
> ('After Arthur reigned Constantine, son of Cador, Earl of Cornwall, nephew of Arthur; this Constantine killed the two illegitimate sons of Mordred who waged war against him for the sake of their father.')[11]

In what follows the author duly fulfills his promise, and we are given the names and main events from the reigns of all the usual British, Anglo-Saxon, Norman and Plantagenet kings that one encounters in a Prose *Brut*, until the death of Richard II.[12] The fact that, and the way in which, the scribe incorporated the *Arthur* poem into the text of the Latin chronicle he was copying shows him to be a versatile person. We shall see that the Latin chronicle bracketing *Arthur* confirms this impression.

---

[10] Jaclyn Rajsic points out to me that several short chronicles are comparable in this to Longleat 55, i.e., they start when Brutus is already in Britain. Genealogical chronicles like the Hague Roll (for which see below) open by saying that Brutus arrives in *Engletere* without any account of his journey beforehand. *Le Petit Bruit* and copies of the *Anonymous Short English Metrical Chronicle* do the same.

[11] All translations from Longleat 55 and the Hague Roll are my own.

[12] As always there are a few differences between the various histories. Thus the last British king given by Longleat 55 is Cadwan. In the Oldest Version of the AN Prose *Brut* this Cadwan has a son, Cadwalein, while in Geofrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* this Cadwalein/Cadwallo also has a son, Cadwallader. For a more detailed discussion of the differences that may occur, see the essay in this volume by Jaclyn Rajsic.

The Longleat Latin Brut Chronicle

In his famous work on the Middle English Prose *Brut* chronicle, Lister Matheson listed nineteen manuscripts containing a Latin version of the text. Edward Donald Kennedy, in a paper published in 2011, mentions a total of twenty-five. Neither of them, however, includes Longleat 55 – unfortunately, for what an interesting text this is. In what follows I will give a general description of the text and discuss a few of its more salient features, which will show the compiler to be someone who is actively engaged in the work he had undertaken, in the sense that he abridges, excises and interpolates material as he sees fit, turning the text into a highly personal variant of the existing, well-known type of Prose *Brut* chronicle as described by Matheson.[13]

In his book Matheson gives a general outline of the contents of the original Anglo-Norman *Brut* chronicle that is at the basis of all other versions. It attributes the discovery of Britain to Brutus, and then covers the history of Britain from Brutus to the death of Henry III in 1272. To this history the majority of the texts have added a preface giving 'a second foundation story that accounts for the presence of the giants whom Brutus defeats', based on the Anglo-Norman poem *Des Grantz Geanz*. Later versions of the Prose *Brut*, as well as their Middle English and Latin translations, converted the prefatory poem into prose and added continuations to the body of the main text, the longest of these, in Middle English, extending as far as 1479/82.[14]

The first major difference between Longleat 55 and the Common Version of the Prose *Brut* chronicle is that it skips all events preceding the arrival of Brutus in Britain: there is no preface on the origin of the giants, and nothing on the ancestry of Brutus, his exile from Lombardy or the liberation of the Trojans held captive by the king of Greece. Nor do we hear about the sacrifice to the goddess Diana, or her reply, which is only hinted at in the opening sentence:

> Brutus post destruccionem magne Troie veniens in Insulam tunc nominatam Albion iuxta responsum Dyane Anno millesimo centessimo ante incarnacionem …[15]
>
> ('After the destruction of great Troy Brutus, coming to the island then called Albion following the reply of Diana, in the year 1100 before the Incarnation …')

In all *Brut* texts the first thing Brutus does after he has defeated the giants is build

---

[13] Matheson, *The Prose* Brut, pp. 49–53.

[14] Ibid., pp. 1–3.

[15] MS Longleat 55, fol. 35v. It is unusual that the year of the arrival of Brutus in Britain is given. If chronicles have a time reference at all it is to the fall of Troy, dated at 1240 BC. But most manuscripts of Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle* have 1130 for Brutus's arrival, the first of a number of 'chronological notes', which, according to the *Chronicle*'s editor, 'appear to be added by the compiler' (*The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, ed. W. A. Wright, 2 vols., Rolls Series 86 (London, 1887), p. xvi). Jaclyn Rajsic informs me that genealogical rolls, like the Hague Roll and its relatives, have 1200 BC, which is the same date as found in, e.g., Robert Mannyng's *Chronicle*.

a city on the bank of the River Thames: Troia Nova, nowadays known as London. Not in Longleat 55, however:

> Et inde scrutatus est Brutus loca insule vbi villam edificaret ad quietem ipsius et suorum; et primitus disposuit edificare in Deuonia in quodam loco vbi quando venit ad insulam applicuit vbi ipsem cum suis deliciose fuerant recreati vnde et locum illum nominauit sic Tout en Ese, quod sonat totum in quiete, wlgariter dictum Totenesse in Deuoneschire. Sed fertilierem et situ nobiliorem inueniens locum super Riuum et nobilem Thamesiam; tunc illuc edificauit Ciuitatem .ccc tis lxxxx. annis ante constructionem vrbis Rome, quam ipse appellauit Ciuitatem Noue Troie, in memoriam illius Troie vnde ipse venit cum eius progenia.[16]
>
> ('And then Brutus looked for places on the island where he might build a city for the rest and peace of himself and his followers. And he decided to begin by building in Devon at the selfsame place where he had first set foot on the island and where he and his men had felt pleasantly relaxed, for which reason he called the place thus *Tout en Ese*, which means "Completely at Ease", or in the vernacular "Totenesse", in Devonshire. But having found a more fertile and more noble place at the noble river Thames, he built there a city 390 years before the establishment of Rome, which he named the city of New Troy, in memory of that Troy from which he himself and its progeny had come.')[17]

To the best of my knowledge this anecdote is unique to Longleat 55: no earlier or later text has Brutus build a city at Totnes, nor do they have this etymology of the city's name. The only possible reference to the establishment of Totnes by Brutus occurs in a local legend, mentioned in an article by Theo Brown, which has it that

> when Brutus stepped off his ship at Totness, he stood on a stone, from which he declaimed, in astonishingly good English for a Trojan:
>
> > 'Here I am and here I rest
> > And this town shall be called Totness.'[18]

---

[16] MS Longleat 55, fol. 35v. A faint echo of this concern to find a place to build a new town where he and his men could be 'at ease' is heard in some earlier texts, e.g., in Wace's *Roman de Brut* ('il out quis leu covenable / E aaisiez e delitable', lines 1219–20), or Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle* ('Brut wende vorþ in to Engelond & espied vp & doun / Vor to seche an eysi place vor to rere an heued toun', lines 528–9). Similar phrases occur in the chronicles of Thomas Castleford ('A stabyll sted and of gret ese', line 2483), and Robert Mannyng ('[a place] where was eyse wonnyng for men', line 1888).

[17] Again Longleat 55 is unique in giving the date of the foundation of London: 390 + 754 = 1144 BC. This tallies well with the date given for the arrival of Brutus in Britain, 1100 BC. Another remarkable feature of this namegiving is that Brutus apparently speaks French. With Geoffrey of Monmouth, followed by Wace and Laȝamon, the original language of Brutus is referred to as 'Troiana siue curvum Graecum' ('Trojan or crooked Greek'; *The History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. Michael D. Reeve, trans. Neil Wright, Arthurian Studies LXIX (Woodbridge, 2007), Bk I, 461–2).

[18] T. Brown, 'The Trojans in Devon', *The Devonshire Association* 87 (1955), 63–76 (p. 68).

According to Brown the stone on which Brutus stood was mentioned by local historian John Prince in 1675 and can still 'be seen at this day, let into the pavement of Fore Street, outside No. 37'.[19]

Brut chronicles, like so many other historiographical works, abound with such explanations of the names of cities, castles and rivers, the best known of course being Britain, which Brutus named after himself, and Cornwall, named after Corineus, but there are also Leicester, named after Leir, Ludgate, named after Lud, and many others. Longleat 55 does have these but distinguishes itself by a few which occur nowhere else. One was the account of the founding of Totnes, here follows another. When Hengist has defeated Vortigern's enemies, he asks the king for a reward:

> Et Engistus rogauit regem vt daret ei locum de concilio suorum procerum quantum posset circumdare cum coreo vno vbi posset edificare ei et suis mansionem. Et Vortigernus concessit. Empto quia corio vnius tauri, sudit[20] ipsum in paruissimas vel minimas corigias et cum eis circumduxit locum sibi desideratum aptum suo preposito, quem locum appellauit ligua sua Saxonia, quia illum cum corio sic tegebat, Doo Ouere, quem locum nominamus ab inde Douerria, vna de quinque portibus in Cancia vbi construxit forte castrum quod ipse nominauit Twhang Castell, quod sonat castrum corrigiarum.[21]
> ('And Hengist asked the king to give him a plot of land where he could build a mansion for himself and his men, which at the advice of his nobles should be as big as could be encircled by a hide. And Vortigern granted that. Having acquired the hide of a bull he cut it up in very small strips and with these he marked off the desired site which he thought suited his plan, which place he named in his Saxon language, because he had covered it with a hide: *Doo Overe*, which place we have since then called Doverria, one of the Cinque Ports in Kent, where he erected a strong castle which he called *Thwang Castell*, which means "Castle of Thongs".')

Apart from the fact that this story is known from no other *Brut*-like source,[22] the appearance of the verb *to do over* in the sense 'to cover' is also curious. The *MED* does not have it, and according to the *OED* its first occurrence in this sense is in 1611 (s.v. *to do*.VI.50), two centuries later than Longleat 55.[23]

Numerous additional examples could be adduced to show that the compiler of

---

[19] Ibid. However, when I checked the relevant passage in Prince's book, *Worthies of Devon* (1675), p. 710, it appeared that it is correct that Prince describes the stone briefly, but that he does not give the distich.

[20] *sudit*: this verb has not made it to the dictionaries; it was probably based by the translator on the noun *sudis*, 'a sharp object', which could be used for cutting. I owe this explanation to my colleague Arpád Orbán, Professor Em. of Medieval Latin at Utrecht University, who also assisted with the translation of a few other tricky Latin passages.

[21] MS Longleat 55, fol. 40r.

[22] The story itself is not new: Virgil recounts the legend that Dido bought the land on which she established Carthage with the same ruse (*Aeneid* I, 366–8).

[23] See 'do, v.', *OED* Online, Oxford University Press, December 2014, which has an earlier

this Latin *Brut* chronicle has left quite a personal stamp on his text, not only due to the way he abbreviates, expands or alters it, but especially by his idiosyncratic accretions with descriptions of events, persons or places. His account of the burial place of Joseph of Arimathea at Glastonbury may illustrate this point.

Joseph of Arithmathea in Longleat 55

The story of Joseph of Arimathea, who brought the Grail with the blood of Christ to England, is well known nowadays, but this knowledge mainly derives from romance material. According to Valerie M. Lagorio it is not well attested in chronicles, which makes the following passage in Longleat a rarity.[24] It is short but significant:

> Iste Aruiragus vt scribit Melkynus qui erat ante Merlinum concessit Joseph ab Armathia venienti in hanc insulam vocatam insulam Auilonum, hoc est insulam pomorum iuxta liguam Britonum vel Wallicorum Ynewrytum, vbi vt dicit idem accepit sibi sompnum suum perpetuum, et iacet in meridiano angulo linea bifurcate oratorij adorande virginis. habet enim[25] secum duo vascula alba et argentea de cruore et sudore magni prophete Jesus perimpleta. Per multum eciam tempus ante diem iudicij corpus eius integrum et illibatum inuenietur; et erit apertum toti orbi terrarum. Ex tunc ros nec pluuia deficiet in illa insula.[26]
>
> ('This Arveragus, as is written by Melkynus, who was before Merlin, conceded the island called Avalon to Joseph of Arimathea when he came to this island. This is the "Island of Apples" according to the British language or Welsh "Ynewrytum", where, as Melkynus says, he [i.e., Joseph] accepted eternal slumber and lies on a divided line in the southern corner of the oratory for the worship of the Virgin. He has with him two white and silver vessels completely filled with the blood and sweat of the great prophet Jesus. For a long time before the Day of Judgment his body will be discovered, whole and undecayed. And it will be visible to the whole world. Since then neither dew nor rain were lacking on that island.')[27]

---

citation, from 1588: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/56228?redirectedFrom=to+do+over; accessed 16 January 2015.

[24] See V. M. Lagorio, 'The Evolving Legend of St Joseph of Glastonbury', *Speculum* 46 (1971), 209–31, who gives Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle* and one other example; Kennedy adds a few more ('Glastonbury', p. 122).

[25] *enim*: the manuscript has an abbreviation here which is hardly legible, but *enim* is a possibility that suits the context and is moreover supported by the text in John of Glastonbury's *Chronicle*; see *The Chronicle of Glastonbury Abbey*, ed. J. P. Carley, trans. D. Townsend (Woodbridge, 1985), p. 54.

[26] MS Longleat 55, fol. 38v.

[27] The translation of this passage leans heavily on David Townsend's translation of the almost identical passage in John of Glastonbury's *Chronicle* (*Chronicle of Glastonbury Abbey*, ed. J. P. Carley, pp. 54–5). For the history of the British name of Avalon, Ynys Wydrin, which is used several times by John of Glastonbury, see Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, 'From Ynys Wydrin to Glasynbri: Glastonbury in Welsh Vernacular Tradition',

Joseph of Arimathea, the Grail, Glastonbury and Arthur became connected around 1200, through on the one hand the French Grail romances, starting with those of Robert de Boron, and on the other the exhumation of Arthur's remains in the abbey cemetery of Glastonbury in 1191 – which was then identified as Avalon.[28] According to James Carley the chronicle of John of Glastonbury, written *c.* 1340, 'represents the first organised attempt to update' the material collected by William of Malmesbury two hundred years earlier in his *De Antiquitate Glastoniensis Ecclesiae* (*a.* 1139), and although John's chronicle is 'a remarkable piece of eclecticism', John managed 'to create a coherent and persuasive narrative of Joseph's mission to Glastonbury'.[29]

John of Glastonbury is the first to quote extensively from the alleged writings of the prophet Melkin, from which he includes a brief chapter entitled 'Ista scriptura inuenitur in libro Melkini qui fuit ante Merlinum' ('This passage is found in the Book of Melkin who preceded Merlin').[30] It is on this chapter that the Longleat text about Melkin and Joseph is clearly based.[31]

Melkin himself is quite an enigmatic figure. John, by connecting Melkin's name with Glastonbury and the story of Joseph of Arimathea, was the first to draw attention to his prophecies. The next reference to Melkin comes over one hundred years later, by John Hardyng, who in his *Chronicle* (*c.* 1450) shows knowledge about Melkin that undoubtedly goes back to John of Glastonbury.[32] All further witnesses date from the sixteenth century and after. Thus the well-known antiquarian John Leland, who travelled the country in the service of Henry VIII, 'reported that he found in Glastonbury's library an ancient fragment of Melkin's *Historia* and that he

in *The Archaeology and History of Glastonbury Abbey*, ed. L. Abrams and J. P. Carley (Woodbridge, 1985), pp. 301–15. In 1419 the Glastonbury monks made an attempt to find Joseph's grave in their cemetery, see J. P. Carley, 'A Grave Event: Henry V, Glastonbury Abbey, and Joseph of Arimathea's Bones', in *Glastonbury Abbey and the Arthurian Tradition*, ed. J. P. Carley (Cambridge, 2001; reprint of 1994), pp. 285–302 (pp. 292–3). Since no mention is made of this in Longleat 55, Carley suggests that the original text may be a little older than the manuscript and date from before 1419 (personal communication).

[28] See, e.g., W. A. Nitze, 'The Exhumation of King Arthur at Glastonbury', *Speculum* 9 (1934), 355–61.

[29] *Chronicle of Glastonbury Abbey*, ed. Carley, p. li.

[30] Ibid., pp. 54–5.

[31] John of Glastonbury has more references to this Melkinus, e.g., in his chapter on the church of Glastonbury and the famous people buried there (*Chronicle of Glastonbury Abbey*, ed. Carley, pp. 28–31).

[32] Ibid., p. liii; see also F. Riddy, 'Glastonbury, Joseph of Arimathea and the Grail in John Hardyng's Chronicle', in *The Archaeology and History of Glastonbury Abbey*, ed. L. Abrams and J. P. Carley (Woodbridge, 2001; reprint of 1991), pp. 317–31.

took notes from it'.[33] In later works Melkin is even credited with as many as three books.[34]

From the passage quoted from the Longleat chronicle we may conclude that the compiler had access either to a version of John of Glastonbury's chronicle itself, or to material taken from it. Longleat's text is quite a bit shorter and somewhat garbled in comparison to John's. Its wording is much closer to a variant form of the prophecy which occurs in the margin of a London continuation of the *Flores Historiarum* by Matthew of Westminster.[35] This passage and others, dating from the fifteenth century and later, demonstrate that versions of Melkin's prophecy circulated outside the Glastonbury area,[36] and that at least one of these was apparently available to the author of the Longleat text. And its presence in Longleat 55 makes that the earliest occurrence after John of Glastonbury's chronicle.[37]

All of these unprecedented deviations from the standard Prose *Brut* text might create the impression that with Longleat 55 we are dealing with a highly personal adaptation which has eased itself away from its source, but nothing could be further from the truth. On the whole it faithfully and in the right chronological order

---

[33] *Chronicle of Glastonbury Abbey*, ed. Carley, p. liv. Leland visited Glastonbury in 1533. A few years later he drew up a select list of works he consulted in Glastonbury's library, the first of which contained the passages from Melkin from which he took the notes which he later used for the chapter 'De Melchino' in his book *De uiris illustribus*; see *English Benedictine Libraries. The Shorter Catalogues*, ed. J. P. Carley, R. M. Thomson and A. G. Watson, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues 4 (London, 1996), p. 233, and John Leland, *De uiris illustribus*, ed. J. P. Carley, 2 vols. (Toronto and Oxford, 2010 and forthcoming), I, 66–9, and II, forthcoming. In this chapter Leland makes no secret of his doubts concerning the presence of Joseph's burial place: 'To be quite frank, I do not agree with what he writes about the sacred cemetery at Glastonbury, old and venerable though it is, and I reject what he claims, without any authority, about Joseph of Arimathea. For I myself cannot easily believe that Joseph, …, was buried at Glastonbury' (*De uiris illustribus*, ed. Carley, I, 68–9).

[34] *Chronicle of Glastonbury Abbey*, ed. Carley, p. lv.

[35] The text is given by Carley (ibid., p. lv): 'Joseph ab Arimathia nobilis decurio in insula Avaloniæ cum XI sociis somnum cepit perpetuum: et jacet in meridiano angulo lineæ bifurcatæ Oratorii adorandæ Virginis. Habet enim secum duo vascula argentea alba cruore et sudore magni Prophetæ Jesu perimpleta. Et per multum tempus ante diem Judicii ejus corpus integrum et illibatum reperietur; et erit apertum toti Orbi terrarum. Tunc nec ros nec pluvia habitantibus nobilissimam.' Carley does not identify the manuscript, but Riddy does: London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 1106, fol. 10v ('Glastonbury, Joseph of Arimathea and the Grail', p. 325 n. 24). Similar to Longleat's as this may be, it cannot be its immediate source since the opening lines with the explanation of the name Avalon are lacking.

[36] J. P. Carley, 'Melkin the Bard and Esoteric Tradition at Glastonbury Abbey', *The Downside Review* 99 (1981), 1–17 (pp. 2–3).

[37] It is a pleasure to acknowledge here my indebtedness to James P. Carley, who generously shared his expert knowledge on the subjects of this section with me, gave me access to the unpublished volume II of his edition of Leland's *De uiris illustribus* and provided comments, suggestions and references for further reading.

narrates the historical events of the run-of-the-mill *Brut* chronicle, as summarized above.[38]

Nevertheless, for his great survey of the Prose *Brut* chronicles Lister Matheson chose not to include MS Longleat 55. The question is: why not? A look at another *Brut*-like manuscript may help to answer this question.

The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 75 A 2/2

In 1989 I published an article, again with a former student, on a manuscript in the Dutch Royal Library (Koninklijke Bibliotheek), a roll with an Anglo-Norman text on the front, which looked like a Prose *Brut* in genealogical form, with roundels containing the names of the kings and their children.[39] It has a nodding reference to Brutus and a mere twenty lines on the British kings, after which it concentrates on the English period, ending with the coronation of Edward I.[40]

---

[38] Such a combination of traditional historiographical narrative and unique elements is not unusual with *Brut* chronicles, and especially not with the Latin ones, according to Kennedy: see his *Chronicles and Other Historical Writings*, vol. 8 of *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050–1500*, gen. ed. A. E. Hartung (New Haven CT, 1989), p. 2629; 'Glastonbury', p. 119; and below. The same treatment is seen with other texts as well, e.g., with MS 'J' of Wace's *Brut*, as was shown by Jane Bliss and Judith Weiss ('The "J" Manuscript of Wace's *Brut*', *Medium Ævum* 81 (2013), 222–48), or with London, British Library, MS Royal 12 C. XII of the *Abridged English Metrical Brut* or *Short Chronicle* (M. Fisher, *Scribal Authorship and the Writing of History in Medieval England* (Columbus, 2012), esp. pp. 116–41). The creative way in which scribes dealt with texts they were copying was well illustrated in an essay by Lister Matheson and Linne Mooney about the Beryn scribe, who shows 'a desire and willingness to complete his authors' or exemplars' deficiencies' ('The Beryn Scribe and His Texts: Evidence for Multiple-Copy Production of Manuscripts in Fifteenth-Century England', *The Library* 4.4 (2003), 347–70 (p. 354)).

[39] E. Kooper and A. Kruijshoop, 'Of English Kings and Arms', in *In Other Words: Transcultural Studies in Philology, Translation and Lexicography presented to Hans Heinrich Meier on the Occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday*, ed. J. L. Mackenzie and R. K. Todd (Dordrecht, 1989), pp. 45–56.

[40] For an impression of what such a roll manuscript looks like, see the British Library website displaying London, British Library, MS Royal 14 B. VI: http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/TourHistoryGeneal.asp#ROLL; accessed 29 January 2015. This manuscript is very similar to KB 75 A 2/2, but with at least one important difference: the Royal manuscript does not have the opening paragraph with a brief history of the British kings. The Hague and Royal manuscripts belong to a group of Anglo-Norman genealogical rolls that flourished in England in the last quarter of the thirteenth century and in the early decades of the fourteenth. These rolls have been studied extensively by O. de Laborderie, *Histoire, Mémoire et Pouvoir: Les Genealogies en Rouleau des Rois d'Angleterre (1250–1422)* (Paris, 2013). Another roll belonging to this tradition is Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole Rolls 38. It is closely related to the Hague Roll, and also includes a brief history of British kings. For an edition and translation of the Ashmole Rolls 38 prologue, see J. Rajsic, 'Genealogical Rolls', in *Vernacular Literary Theory and Practices of Medieval England, c. 1120–c. 1450: Texts and Translations in the Frenches of England*, ed. J. Wogan-Browne, T. Fenster and D. Russell (Cambridge, forthcoming [working title]).

Plate 2
Opening of the Hague Roll showing the Heptarchy diagram and history of
England's kings from Brutus. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 75 A 2/2

Around the same time I heard that Diana Tyson was collecting material for a new catalogue of manuscripts with Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut* chronicles, and therefore passed on to her information about this manuscript as well as my transcription of the text.[41] When a little later I came to know Lister Matheson, I told him about the manuscript too. But when their publications appeared, in 1994 and 1998 respectively, Tyson had included the Hague manuscript, Matheson had not.[42]

Why not? The answer must lie in Matheson's strict definition of this type of text. Tyson's paper was entitled 'Handlist of manuscripts containing the French Prose *Brut* chronicle'. Her list added up to 116 manuscripts, a substantially greater number than Lister's 'meagre' forty-nine. When I asked Lister for a reaction, his response, by e-mail, was unambiguous, and in typical Lister style. What he objected to was that

> her hundred-odd manuscripts contain texts of various types and, indeed, different works, ranging from the AN *Brut* to genealogies to other chronicles that simply begin with Brutus (such as the *Scalacronica*). Some of the latter probably used the *Brut* as a source but they cannot claim to be THE *Brut*. Tyson takes the term 'Brut' as a generic term rather than the title of a specific work.

Tyson herself had stated three criteria for dividing her manuscripts into categories: starting point, finishing point and nature of the text. On the basis of these she included 'those texts which start with or include Brutus, or which start at the Heptarchy, or which start later but have a text so similar to the others that one may reasonably assume them to belong to the family'.[43]

Several years before Matheson and Tyson published their works Edward Donald Kennedy, in his volume *Chronicles and Other Historical Writing* for *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, had already pointed out the complexity of the Prose *Brut* material. He wrote that it is 'more accurate to speak of Prose *Brut* chronicles rather than one chronicle, since a number of the manuscripts are textually quite different from one another with interpolations not found in others'.[44]

In a much more recent paper Kennedy finds that the 'term Latin *Brut* is misleading because scholars have used it to refer to several different chronicles'.[45]

---

[41] D. Tyson, 'Handlist of Manuscripts Containing the French Prose *Brut* Chronicle', *Scriptorium* 48 (1994), 333–44.

[42] In her impressive *Anglo-Norman Literature: A Guide to Texts and Manuscripts*, which appeared in 1999, Ruth Dean, to whom I had sent photocopies of the Hague Roll, included it under the heading 'Genealogical Chronicles', a group of texts 'with historical notices of varying length, drawn from chronicles such as *Li Livere de Reis de Brittanie*, *Li Livere de Reis de Engleterre*, and *Brut*' (R. J. Dean, with the collaboration of M. B. M. Boulton, *Anglo-Norman Literature: A Guide to Texts and Manuscripts*, Anglo-Norman Text Society, Occasional Publications Series 3 (London, 1999), p. 7). J. Spence, *Reimagining History in Anglo-Norman Prose Chronicles* (York, 2013), p. 13, points out that the first of these 'apparently also served as the source for the texts of genealogical roll-chronicles of English kings', such as the Hague Roll and Ashmole Rolls 38.

[43] Tyson, 'Handlist of Manuscripts', p. 333.

[44] *Chronicles and Other Historical Writing*, p. 2629.

[45] 'Glastonbury', p. 119.

A little further down he says about the Latin *Brut* that it 'is in part drawn from
material in the Anglo-Norman and English *Bruts* but also includes considerable
information not in them'. And he concludes: '[The Latin *Brut*] can be considered an
original compilation, covering the same period as the vernacular *Bruts* but possibly
intended as a chronicle that, because it was written in Latin, might have more
authority than the vernacular ones.'[46]

It must be concluded that scholars apparently have difficulty in deciding when to
call a text a Prose *Brut* chronicle, and that the underlying cause for their indecision
is the lack of clear and generally accepted parameters.

How to Define a Prose Brut *Chronicle?*

Since Matheson published his book an enormous amount of research has been
carried out, and is in fact still being done.[47] If one thing has become clear it is
that the type of historical writing denoted as a '*Brut* chronicle' could in principle
encompass a wide range of texts, in English, Latin and Anglo-Norman, and even
in Welsh. But whether these all qualify to be called 'Prose *Brut* chronicles' by the
strict Mathesonian criteria is doubtful. On the other hand, the term '*Brut* chronicle'
is used perhaps rather too loosely by Tyson and many other scholars.[48] Therefore,
to facilitate discussion of this kind of text, a more practicable description is needed.
Following Matheson, a first step should be that only prose texts may be considered.
A strict definition of what he considered to be a 'Prose *Brut*' Matheson does not
provide, but he had made a first attempt when he stated: 'The starting point for
all comparisons is the Anglo-Norman Long Version of the *Brut* and the initial
translation thereof into English.' In addition to this he used two tests: 'a formal
examination of each text to determine its contents and continuations', and a 'textual
comparison of selected test passages that show consistent, definitional variation in

---

[46] Ibid., p. 120.

[47] This is not the place to give an exhaustive enumeration of all publications since 1998 as
there are simply too many, but at least one thing should be mentioned. The 'Imagining
History Project', led by John Thompson, at Queen's University Belfast, in which Lister
Matheson was involved from the very beginning, has resulted in a website with
brief descriptions of virtually all ME Prose *Brut* manuscripts (http://www.qub.ac.uk/
imagining-history/resources/short/index.php; accessed 29 January 2015). Beside this
there were editions, such as *The Oldest Anglo-Norman Prose* Brut *Chronicle*, ed. and trans.
J. Marvin, Medieval Chronicles 4 (Woodbridge, 2006), *An English Chronicle 1377–1461:
A New Edition*, ed. W. Marx, Medieval Chronicles 3 (Woodbridge, 2003), *Prose Brut to
1332*, ed. H. Pagan, Anglo-Norman Text Society 69 (Manchester, 2011), and numerous
book-length studies and articles in journals. The various bibliographical references in the
present book will give a fair impression of what has been published.

[48] Kennedy, in his comprehensive survey of the Middle English chronicle material, lists
nine categories, of which the second is '*Brut* chronicles'; these 'begin with the legendary
founding of Britain or, although beginning later, are derived from other *Brut* chronicles'
(*Chronicles and Other Historical Writings*, p. 2602). Due to this broad definition he can
include works like Laȝamon's *Brut* as well as the verse chronicles of Robert of Gloucester,
Thomas Castleford, Robert Mannyng and John Hardyng.

particular groups (that is, passages demonstrating that some process of conscious revision has taken place as opposed to simple scribal variation between texts)'.[49] On the basis of the textual comparisons Matheson was able to catagorize the bulk of the manuscripts into four groups: the Common Version, the Extended Version, the Abbreviated Version and a final group of Peculiar Texts and Versions. But useful as this is, it does not provide a solution of the problem of definition.

To bring more clarity to the discussion we should begin by accepting that a 'Prose *Brut* chronicle' is a genre, not a specific text. Matheson, as is clear from the passages quoted above and his comment on Tyson's list, was always looking for THE *Brut* text, that is, in his opinion there was an *Ur*-text, which remained virtually unaltered during the copying process, and was at most rigged up with a variety of accretions and continuations.[50] For him this standard text always had to be there or else it was not to be called a Prose *Brut*.

Furthermore, in order to be called a Prose *Brut* chronicle a text has to meet all of the following criteria:

1. A Prose *Brut* has to begin with an account of the first settling of Britain by Brutus; whether that account includes the Troy story, or the Albina legend, is of secondary importance.
2. It has to contain at least a short history of both the British and the Anglo-Saxon kings, and to continue after the Norman Conquest at least as far as the death of Henry III or the coronation of Edward I; this makes the earliest cut-off date roughly 1270.[51]
3. The majority of the material should be based on earlier Prose *Brut* texts, and thus ultimately go back to the Oldest Version of the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut*.[52]

Where does all this leave us with regard to the two chronicles I have discussed? To test the definition I first compared the Latin text found in the Longleat manuscript with the Oldest Version of the AN Prose *Brut* (OV) as well as with a few other potential sources, like the *Historia Regum Britanniae* of Geoffrey of Monmouth (*HRB*) and Wace's *Roman de Brut* for the British section of Longleat's history. Two examples may suffice to illustrate the results, one from the earliest part of the texts, the fight of Corineus and Gogmagog, the other from the life of one of the British kings, Ebraucus. It appears that Longleat not only follows the general line of events of the AN *Brut*, but also shares with that many details that occur in these two texts

---

[49] Matheson, *The Prose* Brut, p. 49 (for both quotations).

[50] The phrase 'virtually unaltered' should not be taken *stricto sensu*, for, as the term indicates, in the group of Peculiar Texts and Versions there is more variation than, e.g., in the group of Common Versions.

[51] Here I do not follow Diana Tyson, who would accept chronicles that start later but are otherwise quite similar to *Brut* texts with continuations, and therefore, in her opinion, are members of the same family (and see my next point).

[52] The Middle English translation was from the so-called Long Version of the AN Prose *Brut*, but that in turn was based on the Oldest Version.

only. In these passages Longleat echoes the AN *Brut* almost verbatim, while together they present a text that for its details is clearly independent of the other two.[53]

Longleat	OV	HRB	Wace
Gogmagog **duas costas** Cornei confregit (35v.11)	Gogmagog prist Corin si fort qil li debrisa **deux costez** (p. 171)	G. … fregit ei **tres costas**, duas in dextro latere, unam uero in sinistro (Bk 21.480–2)	[G.] Corineüm vers sei sacha / Si que **treis costes** li fruissa (lines 1149–50)
Iste Ebranus post mortem patris eius cum summa letitia coronatus et fuit ita prudens et potens quod **conquestus est totam Franciam** et abstulit inde tantum thesaurum vt edificaret ciuitatem Eboracentem nomine suo. Et fecit castrum vocatum **Castrum Puellarum, nunc autem Edyngbourgh** (fol. 36r, 14–17)	Cesti Ebrank … fort homme e pussant, e cesti par sa pruesce e par aide de ses Brutons **conquist tute Fraunce**. E gaina iloeqe tant dor e tant de argent qe quant il reuint en cestre terre, il fist vne noble cite e lapella Eborac apres son noun, qe ore est appele Euerwyk communement en fraunceys. Cesti roi [fyt] le **chastel de puceles ke ore est apele Edenburgh** (pp. 271–5)	Ebraucus filius suus, uir magnae staturae er mirae fortitudinis, regimen Britanniae suscepit … Hic primus post Brutum classem in partes Galliarum duxit et **illato proelio affecit prouincias caede uirorum atque urbium oppressione** infinitaque auri et argenti copia ditatus cum uictoria reuersus est. Deinde trans Humbrum condidit ciuitatem, quam de nomine suo uocauit Kaerebrauc; id est ciuitas Ebrauci. … Condidit etiam Ebraucus urbem Aldclud uersus Albaniam et **oppidum Montis Agned, quod nunc Castellum Puellarum dicitur**, et Montem Dolorosum. (Bk 27.85–94)	[Ebrauc] fu li premiers ki par mer / Mut d'Engletere ailleurs rober. / Il assembla un grant navie / Si prist de ses homes une partie / **Si ala rober les Franceis / E les Flamans e les Tieis**; / li marines tutes prea / E grant aveirs en aporta. / … / Ebrauc, ki out aveir assez, / Ver Escoce fist dous citez: / Kaer Ebrac l'une apela, / … / L'altre cité plus vers north mist / E el **mont Agned chastel fist / Qui des Pulceles ad surnun** (lines 1501–8; 1517–19; 1525–7)

After this I did the same kind of test with a passage from the later period, that of the English kings, and compared Longleat and the AN *Brut* with Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*:

---

[53] Considering that the Latin of Longleat is rather unsophisticated, Geoffrey's *Historia* seems an unlikely candidate as a possible source anyway.

Longleat	OV	Gaimar
Post hanc regnauit Aedmundus frater eius. Iste fugauit duos reges **Anelauum** et **Reginaldum** vltra Humbriam. Regnauit **quinque annis** et iacet **Glastonie**. Cui successit Edredus, qui subiugauit Scociam et seisiuit Daciam, de quo sanctus Dunstanus multa bona predicauit. Regnauit **nouem annis et dimidio** et iacet **Wyntonem** (fol. 47v, 9–13)	Apres cesti Athelston regna son frere Edmund. … E le tierz an qil regna, il ala outre Humbre, ou ili auoient deux rois Daneis felouns. Lun auoit anoun **Anelaf** et lautre **Reinold**. Il les enchaca ambedeux de la terre … Cesti ne regna qe **sis anz** e gist a **Glastingbury**. Apres cesti Edmund regna Edded soun frere, qe … seisist tute Norhumberlande en sa mayn e fist les Escoz enclin a sa volunte. E en le secund an … vint Anelaf Quiran, roi de Denmarz, e seisist tute Norhumberland … E plus vint le Roi Eddred oue grant poer e lenchaca hors de ceste terre. Cesti Roi Eddred estoit durement prodom, de qi bunte Seint Dunstan precha grauntz bens. Il regna **ix anz e demi**, e gist a **Wincestre**. (pp. 253–67)	Eadmund out nun, prodom, ço crei, e **li tierz anz** cum il regna, ultre Humbre son ost mena. Dous reis i out, felons Daneis: li uns out nun **Unlaf** li reis, li altre ert **Renald** apelez. Fors les chasçat de cel regnez. … Il tint sa terre puis **treis anz**, donc fist de lui Deus ses comanz. Edret son frere aprés regnat. … seisi tut Norhumberland, e les Escoz li vont clinant. Quant il regnout el secund an, idunckes vint Anlas Quiran, Norhumberland seisi e prist, … Treis anz la tint icil Daneis, puis l'enchascerent Norhumbreis. Iric le fiz Harold receurent, de fei tenir bien l'aseürent. Dous anz regnat en cel regné, donc el tierz an l'en unt chascé. Edret idunkes la receut, **mes d'iloc a un an morust**. (lines 3530–58)

Here a similar conclusion can be drawn: Longleat's text comprises no more than the basic data of the lives of Edmund and Edred. It tells us whom they succeeded, how long they reigned, where they were buried, and one or two notable feats, significant at least in the eyes of the compiler. The author of the AN Prose *Brut* gives his readers a little more than the bare bones, but the Longleat and AN versions remain virtually the same, and are quite distinct from that of Gaimar. The facts that make out the basis of all three accounts can ultimately be traced to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum* and Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum*, but none of these has all of them. However, for the purpose at hand this observation is irrelevant, as our concern was merely to find out if Longleat is dependent on the AN Prose *Brut* or not. And the answer to that is positive, we may conclude. It is true, of course, that Longleat has a number of extensions and idiosyncratic additions that put an individual stamp on it (and in that sense it underpins Kennedy's observation on the Latin *Bruts*, quoted above), but there is no doubt that it remains within the boundaries set by the definition of a Prose *Brut* offered above.

The manuscript in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague presents a different picture altogether. It seems most unlikely that a source will ever be found for the blunder with which it opens: 'Deuant la Natiuite nostre seignur Ihesu Crist .M. e CC. anz. Brutus le fiz Siluius e Corineus **son frere** vindrent en Engleterre' ('1200 years before the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Brutus, the son of Silvius, and Corineus **his brother** arrived in England'). But we go from bad to worse, for only

five lines down we read: 'Apres Brut regna son fiz Cisilius grant tens. Apres Cisilius regna Eboracus le tierz rei' ('After Brutus his son Sisillius reigned for three years. After Sisillius reigned Eboracus, the third king'). The eldest son of Brutus is of course Locrinus, who reigned after his father. Such a mistake as we see here can hardly be attributed to a faulty reading of a scruffy exemplar or a dozing copyist, and what may have caused it will probably remain a mystery. If the appearance of this name may come as a surprise, that of Eboracus as his successor and third king is equally puzzling. In Geoffrey's *Historia* Eboracus is the sixth king, coming after Gwendolin, Maddan and Mempricius, his father. This Eboracus, as Geoffrey's text says, fathered twenty sons and thirty daughters on his twenty wives; one of these sons was called Sisillius, but he was not the one who succeeded his father – that was his eldest brother, Brutus Greenshield (who is not mentioned in the Hague manuscript). Much later in Geoffrey's history we come across three kings who bear the name Sisillius, but that can hardly explain the confusion.

Inexplicable distortions of names, dates and numbers keep cropping up in the text, both in the brief section on the British kings and in the roughly 350 lines on the English ones. Nevertheless, it is clear that the roll presents these kings in roughly the usual order and with many of the traditional details.[54] It is through these details in particular that we can gain some insight into the roll's major sources, as is witnessed by the following example. After Harthacnut had been made king he levied a tribute and a tax to pay for the crews of his ships:

> Apres Haraud Harefot regna Hardeknout son frere, e en le secund an ke cestui regna grant tresor fu rendu as Daneis, cest a sauer .xxj. M. liber. e .cc. e .ix. lb. E derechief ouekes .xxij. nefs .xj.M. liures. e xlviij. liures (lines 239–45).
> ('After Harald Harefoot reigned Hardecanute, his brother, and in the second year of his reign a great treasure was rendered to the Danes, i.e. 21,209 pounds. And in addition for twenty-two ships 11,048 pounds.')

When we compare the amounts of money and the number of ships with the more likely sources, the results lead to an interesting conclusion:

Source	1st amount	2nd amount	ships
KB 75 A 2/2	21,209	11,048	22
ASC, E (1040)	21,099	11,048	32
Henry of Huntingdon	21,099	11,048	32

Both MS A and MS E of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* specify that eight marks had to be paid for every rower, but only MS E states what this added up to. William of Malmesbury as well as Henry of Huntingdon adopts the story of the taxes, but while William gives it scant attention (he just mentions the amount per ship, twenty marks), Henry of Huntingdon, though omitting the specification, gives both the two totals and the number of ships. In contrast to these, the vernacular

[54] It should be noted that the various accounts are indeed *roughly* the same, since there are always minor differences in order and emphasis (see also n. 12).

texts of Gaimar and the AN Prose *Brut* have a brief entry on the two sons of Cnut, but without mention of this tax. Many additional examples could be adduced that would testify to the same, viz. that Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* is a major source for the Hague text, and that hardly any connection with the AN Prose *Brut* can be detected.[55] Although more detailed study of the Hague Roll is necessary, it may be concluded that the way in which its compiler abbreviates and expands his sources has made it an interesting text in its own right.

Conclusions

In the Preface to his book Lister Matheson introduced its subject as the 'Middle English Prose *Brut*', going on to say that his study 'classifies and groups the Middle English manuscripts and early printed editions and comments on the relationships that developed among them from the late fourteenth through the fifteenth centuries'.[56] His study, then, is of a text which, even if it was expanded or abbreviated in the course of time, or translated, still remained recognizably the same text. Diana Tyson approached the subject from the opposite direction by taking 'Prose *Brut*' as a generic term, as Matheson commented. But her criteria were so loosely defined that almost any medieval historiographical work dealing with English history and containing passages that evoke those of other '*Brut*' texts could be subsumed under it.

In the above I have argued that neither view can lead to a fruitful discussion on the question of which texts to include or debar from our research on what John Thompson has recently called 'the Middle English prose *Brut* tradition'.[57] For this reason I have suggested a compromise between the two positions, which defines a Prose *Brut* chronicle as a genre whose ultimate textual basis should be, or can be traced to, the Oldest Version of the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut*. This means that Longleat 55 ought to be added to the list of Latin Prose *Brut* chronicles, whereas the Hague genealogical roll does not belong to the genre.

The present essay, and the present book for that matter, could not have been written without Lister Matheson's ground-breaking and seminal study. And thus we see that the acre sown by him over fifteen years ago still produces new crops, and indeed new seeds. The continued activities in the field that was so dear to him always gave him great satisfaction, and that these continue even after his death would undoubtedly have pleased him even more.

---

[55] Both the AN Prose *Brut* and the Hague Roll (and the oldest genealogical rolls in general) end with the death of Henry III, and therefore it may have seemed unrealistic to surmise that the AN *Brut* could be a source for the Hague Roll. But my purpose here was rather to establish that the two texts show a different source tradition.

[56] Matheson, *The Prose* Brut, p. ix.

[57] 'Why Edit the Middle English Prose *Brut*? What's (Still) in It for Us?', in *Probable Truth. Editing Medieval Texts from Britain in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. V. Gillespie and A. Hudson (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 445–63 (p. 454).