Saints of North-East England, 600–1500
MEDIEVAL CHURCH STUDIES

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Volume 39
Contents

List of Illustrations vii
Acknowledgements ix
List of Abbreviations xi
List of Contributors xv

Introduction
MARGARET COOMBE and CHRISTIANIA WHITEHEAD 1

Part One. Anglo-Saxon Northumbria

Bede’s Northern Saints
SARAH FOOT 19

The Saint in his Setting: The Physical Environment of Shrines in Northern Britain before 850
ALAN T. THACKER 41

Cuthbert and Boisil: Irish Influence in Northumbria
SARAH McCANN 69

Exiles and the Exilic Experience in Stephen of Ripon’s Vita Sancti Wilfridi
ALICE HICKLIN 89

St Cuthbert and the South: A North of England Saint and South of England Reformers in the Late Tenth and Early Eleventh Centuries
ALISON HUDSON 111
Part Two. The Long Twelfth Century

Measuring Time and Topography in the Cult of Saint Cuthbert at Durham
DOMINIC MARNER 135

‘Æðele Geferes’: Northern Saints in a Durham Manuscript
HELEN APPLETON 153

The Hexham Bishop-Saints: Cults, History, and Power
DAVID ROLLASON 177

Godric and the Wild Man: The Resonances of Asceticism in Reginald of Durham’s Vita of Godric of Finchale
DOMINIC ALEXANDER 197

What a Performance: The Songs of St Godric of Finchale
MARGARET COOMBE 219

Part Three. Visual and Material Culture

Banners of the Northern Saints
RICHARD SHARPE 245

Sacred Journeys/Sacred Spaces: The Cult of St Cuthbert
ALLAN DOIG 305

Northern Saints and the Painted Glass of Durham Cathedral in the Later Middle Ages
LYNDA ROLLASON 327

Postscript

Contested Reputations: Attitudes to Some Northern Saints after the Reformation
MARGARET HARVEY 347
List of Illustrations

David Rollason

Figure 8.1. West face of the pulpitum-screen of Hexham Abbey (Northumberland). ......................................................... 179

Figure 8.2. Detail of the west face of the pulpitum-screen of Hexham Abbey (Northumberland), showing the painted inscription on the image of St Eata, bishop of Hexham. ................. 180

Figure 8.3. Figures of bishops on the remains of an altarpiece, now on the north side of the chancel, Hexham Abbey (Northumberland). ...... 181

Figure 8.4. The town of Hexham (Northumberland), viewed from the north across the railway-line. ....................... 187

Figure 8.5. The Moot Hall, Hexham (Northumberland). ................... 188

Margaret Coombe

Figure 10.1. The Songs of St Godric on a manuscript leaf from London, British Library, MS Royal 5 F vii, fol. 85. ................. 220

Figure 10.2. Deeming’s tabulation of the songs, based on Stevenson’s analysis of the manuscripts. ......................... 227

Figure 10.3. London, British Library, MS Harley 322, fol. 74v. ......... 229

Richard Sharpe

Figure 11.1. Bearer and banner. Sketched by James Raine in Saint Cuthbert: with an account of the state in which his remains were found in 1827 (Durham: George Andrews, 1828) ............... 252

Figure 11.2. St Cuthbert’s modern banner in Durham Cathedral. ........ 253
Figure 11.3. Marginal drawing in Cambridge, 
Corpus Christi College, MS 139, fol. 134v. ......................... 268

Figure 11.4. Marginal drawing in Cambridge, 
Corpus Christi College, MS 139, fol. 135r. ......................... 268

Figure 11.5. Marginal drawing in Howden’s Chronicle. 
British Library, MS Royal 14 C. ii, fol. 88. ......................... 268

**Allan Doig**

Figure 12.1. Durham Cathedral Church Plan showing the ancient 
arrangements according to existing traces and documentary evidence . . 313

Figure 12.2. John Carter, *Some Account of the Cathedral Church of 
Durham; Illustrative of the Plans, Elevations and Sections of 
That Building* (London: Bulmer and Co. for the Society 
of Antiquaries, 1801), p. 9, pl. 5, ‘Section of the Cathedral 
Church at Durham, from East to West, presenting the south side’, 
detail showing the Chapel of the Nine Altars. ......................... 314

Figure 12.3. John Carter, *Some Account of the Cathedral Church 
of Durham*, p. 12, pl. 9, ‘Elevation of the Eastern Front of the 
Screen to the High Altar of Durham Cathedral’. ......................... 317

Figure 12.4. John Carter, *Some Account of the Cathedral Church 
of Durham*, p. 9, pl. 5, ‘Section of the Cathedral Church at Durham, 
from East to West, presenting the south side’, showing the 
Galilee Chapel. .............................................................. 318

Figure 12.5. John Carter, *Some Account of the Cathedral Church of 
Durham*, p. 9, pl. 4, ‘Elevation of the North Front of the Cathedral 
Church at Durham’, showing the Galilee Chapel at the west end: 
‘the north side of the Galilee, rising by a succession of buttresses 
from the precipitous face of the rock’. ................................. 321

**Lynda Rollason**

Figure 13.1. Plan of Durham Cathedral showing location 
of medieval stained-glass schemes. ................................. 329
Part Three
Visual and Material Culture
St Cuthbert’s Banner in the Twelfth Century

St Cuthbert’s banner was a processional banner incorporating a square of white cloth, the holy corporal, that was believed to have been used by the saint himself when he said mass. Kept at Durham cathedral, it is one of the best documented of medieval saints’ banners, attested from the twelfth to the sixteenth century. Although not the first banner to appear in the evidence from the North, St Cuthbert’s banner is so fully recorded that we know almost exactly what it looked like, and that, I shall argue, is important to any understanding of banners. It is first mentioned in Reginald of Durham’s account of the miracles of the saint, written over a period of time in the 1160s and ’70s. A chapter devoted to a miraculous mission of the banner provides our earliest description. The city of Durham was on fire, the houses of the lower city were already burnt, and the flames were leaping over the walls of the castle. The defenders have a new idea:¹

Vexillum beati Cuthberti cum sacrí corporalibus in lancea suspendunt, quorum latorem inter medias flammas se subito ingessisse uiderunt.

* Grateful thanks to David Crouch and Henry Mayr-Harting for their comments on this paper, which grew out of work on documents from twelfth-century Yorkshire and has evolved in tandem with another paper, to be published as a booklet, Vexilla Regis, Paul Walsh Memorial Lecture 3 (Maynooth, 2018).

¹ Reginald of Durham, Libellus de admirandis beati Cuthberti uirtutibus que nouellis patrate sunt temporibus (BHL 2032), c. 39, ed. J. Raine the elder, Surtees Society 1 (1835), 82–83.

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They hang the banner of St Cuthbert with the sacred corporal on a lance and watched the bearer straightaway enter into the midst of the fire.

C. F. Battiscombe translated Reginald’s words as ‘with the wrappings from the sacred body’, but the word corporalia (n. pl.) was long established in the sense ‘corporal’ (ME corporas), a square napkin of white linen on which the chalice and paten are placed during consecration or with which they are covered. There was a corporal in the communion set found in the saint’s coffin in 1104 and ostensibly replaced in it. If the old one was kept and a new cloth placed in the coffin, then we should have a terminus a quo for the making of this banner. As Reginald described the scene, the bearer of the banner disappeared into the flames and the people began to think that he and the banner were lost, but, wherever he had been with the banner, the fire yielded, and they emerged sooty but unscathed. And someone had seen a little bird flying over them to protect the pyx that held the consecrated bread: the writer seems to have assumed that we knew a pyx formed some part of the banner when carried. Miracles attesting the power of the saint in a banner are unusual, but this banner was the embodiment of a relic. The description of it as taken and hung on a lance is not distinctive, but it is obvious that it was a banner brought from the church. We should doubtless suppose that it was the banner used in

2 C. F. Battiscombe, ‘Introduction’, The Relics of St Cuthbert (Oxford, 1956), 1–114 (at pp. 69, 71). He knew that the Durham relic-list of 1383 (below, n. 5) makes no reference to the saint’s corporal, but, if it was already incorporated into the fabric of the banner, it had no need to. Although he knew the references to the corporalia found in the coffin in 1104 (see next note), which he Englished as ‘burse’ (pp. 12–13, 65), at p. 71 he fails to see that this was a corporal.

3 In the early-twelfth-century Historia translationum S. Cuthberti (BHL 2029–30), mention is made of these items at the point when they were replaced in the coffin: ‘que sacerdotem decebant, altare uidelicet argenteum et corporalia et cum patena calicem’ (ed. J. H. Hinde, Symeonis Dunelmensis opera, Surtees Society 51 (1868), 158–201, at p. 193); translated by James Raine the elder, Saint Cuthbert (Durham, 1828), 81, ‘as became a priest, a silver altar, a linen cloth for covering the sacramental elements, a paten, a chalice’ (Battiscombe, 62). This was the source for Reginald’s Libellus, c. 42, ed. Raine, 89: ‘altare argenteum et corporalia, calicem aureum cum patena’; transl. Raine, Saint Cuthbert, 91, ‘an altar of silver, a cloth for covering the sacramental elements, a golden chalice with a paten’. Raine, Saint Cuthbert, 197, 216–17, called it a ‘burse’ (in which altar-linen might be kept) rather than ‘covering’ (the altar-linen itself), thereby confusing Battiscombe, 65, who concluded that it was replaced in the coffin in 1104 but was not found when it was opened on 17 May 1827. There is wider uncertainty as to when the communion set was actually placed in the coffin, and only the portable altar remained there in 1827 (E. Cambridge, ‘Reconsidering Cuthbert’s relics’, in The St Cuthbert Gospel, ed. C. Breay & B. Meehan (London, 2015), 115–27).
church processions at Easter and at Rogationtide, ordinary functions that are not likely to be well documented.

**St Cuthbert's Banner at War 1296–1563**

After this nothing is heard of the banner of St Cuthbert for more than a century. From the time of Edward I’s Scottish wars, however, it became conspicuous, and for more than two hundred years it can be documented as going to war against the Scots, a holy banner carried as a relic with the army to be exhibited on the sidelines of battle.⁴ During this whole period its regular use in processional liturgies is attested principally by payments in the account rolls of the priory. In a list of relics at the priory in 1383 it appears at the beginning with the number I for Cuthbert.⁵ Its last exceptional appearance occurred in 1536, when it was carried by the protesters on the Pilgrimage of Grace. On that occasion its role was more that of the visible representation of the saint as leader of his diocesan community than as a relic carried for the sake of its power to deliver victory in war.

Even the expeditionary history of St Cuthbert’s banner must be largely recovered from account rolls and similar records. Narrative sources rarely refer to it at all. The banner accompanied King Edward to Scotland in the summer of 1296, and the Durham community was rewarded with promise of payments from the Scottish treasury amounting to £40 per year.⁶ In 1297 Walter of Guisborough credited St Cuthbert with thwarting a Scottish invasion by bringing on snow

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⁶ Letters patent dated at Berwick, 16 September 1296; *Cal. Patent Rolls 1292–1301*, 204. C. M. Fraser, *The History of Antony Bek, Bishop of Durham* (Oxford, 1957), 129n, adds that the pension was seldom paid and was the cause of many petitions. A note in the roll records that the patent was cancelled when, on 7 March 1302, the priory was allowed instead to appropriate the East Riding church of Hemingbrough. Despite this, requests such as Ancient Petitions, SC8/43/2123 and SC8/9/417, led to the payment of four years’ arrears in 1309 (*Rotuli Scotiae* (London, 1814–19), i, 34, 67).
and frost unseasonably early in November, but he says nothing of the banner. Its next appearance was supposedly at the head of the bishop’s army in July 1298, when Edward I invaded Scotland and defeated William Wallace at the battle of Falkirk. Actual evidence is lacking, for there is no surviving account from the king’s wardrobe for the year 26 Edward I. Bishop Anthony Bek (we are told) was there ‘in all the pomp and splendour of a palatine prince’—the bishop of Durham was no mere prelate but the head of his county—with twenty-six ‘standard-bearers of his own household’ and 140 knights, 1000 foot, and 500 horse, ‘under the consecrated banner of St Cuthbert’, and the banner-bearer is named as Henry of Horncastle—but the source lacks authority. In 1299 and 1300 the banner certainly went to war in Scotland, and after the campaign a writ ordered its return to the cathedral. The roll of arms that celebrated the capture of Caerlaverock castle in 1300 mentions only secular banners, but it includes alongside the king’s arms those of St Edmund, St George,

8 Robert Surtees, The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham (London, 1816–40), i, xxxii, citing no evidence and dating the battle to 1296. Twenty-six uexillarii and 140 knights are probably taken from an undated context, ‘aliquando in guerra Scocie’, in the chronicle of Robert Graystanes, c. 18 (ed. J. Raine the elder, Historiae Dunelmensis scriptores tres, Surtees Society 9 (1838), 64). The number of bannerets (seigneurs a banniere) in the bishop’s division agrees with the Falkirk roll of arms (H. Gough, Scotland in 1298 (Paisley, 1888), 134–41, at p. 141). C. H. Hunter Blair, ‘Northern knights at Falkirk, 1298’, Archaeologia Aeliana 4th ser. 25 (1947), 68–114, remarked on Surtees’s confusion but thought it ‘not at all likely’ (p. 70) that St Cuthbert’s banner was at Falkirk. In view of the king’s habit, I prefer to say that direct evidence is wanting. Henry of Horncastle is last attested when, as prior of Durham’s Scottish cell at Coldingham, he was one of several prelates from Scotland who attended on King Edward at Berwick on 28 August 1296 (Durham Liber Vitae (n. 13), iii, 167–68). Narrative sources are gathered by Gough, Scotland in 1298, pp. xv–xxxii; the main narrative is Walter of Guisborough, ed. Rothwell, 323–29; but there is no mention of the saint’s banner. A modern military historian, P. Armstrong, Stirling Bridge and Falkirk, 1297–8. William Wallace’s Rebellion (Oxford, 2003), 60–61, assumes that Edward collected the banner as he passed through Durham in June 1298.
9 Writ close, dated 27 November 1300 (Cal. Close Rolls 1296–1302, 414). This writ was noted by Battiscombe, ‘Introduction’, 69. The expenses of Br William de Greatham, monk and banner-bearer, from 9 to 28 December 1299 and again from 3 July to 24 August 1300 appear in the wardrobe account book 28 Edward I, Liber quotidians contrarotulatoris Garderobae, ed. J. Topham (London, 1787), 50, 67. Topham, p. liii, provided a note on the banner, drawing on the description in the Rites, which in turn came to the notice of [Nicolas], ‘Banners used in the English army’ (n. 108), 100–01. The wardrobe account from the following year, now BL Add. MS 7966a, fol. 39v, shows expenses of Br William de Greatham and Henry de Creistok, ‘clerk, in carrying the banner of St Cuthbert, quod rex habuit secum in guerra Scocie anno xxviiij’, from York back to Durham when the campaign was over.
and St Edward.10 These were something quite different from St Cuthbert’s banner. Again in 1301 the banner followed the king to war in Scotland for more than three months.11 Payments from the king’s wardrobe appear again in 1303—4, when the banner was away from Durham for so long that it missed the major processional feasts.12 It was carried on at least four occasions by the same man, a monk of Durham, Br William de Gretham, who also acted as courier between the prior and the king.13 At the beginning of his reign King Edward II is said to have agreed with the convent that it would always bring out the banner for a Scottish campaign, and the king paid the banner-bearer’s costs in July 1307.14 The lack of any evidence for his taking the banner in 1314, when he was defeated at Bannockburn, speaks for itself. King Edward III called up the banner when he was in Scotland in 1335, but it was the bursar of Durham who met the expenses of the bearer, Br William de Scaccario.15 I have found no mention

10 These were flags by this date associated with the king. N. H. Nicolas, The Siege of Caerlaverock (London, 1828), 86; T. Wright, The Roll of Arms of the Princes, Barons, and Knights who attended King Edward I to the siege of Caerlaverock in 1300 (London, 1864), 35; G. J. Brault, Eight Thirteenth-Century Rolls of Arms in French and Anglo-Norman Blazon (University Park, PA, 1973), 122. The sum of 10s. was spent on five lances for the five royal banners to be carried to Scotland, two of the arms of England, and the arms of St George, St Edmund, and St Edward (Liber quotidianus contrarotulatoris Garderobae, 64).


12 BL MS Add. 8835 (wardrobe account 1303–4), fol. 9v, William de Gretham, monk of Durham, was paid £14 6s. 0d. for remaining at court with the banner of St Cuthbert for the period from 20 November 1303 to the end of August 1304. My thanks to Prof. Michael Prestwich for this reference.


14 Fraser, History of Antony Bek, 129, 212, cites wardrobe accounts, but fails to give the dates of account or to relate what they say to the statements in her text. The first, E101/355/10/1 mem. 2, does not check out; the second, E101/373/15 fol. 11, for the year 1307–8, records payment to the banner-bearer, Br Thomas Rillington (Calendar of Documents Scotland, v, 222, § 521; Durham Liber Vitae, iii, 217).

15 Durham Liber Vitae, iii, 245, from Bursar’s Roll 1335–6. J. T. Fowler, Extracts from the Account Rolls of the Abbey of Durham, Surtees Society 99, 100, 103 (1898–1901), ii, 529, in compensating for omitted entries, has mistakenly supplied the name of Richard of Wolveston as bearer. From the source one cannot infer the year—and Edward III was in Scotland in both 1335 and 1336—but, since St John’s banner was called up in June 1335 (below, n. 116), I infer that this represents reimbursement of expenses in the sum of £10 after Michaelmas 1335.
of the banner in the context of Edward III's campaign in 1333 which ended in victory at the battle of Halidon Hill and the capture of Berwick.

In 1346, Edward was far away in France, when King David II invaded England by arrangement with the French king Philippe VI. William Zouche, archbishop of York, summoned an army to defend the realm, and on 17 October battle was joined at Neville's Cross to block the Scots' advance. The monks of Durham, sighting victory from the tower of the cathedral, sang *Te Deum*, and success was claimed for St Cuthbert. Despite this detail, our fourteenth-century narrator Henry Knighton says nothing of the saint's banner. A sixteenth-century source from Durham, however, tells how, before the battle, Prior John Fossor experienced a dream in which St Cuthbert told him 'to taine the holie corporax Cloth, which was within the corporax, wherewith St Cuthbert did cover the chalice when he used to say masse, to put the same holie relique, like unto a banner clothe upon a spear point, and on the morow after to goe [...]'.

St Cuthbert had also, we are told, appeared to King David in a dream, urging him not to invade the lands of his church, but the king ignored the warning. Battle was fought and won, David was captured, and his royal banner was brought to the saint's feretory. After this victory Prior Fossor 'caused a goodly and sumptuous banner to be maid', and the sixteenth-century writer, apparently remembering the banner itself, gives a very detailed description:

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19 *Rites of Durham*, 6, 25. This work also refers to capture of the Black Rood of Scotland, ib. 18–19, entered in the Durham relic list in 1383 (n. 5), Fowler, *Durham Account Rolls*, ii, 426. The Black Rood at Durham, however, was a painted crucifix, quite distinct from the historic Black Rood carried as a small relic by King David I: discussed by R. White, 'The battle of Neville’s Cross’, *Archaeologia Aeliana* new ser. 1 (1857), 271–303 (at pp. 292–93), and L. Rollason, 'Spoils of war: Durham cathedral and the Black Rood of Scotland', in *The Battle of Neville’s Cross*, ed. D. W. Rollason & M. C. Prestwich (Stamford, 1998), 57–65.

The said Prior caused a goodly and sumptuous baner to be maid and with pippes of siluer to be put on a staffe, being fyue yerdis longe, with a device to take of and on the said pipes at pleasure, and to be kept in a chyste in the ferretorie when they were taken down, which baner was shewed and caried in the said abbey on festivall and principall daies. On the highte of the ouermost pipe was a faire pretie crosse of silver and a wand of siluer, having a fyne wroughte knopp of silver at either end, that went ouertwhart the baner cloth, wherevnto the baner cloth was fastned and tyed, which wand was of the bignes of a mans fynger, and at either end of the said wand there was a fyne siluer bell, the wand was feste by the myddle to the baner staff hard under the crosse. The baner cloth was a yerde brode, and five quarters deape, and the nether part of it was indented in five partis, and frenged, and maid fast withall about with read silke and gold. And also the said baner cloth was maid of read velvett of both sydes most sumptuously imbroidered and wrought with flowers of grene silke and gold. And in the mydes of the said baner cloth was the sayde holie relique and Corporax cloth inclosed and placed therein, which Corporax cloth was covered over with white velvett, halfe a yerde squayre every way, having a red crosse of read velvett on both sydes over the same holie Relique, most artificiallie and cunyngly compiled and framed, being fynely fringed about the edge and sciritis with freng of read silke and gold, and ij little fyne siluer bellis feste to the sciritis of the said baner cloth, like vnto sackring bellis, and so sumptuouslie finished and absolutely perfitted, was dedicated to holie St Cuthbert, of intent and purpose that the same should be alwaies after presented and carried to any battell, as occasion should serve, and which was never caryed or shewed at any battell, but, by the especial grace of God Almightie and the mediacion of holie St Cuthbert, it browghte home the victorie.

Elsewhere in the same source the banner is described again more briefly: 21

there was also a banner [...] called St Cuthbertes Baner, which was iiij yeardis in length. All the Pippes of it was of siluer to be sleaven on a long speire staffe, and on the height of it was a fyne lytle silver crosse, and a goodly Baner cloth perteyned to yt. And in the mydes of the baner cloth was all of white velvett halfe a yerde squayre every way, and a faire crose of read velvett ouer yt, and within the said white velvett was the holy Relique the Corporax cloth/ that they holy man Sancte Cuthbert sayd mess withall. And the Resydewe of the Banner clothe was \all/ of Read velvett imbroidered all with \grene silke &/ goulde.

inclusion of little bells in the work was perhaps not unusual. Their use in vestments as well as banners is discussed by P. E. Schramm, ‘Tintinnabula: die Glöckchen am geistlichen und am weltlichen Gewande’, Herrschaftszeichen und Staatsymbolik, MGH Schriften 13 (1954–56), ii, 554–59.

21 Rites of Durham, 95.
The descriptions are sufficiently detailed to permit reconstructions (figures 11.1 and 11.2), a sketch and a lithographic print in 1828, and a reproduction of the banner in 2012. The main point of doubt is the precise form of the red cross.

Raine, *Saint Cuthbert*, 108n, explains the thinking behind the print by Frederick Nash (1782–1856), ‘The Interior of Durham Abbey; with a Procession of Monks on one of their Grand Festivals Previous to the Reformation’ (1828) [copy in the Cathedral Library], using the
in the middle of the white square that formed the centre of the embroidered red banner.\textsuperscript{23} This banner ‘was thought to be one of the goodlyest Reliquies that was in England’\textsuperscript{24}

and yt was not borne but of principall daies when ther was a generall possession, as Easter daie, the Assention day, Whitsonday, Corpus Christi daie, and Sancte Cuthbert day. And at other festivall daies it was sett up at the easte end of the shrine because it was so chargeable [\textit{heavy}].

Locally St Cuthbert’s day would begin the processional season, falling on 20 March and therefore always in Lent. Apart from the major Rogation on 25 April, the processional feasts move with Easter itself, starting with Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday; Rogationtide begins five weeks later and leads up to Ascension Day; Whitsun is ten days later, and Corpus Christi eleven days after Whitsun. The \textit{Rites} goes on to say that, when it was carried in procession, the bearer was accompanied by a clerk in surplice and by four attendants. At the feast of Corpus Christi the banner of St Cuthbert was brought from the cathedral in procession to meet the crystal monstrance carried towards it from St Nicholas’s church in the market square by a procession of all the churches of the town with the banners of all the town gilds.\textsuperscript{25} Such Corpus Christi processions remain common

\textit{Rites}, two or three ancient copes among the cathedral’s vestments, and of course the building. Nash made six drawings in Durham in 1828. The \textit{Rites} also served as the basis for the design of St Cuthbert’s banner, which now usually hangs outside the feretory in the south choir aisle. Designed by Fiona Raeside-Elliott and hand-embroidered by Ruth O’Leary, this was dedicated on St Cuthbert’s day 2012.

\textsuperscript{23} Raine, \textit{Saint Cuthbert}, pl. iii, no. 2, drew a plain Greek cross. He knew that the gold and garnet cloisonné St Cuthbert’s cross, found in the folds of the saint’s vestments when the coffin was opened in 1827, was unknown to Reginald, and instead he made a connexion with the style of cross on the seal of the priory (\textit{Saint Cuthbert}, 211–12), discussed at length by Longstaffe, 54–57. In Nash’s print the arms of the cross are wider at the ends, and this may have led Raeside-Elliott to model the red cross on St Cuthbert’s cross, slenderer but with a definite widening in the arms and with a circle at the centre.

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Rites of Durham}, 95–96.

where the feast is still kept. It was much later reported as ‘ancient custom’ that the priests of all the parish churches appropriated to the cathedral priory were to assemble at St Oswald’s church in Durham, wearing copes and surplices,26 attended by their respective parish clerks, bearing each the banner of his church, in sign of subjection and in honour of the church of Durham. When this numerous body was gathered together, the banner of St Cuthbert took the lead, and the whole assemblage moved on in procession to the church aforesaid.

Processional banners were familiar to every local community, and in the diocese of Durham St Cuthbert’s banner was their leader. The banner, it is clear, was primarily a liturgical banner, carried in procession several times a year. Unusually it was also a relic and an embodiment of the saint’s power, which King Edward I and his successors had seen as an asset in war against the Scots. Despite what the sixteenth-century writer said, it is certain that the banner was not first made in 1346. Rather than taking out the small white corporal, mounted on a lance, Prior Fossor took out the existing banner, probably the very one referred to by Reginald, which already served to house the relic, and presumably the banner that had gone to Scotland so often with the three Edwards. After the victory over David II, it is possible that the prior commissioned a new banner to replace the old one—after more than two hundred years, its fabric was perhaps becoming threadbare—but like the old one it housed the saint’s corporal, and we can surely deduce the form of the banner in the twelfth century from the sixteenth-century description of its successor.

The events of 1346 were very likely the stimulus to the Scottish chronicler John Fordoun, who created an earlier role for the banner of St Cuthbert in 1097, when the young Edgar mac Maelcholuim, rightful heir to Malcolm III of Scotland, travelled north with his English uncle Edgar Atheling and with troops provided by King William Rufus to fight the usurper Domnall Bán and claim the throne of Scotland. Fordoun, writing around the middle of the fourteenth century, says that the future King Edgar experienced a dream in which St Cuthbert spoke to him in biblical prose:27

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26 Raine, *Saint Cuthbert*, 136 n. Raine says ‘twice yearly at the prior’s visitation’, but the modern catalogue of his cited source refers only to the seven days of Pentecost. The source is a letter, dated 18 October 1461, from the prior’s official, acting as archdeacon for the appropriated churches, which orders the summoning of rectors and vicars who had failed to attend in person or through chaplains at the previous Whitsuntide, as copied in DCM Registrum Parvum III, fols 106r–107v.

Fili, noli timere, quia placuit deo dare tibi regnum; et hoc tibi signum, cum uexillum meum tecum de monasterio Dunelmi tuleris, et contra adversarios illud erexeris, tibi exurgam in auxilium, et dissipabuntur inimici tui, et qui oderint te fugient a facie tua.

Son, be not afraid, for it hath pleased God to give thee the kingdom; and this shall be a sign to thee, when thou taksethe banner with thee from the monastery of Durham, and liftest it up against thy adversaries, I shall rise up to aid thee, and thy enemies will be scattered and those that hate thee will flee before thy face.

They took up the saint’s banner, and an English knight Robert fitz Godwin with two other knights attacked Domnall Bán and with the saint’s power turned him and his forces to flight. What banner may have existed so early is not known, but the story fits the fourteenth-century context. Where Fordoun hints at Scottish respect for an enemy banner and its cross-border saint, his reviser Bower made it a principle that Scots should avoid doing injury to Cuthbert, who was brought up in Scotland and who brought about King Edgar’s succession.28

After the battle of Neville’s Cross Prior Fossor’s banner and its bearers feature frequently in the account rolls of the priory, which provide hitherto undocumented details of small repairs and the bearer’s equipment as well as of regular payments to a chaplain for carrying the banner in processions. These records survive in some abundance from the late-fourteenth- and fifteenth-centuries, but they have not survived from earlier generations. By this period it is the priory and not the king’s wardrobe that bears the expense of the banner’s service with the king’s army. Br William de Scaccario brought the banner to the king at Newcastle in 1356, but the bearer was now Br William of Masham, who carried the banner with the king into Scotland, when Edward III recovered Berwick.29

There is evidence that it was taken north in 1384 and again by King Richard II in 1385 and by King Henry IV in 1400.30 It missed the battle of Otterburn,
at which the Scots had victory over Hotspur in 1388. In 1482 it crossed the Tweed when Earl Richard of Gloucester captured Berwick; it went with Bishop Richard Foxe to Newcastle in 1497, when he took a force as far as Norham castle to fend off a possible Scottish invasion. And it played its part in the English triumph over King James IV in 1513, when three members of the monastic community accompanied it to Branxton, where it helped bring victory on Flodden Field. It was at Alnwick with the earl of Surrey’s army again in 1523. Finally, in 1536, it was brought out by protesters on the Pilgrimage of Grace, carried before the devout laity as it had been countless times at Durham.

Prior provided £1 in the same Robert Claxton’s expenses ‘uersus Scociam’ (ib. 594). Claxton was the displaced prior of Coldingham (below, n. 117). A continuation of Higden’s Polychronicon, ed. J. R. Lumby, Rolls Series 41 (1865–86), ix, 62, names the commanders of the first division ‘cum cruciata et uexillo sancti Cuthberti’ (‘with the cross and banner of St Cuthbert’).

Bishop John Fordham and his men failed to arrive in time for the battle at Otterburn, ‘one of the many mistakes made by the English forces’ (R. B. Dobson, ‘The church of Durham and the Scottish border’, in War and Border Societies in the Middle Ages [in fact papers of a conference about the battle of Otterburn], ed. A. F. Tuck and A. Goodman (London, 1992), 124–54, at p. 148. Dobson (p. 125) saw the church of Durham as the biggest loser from this defeat.

Richard Tanfield in 1482 and Robert Bailey in 1497 were paid their expenses as bearers by the bursar(Durham Liber Vitae, iii, 383, 389, citing unpublished bursar’s accounts). An account in Fowler, Durham Account Rolls, iii, 654, names Bailey and others attendant on the banner and riding with the bishop to Newcastle in 1497.

Rites of Durham, 95. Fowler, Durham Account Rolls, iii, 663, shows that three office-holders of the community, bursar, sacrist, and cellarer, were deputed to accompany the banner in 1513 (Durham Liber Vitae, iii, 400, 403, 411).

[Nicolas], ‘On the banners’, 102, quotes, with reference to Henry Howard, earl of Surrey, ‘The erle harde masse and appoynted with the Prior for saincte Cutberde’s banner’; his source was Edward Hall’s The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York (1548), as edited by Henry Ellis, Hall’s Chronicle (London, 1809), 557, who shows that the earl passed through Durham in August 1523. The Earl wrote to King Henry VIII from Alnwick, 30 October, acknowledging that the king wanted him to go no further than St Cuthbert’s banner would go with him, and again on 3 November 1523, mentioning ‘my lord cardinal’s company, my lord of Northumberland, my lord of Westmoreland at Saint Cuthbert’s banner lying at Alnwick and thereabouts’ (J. S. Brewer, J. Gairdner, R. H. Brodie, Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, preserved in the Public Record Office, the British Museum, and elsewhere in England, 2nd edn, 23 vols in 38 (1862–1932), iii/2, nos 3481, 3506). The Scottish and French forces under the Duke of Albany were defeated at Wark castle shortly afterwards, victory celebrated by the poet Skelton who referred to the banners of St Cuthbert and St William (n. 140).

Evidence from the testimony and answers of Robert Aske, leader of the Pilgrimage of Grace in Yorkshire: Letters and Papers of the Reign of Henry VIII, xii/1, nos 6 (at p. 5), 901
The author of the *Rites of Durham* tells of its destruction by the wife of William Whittingham, who came to Durham as dean in 1563. We know that he had married in Geneva a French woman, Katherine Jacqueman. Whittingham was an iconoclast. The banner, it was believed, had survived the purging of shrines on King Henry VIII’s orders in 1537 and the destruction of St Cuthbert’s feretory in 1539, only to fall victim to Elizabethan puritanism. As late as 1591, Dean Tobie Matthew was conscious still that ‘a banner of St Cuthbert’ might lead a Catholic rising in the North.

All this detail serves a purpose. By its very continuity from Reginald’s reference to the *sacra corporalia* of St Cuthbert’s banner to the sixteenth-century writer’s narrative about Prior Fossor and his detailed description of the banner remembered in the cathedral, even after the priory was dissolved, we have assurance that the tradition of the banner was kept up for some four centuries. We know that it was a processional banner, hanging from a cross-bar and carried on a lance, later replaced by a cross-topped banner-stave, a form of banner still very familiar across Catholic Europe and beyond. Its liturgical role is least visible, being too much a part of the annual round of life to be described, except when accounts have been preserved to shed light on day-to-day trifles. Its exceptional role in war against the Scots has made it more conspicuous than it would otherwise have been and provokes questions about the perceived special power of holy banners.

With this two-sided picture in our minds of a church banner, carried at Easter and Rogationtide and, from the thirteenth century at Corpus Christi, that was also taken to war from the 1290s onwards, we turn to the less well-recorded banners of the saints of Yorkshire. What we learn from St Cuthbert’s banner helps us to understand more difficult evidence from the twelfth century, which will lead us into questions of far wider significance for the church and war. Our capacity to understand the earlier sources is much enhanced by awareness of the later and richer record concerning St Cuthbert’s banner.

(§§ 41, 73), 946 (§ 118); M. Bateson, ‘The manner of the taking of Robert Aske’, *EHR* 5 (1890), 330–45 (at pp. 336–37), and ‘Aske’s examination’, *EHR* 5 (1890), 550–73 (at p. 571). My thanks to Prof. George Bernard for these references.

36 He was denounced by Anthony Wood in his *Athenae Oxonienses* (1691–2), and despite an attempt to balance the picture this still comes across strongly in W. Hutchinson, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham* (Durham, 1823), ii, 185–97. His gravestone, destroyed in 1640, made his wife the sister of John Calvin (ib. 196n).

37 Rosamond Oates, ‘Catholicism, conformity, and the community in the Elizabethan diocese of Durham’, *Northern History* 43 (2006), 53–76 (at p. 59n), citing correspondence between the dean and Francis Mylles, secretary to Francis Walsingham, from BL MS Cotton Titus B. vii, fol. 425‘.
The Banners of St Peter, St Wilfrid, and St John of Beverley at the Battle of the Standard

In 1138 Archbishop Thurstan brought out the banners of the saints of Yorkshire to defend England against invasion by King David I of Scotland. Three saints’ banners were present on the battlefield, but what they looked like is left to the reader to infer. Within the year an early, but on some aspects detailed, account of the battle was included by Henry archdeacon of Huntingdon at the end of the fourth version of his Historia Anglorum. He fails to mention the banners. The main contemporary narrative about the campaign was written in 1139 by an Austin canon, Richard, prior of Hexham, who describes the lead up to the battle as well as the battle itself. King Stephen was besieging Bristol when King David’s army threatened to march on York, whose defence fell to the aged Thurstan. A group of the main barons of the shire conferred with him in York, when he made a promise to them:

Promisit etiam [Turstinus] eis quod sue diocesis presbiteros singulos cum crucibus et parochianis suis pariter cum illis in bellum procedere faciat.

He promised them also that he would make the individual priests of his diocese go forth with them to battle with their crosses and their parishioners.

Taking parochiani to refer to the men called up to serve, it is oddly tied into Thurstan’s promise. Any other reading seems to suppose a parish deputation as well as fighting men. The barons returned ‘ad sua’ but were soon reassembled at York: ‘Post modicum unusquisque cum suis munitis et bellicis armis instructis iterum Eboracum conueniunt’ (‘a little later each one together with those of his

38 Henry of Huntingdon, Historia Anglorum, X 7, ed. Diana E. Greenway (Oxford, 1996), 712–18 (where the fourth version ends: Greenway, lxx–lxxi). Henry was followed by Roger of Howden, Chronica, ed. W. Stubbs, Rolls Series 51 (1868–71), i, 193, who added the site of the battle on Cowton Moor from the Melrose chronicle, Stubbs, 1, p. xliv. See below, n. 73.


men equipped and trained in the weapons of war assemble at York’). This has been understood to mean that the local militia was called up to defend the land at a time when the king and most of his knights were occupied elsewhere. The men were equipped and trained, not simply called from the fields. At one time Richard was read as intending a general call-up of all able-bodied men. From Domesday Book we may be able to infer that, before the Conquest, the obligation of fyrd drew one fighting man from a holding of five hides. For Warren Hollister, who drew a distinction between what he called the great fyrd and the select fyrd, it was the great fyrd of Yorkshire that fought at the Standard, a general call-up to defend the land. More recent work has rejected this notion of a great fyrd but none the less allows that in the early twelfth century the king could call on English militia as well as on enfeoffed knights for the most part not of English descent. Richard’s words pose a difficult question about parishes and holdings of five hides and more. His account of the battle itself shows that this Yorkshire force fought on foot led by dismounted knights. Thurstan gave the barons his archiepiscopal cross and the banner of St Peter from York minster: ‘Tunc crucem suam et sancti Petri uexillum ac suos homines eis tradidit’ (‘So he consigned to them his own cross, and the banner of St Peter, and his retainers’). Meanwhile the king had despatched Bernard de Balliol back to Yorkshire with a body of knights, and a little time later he sent a small group of barons from Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire with their knights.

41 Raine, 87; Howlett, 161. Note that both print ‘instructi’, construing ‘unusquisque instructi conueniunt’; the manuscript reads ‘instructis’ (first word of fol. 42r) and the shift from singular to plural is better explained as ‘unusquisque cum suis armis instructis conueniunt’.


43 The primary point of reference comes under Wallingford, Great Domesday Book, ed. A. Farley (London, 1783), fol. 56c: ‘si rex mittebat alicubi exercitum, de V hidis tantum unus miles ibat’ (‘if the king sent an army anywhere, one fighting-man went from five hides only’). Similarly under Malmesbury: ‘rex . . . unum hominem ducebit secum pro honore V hidarum’ (ib. 64b). The general principle of this rate is nowhere stated, but it appears under boroughs because Domesday Book offered no better general entry at the head of each shire.


46 Raine, 87; Howlett, 161. Nicholl, Thurstan, 224, translating, elides the narrative to focus on Thurstan’s actions at the expense of a clear sequence of events.

47 Raine, 87, 88; Howlett, 161, 162. The additional despatch of barons from Nottingham and Derby may have been a move to stiffen the loyalty of the Yorkshire barons (David Crouch, King Stephen (London, 2000), 82).
A peace-mission to King David failed, and Thurstan sent his forces out to fight, with Bishop Ralf of Orkney as his personal deputy, together with one of his archdeacons and other clerks: 48

Misit archiepiscopus eis Radulfum cognomento Nouellum, Orcadiensium episcopum, cum quodam de archidiaconibus suis, et aliis clericis, qui populis cotidie ad eos undique cateruatim confluentibus, uice sua, et penitentiam iniugeret, et absolutionem daret.

Nicholl summarizes: 49

at the same time providing them with spiritual advisers in the person of Bishop Ralph of Orkney, one of his York archdeacons, and other clerics, who were to preach penance to the people and bring them absolution.

The bishop was to enjoin penance on and absolve those who day by day thronged to the fight. The very words ‘populis’ and ‘cateruatim’ point towards a general call-up. And then, fulfilling his promise to the Yorkshire barons, the archbishop ‘misit quoque eis presbyteros cum parochianis, sicut eis promiserat’ (‘he also sent them priests with parishioners as he had promised them’). 50

Thurstan can hardly have intended that these priests were to fight. The legatine council held at Westminster at the end of the same year repeated the established view that, just as laymen may not say mass, priests may not ‘arma sustollere et ad bella procedere’ (‘take up arms and go forth to battle’). 51

Despite the phrasing similar to that of Thurstan’s promise, Prior Richard did not intend to say that Thurstan’s action was uncanonical. His audience, we may suppose, knew what he referred to, but we must guess. And we shall see that a contemporary writer, Aelred of Rievaulx, introduced parochial banners as well as crosses to Thurstan’s promise. If the men were ready to leave York for battle near Northallerton, it seems to be supposed that the priests and parishioners too were in York, ready to be sent out. We know nothing of the routines for assembling the fyrd, but are we to picture scores of processions as priests, parish-clerks, and altar-boys walked twenty, thirty, even fifty miles to the mus-

48 Raine, 88; Howlett, 162.
49 Nicholl, Thurstan, 224.
50 Raine, 88; Howlett, 162.
ter of the fyrd? In the light of what we may understand about Whitsun processions to the cathedral, that is perhaps not out of the question.\textsuperscript{52} A less challenging supposition might be to picture processions in every parish, like those at Rogationtide, as a show of communal support to send on their way the men trained and duty-bound to fight.

By Archbishop Thurstan’s gift the banner of St Peter of York was taken to battle. What was done with it and other banners has given this battle its distinctive name. Along with the banners of two venerated bishops of York, St Wilfrid from Ripon and St John from Beverley, the banner of St Peter was hoisted high over the field of battle.\textsuperscript{53}

Moxque autem aliqui eorum in medio ciusdam machine quam ibi adduxerant unius nautis malum erexerunt quod Standard appellauerunt. \textit{[quotes couplet from Hugh the Chanter]} In summitate uero ipsius arboris quandam argentam pixidem cum corpore Christi et sanctorum Petri apostoli et Iohannis Beuerlacensis et Wilfridi Ripensis confessorum ac pontificum uexilla suspenderunt. Hoc autem ideo fecerunt, ut Iesus Christus, dominus noster, per presentiam sui corporis eis dux belli esset, quod pro eius ecclesia ac sua patria defendenda, susceperant. In hoc quoque suis prouidentes, ut si aliquo casu a se disiungerent et elongarentur, euidens et certum signum haberent quo ad suos socios reuertentur, et ubi auxilium recuperare possent.

Some of them quickly erected, in the centre of a frame which they had brought, the mast of a ship to which they gave the name of the Standard. [...] On top of this pole they hung a silver pyx containing the Host, and the banners of the saints Peter the Apostle, John of Beverley and Wilfrid of Ripon, confessors and bishops. In doing this their hope was that our Lord Jesus Christ, by the efficacy of his body, might be their leader in the contest in which they were engaging in defence of his church and their country. By this means they also provided for their men that, in the event of their being cut off and separated from them, they might observe some certain and conspicuous rallying-point by which they might rejoin their comrades, and where they would receive succour.

\textsuperscript{52} Martin Brett, \textit{The English Church under Henry I} (Oxford, 1975), 162–64, 198. The case of Durham has been mentioned above (p. 7).

The battle was fought on Cowton Moor near Northallerton, 22 August 1138, on land belonging to St Cuthbert’s church, as Richard points out.\(^{54}\) It quickly came to be known as the battle of the Standard. The name is peculiar to the battle, though the use of the word standard for such a battle-mast is not unique.\(^{55}\) It is perhaps a moot point whether the presence of the three saints’ banners was normal practice or the result of a unique decision by Thurstan.\(^{56}\) After the battle the saints’ banners were restored to the churches where they belonged.\(^{57}\)

At Anglorum exercitus, paucis de suis amissis, Deo auxiliante, uictoria expedite potitus, summpta preda, que satis copiosa ibi reperta est, breui fere totus dissoluitur; et unusquisque ad propria reuertens, uexilla que acceperant, cum gaudio et gratiarum actione, ecclesiis sanctorum reconsignant.

But the army of the English quickly gained a victory, by God’s help and with few of their own men lost; they took booty, which was found there in sufficient abundance, and quickly dispersed, each returning to his own. The banners that they had received they returned with rejoicing and thanksgiving to the churches of the saints.

It is necessary to ask what kind of banners these were. It is likely that they were processional banners like that of St Cuthbert, hanging down from a crossbar or yard-arm, which could be attached to a lance or staff. It is significant that, as in Reginald of Durham’s story of the banner’s safety in the fire, a pyx was attached to the mast that carried the banners. The use of such banners was ordi-

\(^{54}\) Raine, 94; Howlett, 165. Howden also adds ‘in Cutune mor’ (Chronica, i, 193), despite his otherwise copying Henry of Huntingdon. As if to heighten a sense of saintly intervention, Richard says that all the land around the battlefield was not Cuthbert’s. This goes against fact. Allertonshire had been given to Bishop William of Durham in 1088 by King William II (Durham Liber Vitae, i, 158; W. Farrer, Early Yorkshire Charters (1914–16), ii, 269–71).

\(^{55}\) M. Strickland, War and Chivalry: The conduct and perception of war in England and Normandy, 1066–1217 (Cambridge, 1996), 66n, compares King Richard I’s ‘wheeled flagpole’, also named the Standard, in 1191, described in Itinerarium peregrinorum et gesta regis Ricardi, IV 10, ed. W. Stubbs, Chronicles and Memorials of the reign of Richard I, Rolls Series 38/1 (1864), 249–50: ‘trabes longissima, ulul malus nauis, super quatuor rotas solidissimas composita laquearibus et compaginata iuncturis, ferro uestita’ (‘a very long wooden shaft, like a ship’s mast, set over four very strong wheels, fixed with ties and joints, sheathed with iron’).

\(^{56}\) Strickland, War and Chivalry, 65, takes the ad hoc view: ‘Thurstan had ordered the collection of saints’ banners from the most important religious houses [!] in the north of England, including those of Cuthbert from Durham [!], Wilfrid from Ripon, and John of Beverley, while he sent the banner of St Peter from York and his own archiepiscopal cross’.

\(^{57}\) Raine, 93; Howlett, 164–65.
narily confined to liturgical processions outside the church as well is inside. Only specialists in liturgical textiles have paid much attention to them at this period. Historians have taken more interest in war-banners and, in precisely this period, in the fact that prelates sometimes gave a war-banner in the name of a saint to a war-leader whose cause the church espoused. The precise nature of the banners makes a difference, and an answer to the question will help us understand what Archbishop Thurstan had in mind in 1138. It matters because it takes us to the heart of a question about the church and war.

Another contemporary, Abbot Aelred of Rievaulx, wrote a dramatic account of the battle, devoting more words to the speeches of his protagonists than to any narrative. Aelred's family was from Hexham, but, as a monk of Rievaulx from 1132 or not long after, he was well acquainted with the founder of the abbey, Walter Espec, one of the king's two justices in Yorkshire, who is the hero of his account. The occasion for his writing and his intended audience are difficult to infer, but his Relatio de Standardo was not written until at least ten years after the events, by which time he was abbot and Walter Espec was perhaps dead or at least retired into monastic life. The abbot's little book

58 For example, Franz Bock, Geschichte der liturgischen Gewänder des Mittelalters, oder Entstehung und Entwicklung der kirchlichen Ornate und Paramente (Bonn, 1859–71), iii, 209–22; Joseph Braun, Die liturgischen Paramente in Gegenwart und Vergangenheit. Ein Handbuch der Paramentik (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1924), 236–37. There is also some study of late medieval banners as works of art, such as Andreas Dehmer, Italienische Brüderschaftsbanner des Mittelalters und der Renaissance (Berlin, 2004).


61 The work was dated 1155–7 by F. M. Powicke, The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx by Walter Daniel (Edinburgh, 1950), pp. xcvii, xcix, on the basis that Aelred writes as if Walter Espec were dead and that Walter was buried at Rievaulx on 15 March 1155. His dating has been relayed without question by, e.g., C. T. Clay, Early Yorkshire Charters (Leeds, 1935–65), x, 144; A. Hoste, Bibliotheca Aeli Rediana (Steenburige, 1962), 119; Gransden, Historical Writing in England, i, 213; and D. N. Bell in ODNB. The original DNB dated Walter's death to 7 March 1153. The two dates come from the same source, a note on Walter Espec known to us from two antiquarian copies, recording his retirement to Rievaulx and his burial there two years later. Powicke used J. C. Atkinson, Cartularium abbathiae de Rievalle, Surtees Society
might have served to praise him in the hour of his withdrawal from the world. In writing it Aelred had Richard of Hexham’s text in front of him and very likely Henry of Huntingdon’s too. One cannot use Aelred as a source—he is an interpreter of sources still available to us—but two differences between his account and Richard’s are worth remark. The Standard is named on the first page, but Aelred refers to it as ‘the royal ensign’.

Exercitum adunarunt regiumque signum quod ulgo Standard dicitur, in campo latissimo iuxta Aluertonam constituentes, illic hostes excipere decreuerunt.

83 (1889), 264–65, taken from Bodl. MS Dodsworth 85, fol. 36, ‘idus Martii anno millesimo centesimo quinquagesimo quarto’; Powicke has allowed for the Cistercian use of Lady Day reckoning, so this can be expressed as 15 March 1154/5. DNB cited BL MS Cotton Vitellius F. iv, fol. 137v, as printed by Roger Dodsworth and William Dugdale, Monasticon Anglicanum (London, 1655–73), i, 727, repr. Monasticon (below, n. 81), v, 280, ‘vij idus Marcii mcliij’. In fact Dugdale had also used Dodsworth’s transcript, taken in 1640 from a manuscript in the hands of the earl of Rutland, which included four lines of verse not found in the Cotton manuscript, which comprises extracts from cartularies made by James Strangman (d. 1595/6). DNB erred in the conversion of the Latin date, ‘vij idus’ (9 March), and failed to allow for Lady Day reckoning, 1153/4, while Atkinson omitted ‘vij’ in error and thereby misled Powicke. The two sources agree in dating the burial to 9 March but disagree between 1153/4 (Strangman) and 1154/5 (Dodsworth). Paul Dalton in ODNB dates Walter’s death or retirement from the first charter of his heir, Robert de Ros, in favour of Rievaulx, with a long witness list; Dalton’s date is 1147 × 14 October 1153, not later than the death of Archbishop Henry Murdac (Cartularium de Rievalle, 21–22, no. xliii). It is probably correct to suppose that Walter was retired or dead when the work was written: indeed, his retirement or death may have been the occasion of writing. It is manifestly positive about King Stephen, to such a degree that it could not have been written after Stephen’s death, and probably not after his agreement with Duke Henry, the Plantagenet heir, on 6 November 1153. It is tactfully silent as to the names of Stephen’s royal enemies, King David and his son Earl Henry, both of them Aelred’s friends of old; Henry died 12 June 1152, David 24 May 1153, but nothing in the text refers to them as dead, though the question of Anglo-Scottish relations was clearly in the front of Aelred’s mind. A date of writing not later than the spring of 1152, perhaps as a eulogy of the retiring Walter, appears more likely than Powicke’s dating. Aelred soon shifted to recognize Duke Henry as heir to the throne with his Genealogia regum Anglie et regis Dauid Scotie (n. 98).

62 Gransden, Historical Writing in England, i, 215, says, ‘probably based on the account of the Battle of the Standard in Richard of Hexham’s Chronicle’. A passage quoted below is decisive, but Aelred was not following Richard but creating his own work with little close dependence.

63 Howlet, 181. Aelred’s wording might easily be taken as signifying that Standard was the usual name of the royal signum, whereas Richard says it was the popular name for the particular thing associated with this battle. Translated by J. P. Freeland, Aelred of Rievaulx: The historical works (Kalamazoo, MI, 2005), 247, whose note simply tells us, without remark, what Aelred knowingly omitted, that it carried the banners of the saints.
[...] Setting up the royal ensign that is commonly called the Standard in a broad field near [North]Allerton, they decided to engage the enemy there.

King Stephen was far away, and Aelred wanted to emphasise that Yorkshire was fighting for Stephen, the rightful king. If we did not know from Richard of Hexham that this was no ordinary standard, we might read Aelred as saying that the English army displayed the king’s war-banner as the signal for battle.\textsuperscript{64} The phrasing may well have been influenced by Henry of Huntingdon, who seems to want only to explain the simple word Standard: ‘proceres borealis Anglie [...] restiterunt uiriliter, fixo Standard, id est regio insigni, apud Aluertune’ (‘the barons of northern England stood their ground courageously, and the Standard, that is the royal ensign, was set up at [North]Allerton’). It was a word Henry liked.\textsuperscript{65} In his favouring Henry’s treatment over Richard’s, one has to ask why Aelred avoided mention of the saints’ banners hung from the Standard.\textsuperscript{66} Did he perhaps think they had no place on the battlefield? But he straightaway picked up from Richard, though in altered sequence, Thurstan’s

\textsuperscript{64} The declaratory act of ‘baner desployé’ was an element of the rules of war in the later middle ages. An example from 1086 refers to the rebellious raising of a banner (‘erecto uexillo’) by Markgraf Ekkebert (D. S. Bachrach, \textit{Religion and the Conduct of War}, c. 300–1215 (Woodbridge, 2003), 72). The St Albans chroniclers wrote of the treaty between King Stephen and Duke Henry in 1153, ‘ut cessarent exercituum indignatio uexilla que iam explicabantur conuoluta absconderentur, quia de pace tractatus efficax habebatur’ (‘so that armed hostilities might cease the banners which were already unfurled were rolled and put away, since an effective treaty of peace was had’) (Roger of Wendover, \textit{Chronica siue Flores historiarum}, ed. H. O. Coxe (London, 1841–2), ii, 255).

\textsuperscript{65} As Greenway comments in her Introduction, pp. cvi–cvi, it is a French word, which Henry used in the context of the battle of Ashingdon (1016) and the English ensign at Hastings (1066) (\textit{Historia Anglorum}, VI 13, 30, Greenway, 358, 394). She suggests that he was using \textit{chansons de gestes}. By the time that the last continuation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle was written, in 1155, covering the years 1132–54, the Peterborough chronicler used the word as though established, saying that Earl William routed King David ‘æt te Standard’.

\textsuperscript{66} In a discussion of Aelred’s \textit{Relatio}, in which she emphasises how he ‘pursues his theme by invoking saints at strategic points in the narrative, resulting in a work enveloped in a saintly glow’, Elizabeth Freeman, \textit{Narratives of a New Order: Cistercian historical writing in England, 1150–1220} (Turnhout, 2002), 46, does not ask why he omitted the saints’ banners. She merely supplies the facts from Richard, adding from her imagination the presence of St Cuthbert’s banner, as if it had outflanked the Scottish army in getting from Durham to Northallerton. Strickland (above, n. 55) also included St Cuthbert’s banner, while Battiscombe, 69, was surprised by its absence. Aird calls it ‘conspicuously absent’ (W. M. Aird, \textit{St Cuthbert and the Normans} (Woodbridge, 1998), 259), and so too does Bliese, ‘St Cuthbert and war’, 235. All this reflects assumptions, untrammelled by events on the ground or the extent of the call-up of forces.
episcopal command that the clergy and their parishioners should come out for the king, modifying it to mention not only crosses but also banners, a clear sign of the normality of banners in parochial processions at this time:67

Sed et Turstinus archiepiscopus per totam diocesim suam edictum episcopale pro-
posuit, ut de singulis parochiis, presbiteris cum cruce et uexillis reliquiisque sancto-
rum preuentibus, omnes qui possent ad bella procedere, ad proceres properassent, ecclesiam Christi contra barbaros defensuri.

Thurstan the archbishop also published an archiepiscopal edict through all his dio-
cese that, while the priests from every parish led the way with cross and banners and relics of the saints, all who could go forth to war were to hasten to the barons to defend the church of Christ against the barbarians.

The wording, ‘omnes qui possent ad bella procedere’, replacing Richard’s ‘para-
chianis’, reinforces the sense of a general call-up. They were to set off, led by their priests as if in a liturgical procession. Here we have a scene familiar from France and Normandy, mentioned by Orderic in words close to Richard’s: first, referring to the siege of Bréval in 1095, ‘illuc presbiteri cum parochianis suis uexilla detulerunt’ (‘the priests, carrying banners, came with their parishion-
ers’), and again, ‘ut presbiteri comitarentur regi ad obsidionem uel pugnam cum uexillis et parochianis omnibus’ (‘so that the priests might accompany the king [of France] to battle or siege, carrying banners and leading all their parishioners’).68 Chibnall’s version here twice makes the supposition that banners were carried by priests, but it is infinitely more likely that a clerk carried the banner in front of the priest. Still earlier the same scene might be associ-
ated with the idea of God’s Peace, which the church-community would fight to defend. In a well-known story from 1038 the clergy and their parochial banners were the manifestation of the community’s force asserting the church’s peace.69

67 Twysden 337; PL 195. 703; Howlett, 182; translation adapted from Freeland, 247–48. Compare Nicholl, Thurstan, 223, who joins this sentence into Richard’s account rather as Raine introduced the archbishop’s edict in a footnote to his text, 87n): ‘At the same time he published an edict throughout his whole diocese that all who could proceed to the wars should flock to their leaders from each of the parishes, preceded by the parish priests with cross and banners and relics of the saints, to defend the church of Christ against the barbarians.’


69 Erdmann, Kreuzzugsgedanken, 39; trans. Idea of Crusade, 44. The source is Andrew of Fleury, Miracula S. Benedicti (BHL 1126), V 2–4, ed. E. de Certain, Les miracles de Saint-Benoît (Paris, 1858), 193, well known as a very early example of the enforcement of sworn peace by the church; the passage was re-edited by Albert Vermeesch, Essai sur les origines et la signifi-
The first two sketches appear in the margins of a late-twelfth-century copy of John of Hexham, whose account of the Standard follows that of Richard of Hexham. The left-hand image appears to be the first attempt to represent three banners hung from the mast of the Standard, the central image a second attempt, more clearly depicting banners though not making clear their form nor how they were hung from the mast. The right-hand image from the primary manuscript of Roger of Howden is closely related in design to the earlier images, but Howden’s text ignores Richard of Hexham’s description and refers only to the king’s standard flown from the mast. The four-wheeled bogie which they have in common is either a highly creative interpretation of Richard of Hexham’s words, which do not indicate that the Standard was mobile, or perhaps influenced by later experience. Four wheels are mentioned with reference to the Standard set up by King Richard in 1191, but the copy of John of Hexham was probably made before that date.
The saints’ banners from the great minsters of Yorkshire have been, on this reading of the evidence, replaced by Aelred with those carried in parish processions at Rogationtide and other feasts. It is difficult to read Aelred’s mind: was he taking a different view from Thurstan’s on what part the church should play in war? Did he think the archbishop had been wrong to send the saints’ banners into battle? In the 1130s Aelred was without question a protégé of Thurstan and a crucial influence on his conversion to the Cistercian agenda.70 Aelred’s little book was written a decade after Thurstan’s death, but it tells us something about the importance attached to the saints’ banners if Aelred had thought about their role and come to a different conclusion.

If, on the other hand, one thinks that Henry of Huntingdon was correct in referring only to the king’s standard and that Aelred rightly ignored Richard of Hexham’s statements about the saints’ banners, then it would appear that his description of the Standard is fiction. Henry is usually a reliable reporter, but his reference to the battle was written very soon after it, and he may have been too quick to interpret mention of a standard for himself. Aelred had both authorities in front of him and made a choice. His closeness to participants in the events, among them both Archbishop Thurstan and Walter Espec, does not necessarily mean he is more reliable than Richard of Hexham. If Archbishop Thurstan did not initiate the raising of the saints’ banners, why should someone such as Richard make it up? The fact is that the Standard gave its name to the battle, and that speaks for its being something distinct and unusual.

Because of the Standard and the banners it carried, this battle has acquired a place in European historiography in a context where English events rarely do. On the role of the Standard in the fighting, Aelred gives a little detail not provided by Richard of Hexham:71

At proceres, qui maturioris etatis fuerunt, ut ceteris presidio forent, circa signum regium constituuntur, quibusdam altius ceteris in ipsa machina collatis.

cation de la commune dans le nord de la France, Xle et XIle siècles (Heule, 1966), 28–34 n. T. F. Head, ‘Andrew of Fleury and the Peace League of Bourges’, in Essays on the Peace of God. The Church and the People in eleventh-century France, Historical Reflections 14 (1987), 513–29, says it was ‘the only instance during the early phase of the Peace movement in which military force was employed to outlaw military force’ (p. 513).

70 Nicholl, Thurstan, 206–07.

71 Howlett, 191; transl. adapted from Freeland, 261. I remain unsure about the repetition of ‘ceteris’.
The barons of more mature age were placed around the royal ensign to guard the rest, certain of them being set on the platform higher than the others.

We have seen the *machina* translated ‘frame’ by Nicholl and ‘platform’ here by Freeland. What did it look like?

Next to the derivative account by John of Hexham, the unique manuscript has included two sketches of the mast rising unstabilized from a small four-wheeled base: this can hardly be a reliable guide to its exact appearance (figures 11.3, 11.4 and 11.5). The draftsman has provided no space for even a few older barons to stand on a platform, and it is difficult to derive a clear sense of how the banners were actually hung from the mast. The fact that only two are shown may tell us that he had little to go on. The illustration in the primary manuscript of Howden’s *Chronica* depicts an ordinary three-tongued war-banner flying from a cross-topped mast on a similar small four-wheeled base. The bogie-like base might easily be copied from the sketch that accompanies John’s text, but the banner is obviously a war-banner, and the mast is labelled ‘Standard’. Howden followed Henry of Huntingdon, not John of Hexham, who based himself on Richard of Hexham, so his wish to illustrate this object at some remove from the textual sources is curious. Reading Richard’s account, one twentieth-century authority, Carl Erdmann, saw in the *machina* something recognizable from Italian warfare in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, the Milanese *carroccio*. This was a four-wheeled waggon drawn by oxen, on which was mounted an altar, a crucifix, and the banner of St George, patron of the Lombard League. It was first promoted by the fighting Archbishop

72 Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 139 (s. xii3/4), fols 134v, 135r. The two sketches were reproduced by Twysden, cols 339–40. They were used to bizarre effect by the artist illustrating the battle in *Cassell’s Illustrated History of England* (London, 1857–65), i, 163. The sketch also served as the basis of the design on the monument at the battlefield.

73 The authorial fair copy of Roger of Howden’s *Chronica* in two volumes is now BL MS Royal 14 C. ii, continued in Bodl. MS Laud Misc. 582 (s. xii/xiii). The drawing is in Royal 14 C. ii, fol. 88r, and there is no other illustration in the volume. It was not copied in a second author’s copy, made from the first, now BL MS Arundel 69 (s. xii/xiii), in which it would have come at fol. 41v. A later copy, also likely to be based on the primary copy, is now BL MS Arundel 150 (s. xiii7), where the drawing is larger with the mast rising between the two columns of the text and the base in the lower margin.

74 Erdmann makes the Standard, ‘ein gutes Beispiel rein religiöser Verwendung’, the climax of his discussion of the *carroccio* (*Kreuzzuggedanken*, 47–50; *Idea of Crusade*, 53–56). This connexion had first been made long before, when C. du Fresne, Sieur du Cange (1610–1688), *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae Latinitatis* (Paris, 1678), iii, 943, cited John of Hexham’s *standardum* as equivalent to *carrocius*. 
Ariberto in 1039, and an early source likens it to a ship's mast with two white banners. The wheeled ship's mast of Richard's account is now seen as the culmination of a series of parallels to Aribert's original. Indeed the saints' standard has been treated as evidence that this was 'holy' war in England. English events must be seen in their proper context before they are slotted into a theme in European historiography, but it would not be astonishing if Archbishop Thurstan had in his mind ideas that are better attested on the Continent than in England. We should remember that Thurstan spent long periods of time in France and Italy. He was considered to be on friendly terms with five popes and certainly kept company with two of them. He may well have heard of the *carroccio*. To know what Thurstan was thinking, however, we need to know

75 The prototype of the *carroccio* is described by Arnulf of Milan, *Liber gestorum recentium*, II 16 (‘Concertatio inter regnum et praesulem et de uexillo mirabili’): ‘procera trabs, instar mali nauis, robusto confixa plaustro erigitur in sublime, aureum gestans in cacumine pomum cum pendentibus duobus candidissimi ueli limbis [v.l. linteis]; ad medium ueneranda crux depicta Saluatoris imagine extensis late brachiis superspectabat circumfusa agmina’ (ed. C. Zey, MGH SRG 67 (1994), 161–62; translated by H. E. J. Cowdrey, ‘Archbishop Aribert II of Milan’, *History* 51 (1966), 1–15: ‘A tall beam like the mast of a ship was erected upon a stout cart. It had a golden ball at the top, from which hung down two pennants of whitest stuff. Underneath was a cross upon which, with arms outstretched, the Saviour watched over the army’ (p. 12).


77 For Erdmann it was a principle, ‘Nicht mit ausdrücklichen Wörten, aber symbolisch bedeutete eine solche Fahnenverleihung eine Erklärung des heiligen Krieges’ (Kreuzzugsgedanken, 43; *Idea of Crusade*, 51), from which the particular was deduced by Hartmut Hoffmann, *Gottesfriede und Treuga Dei*, MGH Schriften 20 (1964), 256, ‘Die Mentalität des “heiligen” Krieges war den Engländern nicht fremd, wie die geistliche Initiative bei den Standartenschlacht von 1138 zeigt’.


79 The outline itinerary provided by J. E. Burton, *English Episcopal Acta* 5 York 1070–1154 (Oxford, 1988), 113–18, is a starting point for tracing his routes. It was probably Alfred the Sacrist (n. 91), who wrote of Thurstan as ‘ipsis etiam apostolicis Paschali et Gelasio, Calixto et Innocentio, atque Honorio familiaris et carus’ (‘well known and dear even to the popes themselves, Paschal and Gelasius, Calixtus and Innocent and Honorius’) (BL MS Add. 61901, fol. 78’).
whether the saints’ banners were war-banners, made and blessed in the names of the saints but lifted up to a greater height, or, as I think more likely, processional banners suspended from the mast. Did Thurstan create banners for war or did he send out liturgical banners to represent the saints as protectors? We can find a little more evidence for comparison.

*St Peter’s Banner and the Claim to Military Exemption*

The banner of St Peter of York may have played a prominent part in the poem about the battle composed by Hugh the Chanter, but we know no more of it than the couplet quoted by Richard of Hexham. St Peter’s banner appears again in a document drafted, I should argue, not before February 1140 and not after October 1154. This is a pretended charter by which King Henry I was supposed to have confirmed privileges anciently granted to the canons of York minster. It was ostensibly confirmed by King Stephen in February 1136, but Stephen’s charter, which follows Henry’s almost word for word, cannot be accepted as authentic either. The text has nothing in common with a royal charter of the period beyond the formal protocols of address and witnesses. It is a spatchcock of clauses, from more than one source, and it seeks to proclaim the privileges of the canons against the archbishop. So far as the king was concerned, in Henry I’s time, the dean and canons of York were dependent on the archbishop, who was tenant in chief, though Domesday Book recognizes under him the land of St Peter held by the canons. The king would not con-

80 Above, n. 53. The two extant lines are not revealing. Nicholl, *Thurstan*, 225, ‘if one may venture a guess [...] it seems likely that the York contingent marching behind St Peter’s banner were given a central part in the poem’.

81 The earliest extant copy dates from the last years of the thirteenth century, but it was inspected in chancery in 1253, and there are copies of the lost inspeximus; first printed by Dugdale and accessible now in *Monasticon Angelicanum*, new edition (London, 1817–30), vi, 1180–81 (no. xxxi), and as printed by James Raine the younger, *Historians of the Church of York*, Rolls Series 71 (1879–94), iii, 34–36. It is widely known from its listing as *Regesta* 1083. My own edition with notes is available online. The apparent date, inferred from the witnesses, is broadly August 1114 × January 1123, more narrowly after the king returned to England and resumed business, January 1121 × January 1123.


83 So, although the churches of royal manors were among the endowments of the office of dean, the king had given them to the archbishop and successive archbishops assigned them to the dean (Farrer, *Early Yorkshire Charters*, i, 336–37, no. 431; Burton, *English Episcopal Acta 5 York 1070–1154*, 63–64, no. 78, calendar only).
firm privileges to a subtenant, unless the archbishop had granted them; in that case the king might consent to his action. It seems to me inconceivable that this document was drafted in the 1120s, when Thurstan was hugely respected in York for defending the rights of the church. The date when King Stephen is supposed to have confirmed the charter was the occasion of his first visit to York, and it can be so dated because one of the witnesses to this act, as to several authentic ones, was Ouen, bishop of Évreux, who was in England in 1136. Ouen was Archbishop Thurstan’s brother, but Thurstan was not named as witness to this charter, even though we know he was present on the occasion when it was supposedly sealed. It is impossible that the king could have consented to these privileges for the canons, against Thurstan’s interest, in his presence yet without his consent. Both acts, therefore, were composed after the archbishop died on 6 February 1140. For the rest of Stephen’s reign succession to the see and province of York was disputed, and there was no stable archbishop until William fitz Herbert was received in 1154. The canons had opposed his nomination but they were defeated. He arrived at the beginning of June 1154 and died one week later. The dean and canons chose his successor Roger with the king’s approval, and he was consecrated on 10 October 1154. Two weeks later the king died, and Henry II came into his inheritance as king of the English. At this point holders of privileges in the king’s gift approached the new king for confirmation of their rights, and Henry II was much concerned to confirm only rights that had existed in his grandfather’s time and not to confirm those granted by King Stephen. The renewal in King Stephen’s name would not

84 Authentic acts of King Stephen, dated at York in February 1136, include Regesta 979 for York minster, witnessed by Archbishop Thurstan and his brother Bishop Ouen of Évreux; Regesta 716 for Rievaulx abbey, an original in the hand of scribe xiii, attested by Thurstan, Bishop Alexander of Lincoln, and others; Regesta 335 for Foutains abbey and Regesta 919 for Warden abbey both bear the tell-tale dating clause of scribe xiii and were attested by Thurstan, Alexander, and Ouen; Regesta 99 for Beverley minster also bears the dating clause of scribe xiii and its witness list again begins with Thurstan and Alexander. The Beverley document provided the wording for Regesta 717 for Ripon, a forgery, whose witnesses are almost entirely a subset of the larger number of witnesses in Regesta 99, with the addition of the unnamed bishop of Évreux. The witnesses to Regesta 975 for York are identical with those of Regesta 717 except that the bishop of Évreux is named Audinus.

85 Evidence for disputed nominations is concisely set out by Diana Greenway, Fasti ecclesiae Anglicaeciae 1066–1300 6 York (London, 1999), 2–3.

86 Judging from Nicholas Vincent’s index to the charters of King Henry II, that king rarely cites his mother’s charter as a precedent and never cites a charter of King Stephen. Charters of Henry I form the overwhelming majority of charters cited as precedent in Henry II’s acts.
have been forged after Henry II’s accession. The forged charter text, therefore, was put together 1140 × 1154.

Much of its wording was taken from another text. The forged charter has eleven clauses. The first two belong to the forgery, the last three are attested only here, but §§ 3 to 8 are also found in a slightly different form as part of a supposed inquest return from 1106 copied, and, we can surely say, confected in 1227.87 These two York texts share § 4, which is an intrusive gloss that interrupts the reading of the statement of privileges. A third source, none other than Prior Richard of Hexham, quotes § 3 in a form very close to what we read in the inquest version, which is expressed, as legal statements usually are, in the future tense, ‘if anyone will do this’, ‘if anyone will have done this’.88 The charter version has changed the tenses into the past tense as if the charter draftsman was concerned with the historic fact of the pretended ancient privileges. After several clauses about legal privileges, the two York versions add a clause about St Peter’s banner in the event of a military call-up (§ 8):

**confected inquest**

Quando autem rex congregabit exercitum, unus homo tantum preparabitur de tota terra canonica, cum uexillo sancti Petri, qui, si burgenses in exercitum ierent, dux et signifer eos precederet; sine burgensiis nec ipse ibit.

**forged charter**

Quando autem rex congregabat exercitum, unus homo tantum preparabatur de tota terra canonica, cum uexillo sancti Petri, qui, si burgenses in exercitum ierent, dux et signifer eos precederet; sine burgensiis uero nec ipse ieret.

*But when the king will summon an army, one man only will be equipped from the whole land of the canons, who, if the burgesses go to serve in the army, will go before them as leader and standard-bearer with the banner of St Peter. Without the burgesses, he will not go.*

*But when the king summoned an army, one man only was equipped from the whole land of the canons, who, if the burgesses went to serve in the army, went before them as leader and standard-bearer with the banner of St Peter. Without the burgesses, he did not go.*

87 This text is again a spatchcock of fragments. No copy from York survives, but it was copied at Southwell into the Liber Albus (s. xiv/xv) and printed from there by A. F. Leach, *Visitations and Memorials of Southwell Minster*, Camden new ser. 48 (1891), 190–96, reprinted with translation by R. C. van Caenegem, *English Lawsuits from William I to Richard I*, Selden Society (1990–91), i, 138–43 (no. 172), and by D. W. Rollason and others, *Sources for York History to AD 1100* (York, 1998), 220–25. Little of it can date from 1106 beyond the opening protocol specifying the circumstances and naming the jurors.

The first question to be asked here is what the sources mean by the word *exercitus*, ‘army’. Reference to *burgenses* is decisive. This claim does not relate to exemption from knight-service required from feudal tenants but militia-service in the fyrd, if the shire was mobilized, as it had been in 1138. Boroughs as well as vills sent their men to serve in the militia, and if we may scale up from Leicester’s obligation of twelve men in 1086, the city of York must have owed sixty or more.\(^9\) Although bishops and abbots owed knight-service, cathedral chapters did not, but if the fyrd was mustered, by this date surely unusual, men from every vili of five hides or more were liable to serve. Now, in 1138, Archbishop Thurstan had sent his own cross and the banner of St Peter to go with the fyrd, and he had sent his own *homines* too. So says Richard of Hexham, indicating that St Peter’s banner was at the disposal of the archbishop. After Thurstan’s death, the dean and canons wished it were otherwise, and Richard himself would later copy § 3 from the claims of the canons. They have co-opted custom into an exemption from the burden of providing men for the fyrd. Martin Brett has referred to this as ‘twelfth-century tradition’, but it was newly invented tradition.\(^9\) We do not know whether the lands of the canons were in fact treated as exempt in 1138, but Thurstan’s attitude makes it unlikely. This looks like new aspiration.

**St John’s Banner and Military Exemption for Beverley**

Now there is a striking parallel with the banner of St John of Beverley in Alfred the Sacrist’s tract on the liberties of Beverley minster.\(^9\) This states that all the

\(^{9}\) In 1086 Leicester, with about 280 houses, owed twelve men ‘in exercitu per terram’, while Oxford, a much larger town but with many houses derelict, owed twenty men or £20 (Great Domesday Book, fols 230a, 154a); York was very much larger with more than 1400 houses (ib. 298a), but as with most boroughs its military contribution is unspecified. In 1141 several sources refer to the fact that the citizens of Lincoln ‘turned out in force to join the royal army’ (Hollister, *Military Organization of Norman England*, 231).

\(^{9}\) Brett, ‘Warfare and its restraints in England’, 138–39 n. 27. He recognized that the charters were ‘of dubious authenticity’.

\(^{9}\) *Libertates ecclesie sancti Iohannis de Beuerlik*, § 11, ed. T. Chevallier, *Sanctuarium Dunelmense et Sanctuarium Beverlacense*, Surtees Society 5 (1837), 97–107 (without the documents intended to support the tract). Quotations here reflect the new edition with commentary, which I have in hand. The text is preserved in BL MS Add. 61901 (s. xiv\(^a\)), fols 60–73, but this Beverley manuscript was long unknown. Chevallier printed from a seventeenth-century source, BL MS Harley 560, copied from Cotton MS Otho C. xvi (before this was burnt), which had been copied from the Beverley manuscript in the sixteenth century.
land of St John shall be free from the burden of *exercitus* or *expeditio*, militia-service in the fyrd, by the service of the *uexillarius* who carries St John’s banner at the head of the force gathered from the East Riding. Alfred was writing late in the reign of King Stephen, 1149 × 1154, and it is not possible to be certain whether he was writing before or after the canons of York first put together the statement of claims that was in due course incorporated into the charter text. It is tempting to see his work as earlier than theirs and better informed, but it is not impossible that the canons of York imitated customs observed at Beverley before Alfred described them in writing. His tract is a fully intelligible work, setting out a range of rights and customs dating back to before the Norman Conquest, supported by royal charters whose lack of precision Alfred aimed to back up with detail. By comparison with the forgeries from York, what he says is far more persuasive.92

Further, if at the king’s proclamation there will be a general mobilization from the whole of Yorkshire, whether into Scotland or into Wales or against foreign peoples for the defence of the country, the banner-bearer from St John’s Carucate will go at the front with the lance and banner of St John’s church, and the Earl of York with twelve knights as his personal body-guard and with his own retinue, and all the army of the East Riding will follow the banner of St John, and at the command of the earl the banner-bearer will move or stand still. The other part of the earl’s army together with his constable will be mobilized, and all the army of the city of York with the banner of St Peter. But all the land of St John will be free from that fyrd

92 *Libertas*, § 11, BL MS Add. 6190, fol. 64r; ed. Chevallier, 102. The phrase ‘terram suam deseruiet’ (‘will hold his land by service’) must refer to the saint’s land, not the land of the banner-bearer. For the verb, one may compare a phrase in Henry I’s Coronation charter, ‘militibus qui per loricas terras suas deseruiunt’ (‘to knights who earn their lands by military service’) (*Regesta* 488, § 11).
service through that banner-bearer, who, by bearing this banner and by doing no other service, will earn his land. The banner-bearer is entitled to have two sturdy servants as his body-guard and two others who shall provide what is necessary for him in maintenance.

This is a very revealing paragraph. There was no earl of York between about 1081 and 1138, when Count William of Aumale was invested with the county in recognition of his service in defence of the country against the Scots at the battle of the Standard.93 Alfred the Sacrist was avowedly concerned to preserve the old customs, but there is no reason to think he copied a much older statement of rights; he was writing when William was earl of York and he had contemporary practice in mind, even if he believed it followed ancient tradition. Count William’s main land-holding was Holderness in the East Riding, a territory almost cut off by wetlands, but Beverley was described by Alfred as the caput of the East Riding, so that there is a certain fitness in his leading the fyrd of the East Riding himself while the rest of the Yorkshire fyrd was led by the earl’s constable, a further sign that Alfred was thinking of his own time rather than the Anglo-Saxon past. Whether Ulbert the constable turned out in this role at the battle of the Standard is not revealed.94 The force from the city of York followed the banner of St Peter, but their military leader is not identified. Who provided the banner-bearer is not specified, but it was more likely the canons of the minster than the archbishop. At the front of the force from the East Riding went the banner of St John of Beverley, and one can only wonder at the prospect. This was the church’s banner, brought to the battlefield in 1138 and displayed from a mast, before being restored to the church. It was surely meant to be carried on foot in liturgical processions, so, if the banner-bearer walked in front of the earl and his bodyguard on horseback, he must have dictated the pace. He represented the Carucate of St John, which had always been exempt from the king’s geld. His role, however, was said to exempt all the land

93 I take Count Aubrey as the last earl of the Northumbrians based in York, who served for a short period after Bishop Walcher (d. 1080). The source for Count William’s girding as earl of Yorkshire is Richard of Hexham, De gestis regis Stephani et de bello standardii, ed. Raine, 94; ed. Howlett, 165. Following him, John of Hexham, Historia XXV annorum, ed. Raine, 120; ed. Arnold, 295. At the same time Robert de Ferrers was made earl of Derbyshire.

94 Ulbert, who held Halsham and Burton Constable, was identified as Count William’s constable at this date by C. T. Clay, ‘Notes on the early generations of the family of Constable of Halsham’, Yorkshire Archaeological Journal 40 (1959–62), 197–204 (at pp. 198–99). He was dead by 1150 × 1153. B. A. English, The Lords of Holderness 1086–1260 (Oxford, 1979), 89–90, envisages his active role only in relation to a declining number of household knights. Alfred was thinking of the foot-soldiers in the fyrd.
of St John from sending men to the fyrd. To judge from Domesday Book the
geldable lands held by St John amounted to nearly two hundred carucates.95
Deciding whether this banner-service was reality or aspiration depends on the
trust one places in the written source. One may indeed wonder whether the
whole scene was inspired by the experience of 1138. Yet Alfred’s text as a whole
reads as a coherent presentation of local custom, and the lands of the canons
were not so extensive that exemption was incredible. Moreover, King Stephen
recognized that the lands of St John were exempt from fyrd-service and knight-
service, ‘de exercitibus et equitatibus’, by his charter sealed at York, probably
in 1142, in the presence of William of Aumale, earl of York, though no men-
tion is made of sending the banner-bearer.96 There is some possibility that St
John’s lands really did enjoy the privilege of the banner. Alfred tells us that St
Peter’s banner led out the fyrd in the same way, but the sources that claim the
privilege of the banner for the canons of York lack credibility. Forgery and false
claims may have undermined any readiness on our part to believe that as well
as Beverley, the minsters of York and Ripon, Southwell and Hexham, provided
their banners and not their men to the muster of the fyrd. The question may
hinge on whether this was an archiepiscopal privilege, shared by the minsters,
or a special privilege, dependent on the living presence of St John at Beverley.
The latter was Alfred’s view, but it begs the question, What of St Wilfrid’s pres-
ence at Ripon? Was the wider claim unwritten custom from the Anglo-Saxon
past or pretence led by twelfth-century ideas on clerical exemption? The antiq-
ui ty of fyrd-service may be an argument for ancient custom, but, if so, that
begs a wider question, How far back does the liturgical custom go of carrying a
major banner in procession? How long did it continue? For Yorkshire there is
probably no way of answering that question.

95 Great Domesday Book, fol. 304a; Domesday Book 30 Yorkshire, ed. M. Faull & M. Stimson (Chichester, 1986), § 2. E1. All other holdings of St John paid geld including the berewicks of the carucate of St John. The carucage of those specifically held by St John (§§ 2. E2–22) comes to 130 carucates and 1 bovate; §§ 23–41, a further 66 carucates and 3 bovates, are not tied to St John, but among them is Sigglesthorne (§ 2. E38), 8 carucates, which Alfred the Sac-
rist says was given to the church of Beverley by King William I (Libertates, § 27). It seems as if all the archbishop’s land in the East Riding may have been St John’s.

96 Regesta 100 (Cronne and Davis, 36–37), preserved only as part of Alfred’s Libertates, § 38. Earl William’s presence requires a date no earlier than September 1138. The king was in York in late April 1142 and in both York and Beverley in 1149, but the combination of wit-
nesses points to a comparison with Regesta 803 in favour of the Norman abbey of Savigny, in
territory lost to King Stephen in 1143. It is likely therefore that both acts date from 1142. Far-
rer, Early Yorkshire Charters, i, 96 (no. 100), guessed at this date.
St John’s Banner in the Twelfth Century

For more than a century after King Stephen’s reign nothing is heard of the banner of St John of Beverley, but Alfred the sacrist told a good story, and the story developed. When King Athelstan had brought his army north to fight the Scots, encouraged by Wulfstan, archbishop of York, as Alfred says, he turned off the main road north to visit the shrine of St John at Beverley:

Assumpto itaque de manu archiepiscopi uexillo ecclesie sancti Iohannis quod in spe uictorie ante exercitum suum preferri fecit, comitante ipso archiepiscopo, iuit uicit rediit.

Having received the banner of the church of St John from the hand of the archbishop, he caused it to be carried in front of his army in hope of victory, and accompanied by the archbishop he went, he conquered, he returned.

And he showed his gratitude to the church of Beverley in rich gifts. The next telling of the tale omits the banner entirely, and Athelstan instead is said to have left his knife as a pledge on St John’s altar. This tale is found in two sources. The first collection of St John’s miracles, attributed to William alias Ketel, dates from somewhat earlier than the sacrist’s tract, probably the early 1130s. Aelred of Rievaulx has the same story in his little treatise on the Anglo-Scottish lineage of Duke Henry of Anjou, closely datable to 1153 or 1154. After the

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97 Libertates, § 3, ed. Chevallier, 98.
98 BHL 4341. Raine, Historians of the Church of York, i, 261–91, from BL MS Cotton Faustina B. iv (s. xii, Holm Cultram), fols 167v–168r, compared with Acta Sanctorum, Maii I (1680), 173–80. The Bollandists’ text has a sentence at the start of the prologue, in which the writer William, clerk of Beverley, addresses ‘dominis amicis suis Christo preposito et magistro Iesu Ethal’ et Thur’’, which appears to name Aelred (Ethelredus) as his master in Jesus and Thurstan as his provost in Christ. Provost Thurstan of Beverley died in 1152 (John of Hexham, Historia XXV annorum, ed. Raine, 166; ed. Arnold, 328). John Leland in the sixteenth century says that this work was dedicated to Thomas, provost of Beverley, who occurs in 1132 and was succeeded by Robert later in the decade. Leland’s manuscript was surely the Bollandists’ source, and it is now Douai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 843 (s. xv), where we read ‘dominis amicis suis Th(ome) preposito et magistro H( ) et Al( ) et Thur(stano)’ (fol. 68v). The convoluted reading in the Acta is incorrect. The provost at the time was Thomas; Master H is unknown, Al’ may be Alfred of Beverley or perhaps the long-serving canon Aelward, and Thur(stan) is presumably the future provost of that name. My thanks to Jean Vilbas in the library at Douai for a photograph and to James Carley for arranging this.
99 Aelred of Rievaulx, Genealogia regum Anglie et regis Dauid Scotie, c. 12, PL 195. 724; translated by Freeland, Aelred of Rievaulx: The historical works, 90–92. The work is paired with
prologue in Raine’s edition of the miracles follows a chapter that is almost verbatim the same as Aelred’s story.\textsuperscript{100} It is missing from one of two manuscripts, however, and the problem is resolved if we regard it as interpolation from Aelred’s work. Aelred, it seems, knew Alfred’s story about Athelstan’s expedition but chose to replace the saint’s banner with the king’s knife. Once again Aelred appears hostile to the notion of the banner in battle. When the story came to be in the second collection of St John’s miracles at Beverley, Aelred’s and Alfred’s versions were integrated: Athelstan laid his knife on the altar, and the keepers of the church handed him a banner.\textsuperscript{101}

\begin{quote}
Custodes uero ecclesie qui aderant suggesserunt ei, ut signum aliquod inde secum in monumentum asportaret, et fecit quoddam uexillum sibi de eadem ecclesia preferri, consignansque se ad suum exercitum reverens est.
\end{quote}

The custodians of the church who were present suggested to him that he should carry away from there some token, as a sign, and he had a certain banner from that church carried before him and, crossing himself, he returned to his army.

Archbishop Wulfstan has disappeared from the story as the canons appropriate control of the saint’s banner. The author of this text is unnamed, but he had known Alfred, ‘bone memorie’ (‘of happy memory’).\textsuperscript{102} He refers to William ‘qui et Ketellus dictus est’ (‘who was also called Ketel’), and, tellingly, he says that William had not recorded the story of Athelstan’s visit.\textsuperscript{103} This account is not readily datable, but a date around 1170–75 has been generally received.

Aelred’s \textit{Lamentatio Davide regis Scottorum}, together offered to Duke Henry in a prefatory letter, almost certainly in 1153.

\textsuperscript{100} Raine, \textit{Historians of the Church of York}, i, 263–64. This is absent from the \textit{Acta Sanctorum} text but was added from the Cotton manuscript in an appendix, \textit{Acta Sanctorum}, Maii I, 616. It is, of course, absent from the manuscript in Douai.

\textsuperscript{101} Raine, \textit{Historians of the Church of York}, i, 293–98 (quotation from p. 295); translated by S. E. Wilson, \textit{The Life and After-Life of St John of Beverley} (Aldershot, 2006), 178–81. Raine, p. lv, dates this text to the 1170s from mention of Robert de Stuteville, who was sheriff of York from Easter 1170 to Michaelmas 1175. This is a \textit{terminus a quo}, but it may be a fair guide.

\textsuperscript{102} Raine, \textit{Historians of the Church of York}, i, 304.

\textsuperscript{103} He actually says of the Athelstan story that he recorded it as he learnt it from his family and from older people in the district, ‘quia nusquam illud scriptum reperi’ (‘since I have nowhere found it written down’). S. E. Wilson, \textit{The Life and After-Life of St John of Beverley} (Aldershot, 2006), 10, 66, realised that it was interpolated in Raine’s text of Ketel’s work.
When King Edward I became directly involved in the succession to the throne of Scotland, a version of the story was excerpted in answer to his queries, and Athelstan became a prototype for his own claim to Scotland and his calling on the power of the banner. Within weeks Edward visited Beverley for the first time in August 1291. St John’s banner was taken to Scotland in 1296, and the king rewarded the provost and canons with payments from the Scottish treasury, pending the availability of a suitable benefice in Scotland. St Cuthbert’s banner was also taken, and we have seen that the monks of Durham were rewarded in the same manner. The canons’ banner-bearer Gilbert of Grimsby, a clerk, was also promised a benefice worth twenty marks in Scotland, a promise surely never fulfilled. This fact has been in print since 1670 and was known to the writer of a valuable article on English banners published in 1827.


108 [Nicholas Harris Nicolas], ‘On the banners used in the English army from the Conquest to the reign of Henry the Eighth,’ *The Retrospective Review and Historical and Antiquarian Magazine*, 2nd ser. 1 (1827), 90–117 (at p. 101); repr. without the plate in *The Naval and Military Magazine* 4 (No. 7, Sept 1828), 84–109. Authorship inferred from: (a) the fact that
1298 the presence of St John’s banner with St Cuthbert’s banner at the battle of Falkirk has been assumed, but evidence is lacking.\textsuperscript{109} In 1300 it was again Gilbert of Grimsby who carried St John’s banner to the king in Scotland; this is attested both by the writs releasing the two saints’ banners after the campaign and by the payment of Gilbert’s wages from the royal wardrobe.\textsuperscript{110} Gilbert was a vicar choral in Beverley minster who later became canon precentor.\textsuperscript{111} The chronicler Walter of Guisborough mentioned Edward I’s habit of visiting the shrine of St John of Beverley, but there is evidence to show that he routinely stopped at both Beverley and Durham when going to and from Scotland, even in years when the banners are not seen to have been called up.\textsuperscript{112} King Edward II

Nicolas was the historical and antiquarian editor during 1827–8 only; (b) the editor of \textit{Naval and Military Review} says that it came from an editor of \textit{The Retrospective Review}; (c) it ties in with several other pieces he published at this time, among them N. H. Nicolas, ‘Narrative of the Progress of King Edward the First in his Invasion of Scotland in the year 1296, with some observations thereon’, \textit{Archaeologia} 21 (1827), 477–98. These papers were fruit of the research for his elaborate edition of the roll of arms, \textit{The Siege of Caerlaverock} (n. 10).

\textsuperscript{109} Armstrong, \textit{Stirling Bridge and Falkirk} (n. 8), 60–61; Wilson, \textit{Life and Afterlife}, 121 (with ‘perhaps’ and no source).


\textsuperscript{111} R. T. W. McDermid, \textit{Beverley Minster Fasti}, YAS Record Series 149 (1993), 124, 129.

\textsuperscript{112} Walter of Guisborough, \textit{Chronicle}, s.a. 1298, ed. Rothwell, 324: ‘Interim uero uisitavit rex Sanctum Iohannem de Beverlaco sicut et in alios uicibus in eundo et redeundo facere consueuit’ (‘Meanwhile the king visited St John of Beverley as he was used to doing on other occasions both going and returning’). Durham, of course, is on a principal route north but Beverley is not. Detail is seen in the king’s itinerary (above, n. 105), constructed from the place-dates of documents. So, in 1291, he stopped northbound at Durham, 18 Apr 1291, and southbound at Durham, 19 Aug, and at Beverley, 25 Aug 1291 (pp. 6, 12); in 1292–3 he stopped northbound at Durham, 24–27 May 1292, at Durham, 8–11 Aug, and at Beverley, 8–9 Sept 1292, returning northwards, and stopping southbound at Durham, 10–13 Jan, and at Beverley, 29–30 Jan 1293 (pp. 24–35); in 1296 he stopped northbound at Beverley, 24 Feb, and southbound at Durham, 5 Oct, and at Beverley, 16 Oct (pp. 85–95); in 1298 northbound at Beverley, 2–3 June, and at Durham, 12–16 June, and southbound at Durham, 25 Oct–14 Nov, 12–13 Dec 1298; in 1299–1300 northbound at Beverley, 23–25 Nov, and at Durham, 3–4 Dec 1299, 8–9 Jan 1300, and again at Beverley, 28–30 May 1300, and at Durham, 17–19 June 1300 (pp. 146–56); in 1301, northbound at Beverley, 10–11 June, and at Durham, 19–20 June
agreed with the canons that St John’s banner should again go to war against the Scots, and, just as he agreed to pay St Cuthbert’s banner-bearer, so he agreed to pay St John’s banner-bearer at the same rate.\textsuperscript{113} In 1310 Edward required the archbishop’s vicar from Beverley, John Rolleston, to carry the banner of St John in the Scottish campaign.\textsuperscript{114} The lack of any evidence for Edward’s taking the banner in 1314, when he was defeated at the battle of Bannockburn, speaks for itself. It must have been in 1330 that the community of Beverley, petitioning King Edward III over a breach of sanctuary, referred to ‘le Banere seint Jehan que vous et touz les voz ount devant eux en touz lour guerres’ (‘the banner of St John which you and all yours have before them in all their wars’).\textsuperscript{115} He called up the banners of St Cuthbert and St John in June 1335.\textsuperscript{116} Many years later King Henry IV called up the banners of St Cuthbert and St John when he invaded Scotland in August 1400.\textsuperscript{117}

1301 (p. 174); in 1303, northbound at Beverley, 20–22 Apr, and at Durham, 3–5 May, and southbound at Durham, 24–25 Sept, and at Beverley, 17–18 Dec (pp. 208–32); and in 1306, northbound at Beverley, 21–22 July, and at Durham, 1–8 Aug (p. 269). The king’s alms given at the two shrines appear in his wardrobe accounts, for example in 1299–1300, Liber quotidianus contrarotulatoris Garderobae, 25 (24 Nov 1299 at St John’s tomb and banner, 4 Dec at the feretory of St Cuthbert), 27 (9 Jan 1300 at St Cuthbert’s banner and feretory and next day through Peter Schvyngdon at St John’s altar with his banner), &c.

\textsuperscript{113} Fraser, History of Antony Bek, 212, citing E101/373/15, fol. 11\'i. The banner-bearer of Beverley minster in 1307–8 was named as Sir Bernard the chaplain.

\textsuperscript{114} Archbishop Greenfield to John Rolleston, 28 August 1310, Greenfield’s Register, i, 33d, ed. J. Raine the younger, Historical Papers and Letters from the Northern Registers, Rolls Series 61 (1873), 198; ed. A. H. Thompson, The Register of William Greenfield, Lord Archbishop of York, 1306–1315, Surtees Society 145, 149, 151–53 (1931–40), i, 42 (§ 117). The letter was recited in chapter at Beverley two years later (Leach, Memorials, i, 296). The evidence cited by Wilson, Life and After-Life, 122 n. 15, does not support the inference that Edward II took the banner to Scotland again in 1312 and 1314. The king did not go north of Newcastle in 1312. Leach, Memorials of Beverley, i, 321, prints an act of Archbishop Greenfield dated 31 August, and in his introduction, p. xc, he appears to think it was written in 1314, but the dating clause has the fifth year.

\textsuperscript{115} Ancient Petitions, SC8/165/8237, datable on the basis of dated documents also relating to the case of John Acreman.

\textsuperscript{116} Letter of the canons to the king, 25 June 1335, sending the banner with their chaplain, Thomas Huggate (Leach, Memorials of Beverley, ii, 112–13). At this date the king had been in York for some time. He passed northbound through Durham 21–22 June (C. Shenton, The Itinerary of Edward III and his Household 1327–1345, Lists and Indexes Society 318 (2007), 125–44). He was in Scotland again June–December 1336 (ib. 148–56).

\textsuperscript{117} The banner of St John of Beverley is mentioned in an account for provisions (E101/
It is worth observing that St John’s banner was always carried by a clerk of the minster, just as St Cuthbert’s banner was carried by a monk of the priory. These were holy banners. If we may be justified in supposing that St John’s banner, like that of St Cuthbert, took the form of a processional banner, this helps us to visualize the three banners at the battle of the Standard. Those of St Peter and St Wilfrid were surely of the same form as St John’s, the processional banners of the three great minsters of Yorkshire.

**St Mary’s Banner and the Claim to Military Exemption**

Of these three banners that were taken to the battle of the Standard, we have seen that only St John’s banner has any extended history, recorded like that of St Cuthbert’s mainly because of its participation in wars against the Scots. St Peter’s banner continued to exist, but after 1138 we hear little of it. James Raine has left one frustratingly vague allusion, mentioning that it showed the cross keys.\(^{118}\) And in the fifteenth century the chamberlain’s account rolls show small payments to a porter for carrying it at the front of the procession at Rogationtide.\(^{119}\) There is certainly no evidence that the lands of York minster were exempt from military obligations, and it is obvious that no such exemption was even contemplated by the bishops of Durham. The York forgery from King Stephen’s time was manifestly unrealistic in its claims, presumably inspired by the role of the banner of St John of Beverley.

None the less this idea was good enough to catch on. There survives in a copy of about 1180 a pretended charter in the name of King Henry I, confirming to the monks of St Mary’s abbey in York a whole catalogue of lands given to

\(^{42/32},\) the banner of St Cuthbert in an account for provisions at Leith (E101/42/35); A. L. Brown, ‘The English campaign in Scotland, 1400’, in *British Government and Administration. Studies presented to S. B. Chrimes*, ed. H. Headder and H. R. Loyn (Cardiff, 1974), 40–54 (at p. 45n). Chrimes names the banner-bearer of St Cuthbert as ‘Dom William Claxton’, sometime prior of Coldingham, but the prior was Dom Robert Claxton, who had carried the banner in 1385 (above, n. 30), an old man unable to walk or ride by 1398 (Piper, *Durham Liber Vitae*, iii, 274–75). William appears not to have been a monk but a layman.

\(^{118}\) In a footnote to Richard of Hexham, Raine, *Hexham*, i, 87: ‘In one of the archbishop’s registers at York I have seen a rough pen and ink sketch of this banner. The cross-keys was wrought upon it.’ The team at work on the project *York’s Archbishops’ Registers Revealed 1225–1646* could not help find whatever Raine had seen.

\(^{119}\) J. Raine the younger, *The Fabric Rolls of York Minster; with an appendix of illustrative documents*, Surtees Society 35 (1859), 133, 135. These references are excerpted from the chamberlain’s rolls from 1430 and 1477.
them between the early years of William II’s reign and a notional date around 1116. When this document was confected cannot be determined with any assurance. Unlike the fantasy privilege drafted by the canons of York minster, this act was presented to Henry II for his confirmation, but we have no knowledge of whether the monks had either obtained from King Stephen or drafted in his name any renewal before 1154. The text claims three special liberties for St Mary’s abbey, and the first of them is this:120

Nominatim talem consuetudinem ut quando Eboraci schira summonita fuerit ire in exercitum regis predicta abbatia tantummodo inueniat unum hominem cum uexillo sanctę Marię sicut inuenit ecclesia beati Petri Eboraci uel ecclesia sancti Iohannis Beuerlacensis.

In particular this custom, that, when Yorkshire is summoned to serve in the king’s fyrd, the foresaid abbey shall find one man only with the banner of St Mary like the church of St Peter of York or the church of St John of Beverley.

The best route to dating this forgery may be to place it after the forgery from York minster, which inspired this clause, and before the beginning of Henry II’s reign, when an authentic renewal was requested. Supposing that the claim extended only to exemption from a general mobilization in the shire, this was no more than a vain echo of the empty claim drafted for the dean and canons of York and bears no rational comparison with what happened at the battle of the Standard.121 Yet, in 1266, after St Mary’s abbey had supplied men for the king’s forces in his war against Simon de Montfort and the barons in 1265, the monks petitioned the king at Kenilworth. They showed their false charter in the name of King Henry I and claimed the privilege that, like the canons of St Peter of York and St John of Beverley, they owed only one man to carry the saint’s banner in the king’s service; whatever they had provided in addition was ‘mere liberality’, whereby they ‘did the king more abundant grace beyond their service’. King Henry III thanked the monks and promised that this would not prejudice them as a precedent.122

120 BL MS Add. 38816 (s. xii$^3$), fols 22r–24v, to be printed in my edition of the charters of Henry I and with fuller commentary in a volume on Foundation Documents from St Mary’s Abbey, York, Surtees Society (forthcoming). An expanded text in the name of King Henry II, with an apparent date of 1156 × 1157, includes the same clause (H2/2935; ed. Farrer, Early Yorkshire Charters, i, 269–77, at p. 270).

121 Pace J. C. Holt, The Northerners. A study in the reign of King John (Oxford, 1961), 210n, citing the enrolled text (see next note).

122 Letters patent in favour of the abbot and convent of St Mary’s, dated at Kenilworth, 8 September 1266, C66/50 mem. 5; Cal. Patent Rolls 1258–1266, 636. It is unsafe to use this as
St Wilfrid’s Banner

The third banner at the battle of the Standard was the banner of St Wilfrid from Ripon, the archbishop’s third great minster in Yorkshire. In the claim by the monks of St Mary’s to the same privilege as the banners of St Peter and St John, there was no mention of St Wilfrid. We may be justified, therefore, in supposing that whenever that St Mary’s text was drafted, St Wilfrid’s banner did not appear or even claim to appear at the front of the force raised from the North Riding. None the less, at some point, the canons of Ripon thought this was an opportunity not to be missed. The like privilege was imputed to the banner of St Wilfrid, but this first appears in a record of pleadings before the king’s justices supposed to date from 1229. It is said that Nicholas Ward holds four burgages in Ripon:

per seruicium […] portandi uexillum sancti Wilfridi coram capsula et coram burgen-sibus Rypon in guerra, et ducere eos, et non aliter in guerra, nisi burgenses inierunt.

by the service […] of bearing the banner of St Wilfrid in front of the shrine and at the front of the townspeople of Ripon in war and to lead them, and not otherwise in war, if the townspeople do not go.

Here the phrase ‘non aliter in guerra nisi burgenses inierunt’ echoes what we read in the texts from York minster rather than anything from Beverley. How soon the idea caught on at Ripon, however, it is impossible to say. This record of pleadings is itself a forgery most likely made in the early fifteenth century.124

evidence to say that, ‘By 1266 it was accepted that, when the shire of York was summoned to the royal army, the church of Beverley would send one man with the saint’s banner’ (R. E. Horrox, ‘Medieval Beverley: Beverley and St John’, VCH Yorks ER, vi (1989), 7). Wilson, Life and After-Life, 120–21, further misconstrues, ‘by 1266 it had become traditional to petition John’s help in war by sending one man with the saint’s banner whenever the shire of York was summoned to the royal army, a custom which appears to have dated from the reign of Henry I’. Her paragraph goes on to impute motives to King Stephen for actions taken by Thurstan.

123 J. T. Fowler, Memorials of the Church of St Peter and St Wilfrid, Ripon, Surtees Society 74, 78, 81, 115 (1882–1908), i, 51–63 (at p. 62).

124 The manuscript among the public records, Duchy of Lancaster Miscellanea, DL 41/270, dates from the early part of the fifteenth century. The document ostensibly records a plea by the canons of Ripon, heard by named king’s justices in the chapter house at Ripon, begun on the Wednesday following the Translation of St Thomas, 13 Henry III, 4 July 1229 (assuming St Thomas the Apostle), and concluded on the morrow of Michaelmas, which would have been Sunday, 30 September 1229, when a jury was formed. There was no eyre in Yorkshire in 1229 nor in 1228 (the year printed in the margin by Fowler).
One assumes that a banner of St Wilfrid had continued to exist for liturgical processions. It was perhaps never taken to war after 1138. In 1318, Archbishop Melton ordered 20s. to be provided to make a linen banner if the tenants of Ripon were required to serve with the king in Scotland.125 This, one imagines, was for a military banner, and we should draw no inference about the use or otherwise of a processional banner in the minster. That the church of Ripon had a processional banner of St Wilfrid is attested as late as 1514, when a new banner-bearer was appointed.126 A religious banner described at Ripon in 1569 was not that of St Wilfrid.127

Taking the long view, the banner of St John of Beverley was attested in a military context by Alfred the Sacrist as the service due from the Carucate of St John. Whether this was really the case or not seems to be beyond testing, but the rights and customs set out by Alfred carry some credibility. The only actual evidence for such a role concerns the battle of the Standard, but what Alfred wrote fed into a narrative about St John’s help to King Athelstan, hagiography, which in turn inspired King Edward I. The canons of York were probably never able to make good the claim to exemption from fyrd-service, even if we accept Alfred’s saying that the banner of St Peter led the muster of the men of York in the mid-twelfth century. St Wilfrid’s banner existed, but its role is not in evidence outside the battle of the Standard. Its liturgical function may perhaps be taken for granted. The banner of the monks of St Mary’s is only heard of in their forgery and in Henry III’s promise to respect its privilege in future. The abbey no doubt had a processional banner that was used on days when there were traditional liturgical processions. I have found actual evidence only for small uexilla attached to crosses.128 Evidence in all such cases is hard to find.

125 William Melton’s Register, fol. 8’, ed. Raine, Letters from Northern Registers, 375.
126 Fowler, Memorials of the Church of Ripon, i, 303–04. John Ward succeeded Thomas Edwards, by the king’s appointment during the minority of Ralph Nevill (1498–1549), fourth earl of Westmorland, to whom the right of nomination belonged.
127 ‘It was here [Ripon minster], to give the greater sanction to their cause, they had a cross and banner, painted with the five wounds of Christ, carried before them’ (F. Drake, Eboracum; or, The history and antiquities of the city of York (York, 1736), 129).
128 A passage in the Ordinal of St Mary’s says, ‘prouiso quod ad omnem crucem que portatur tempore paschali uexillum appendatur’ (‘provided that a banner is hung on every cross that is carried at Eastertide’) (L. McLauchlan and J. B. L. Tolhurst, The Ordinal and Customary of the Abbey of St Mary, York, Henry Bradshaw Society 73, 75, 84 (1936), 299). Among the Maurist additions to Du Cange’s Glossarium, s.v. vexillum, we find a quotation from an unprinted ordinal of Sens (?BNF MS lat. 1206), showing a similar requirement that from Easter until the
The Saints’ Banners at War—Two Innovations

This discussion has focused on just two topics. First, the military role of the banners of the three great minsters of Yorkshire at the battle of the Standard is clearly attested by Richard of Hexham, who presents it as effected by Thurstan’s command, though we have seen that Henry of Hungtingon said nothing of this and that Aelred of Rievaulx chose to write about the same battle and yet to reinterpret the Standard itself without the saints’ banners. The event has been seen as a unique instance of ‘holy war’ in England, but, if this view has any merit, it must recognize that Aelred dissented, or came to dissent, from his episcopal superior’s action. The alternative requires us to believe that Richard made it up and that Henry and Aelred correctly took the Standard for the king’s ensign at a battle where the king himself was not present. Richard becomes the theorist for holy war, perhaps a mouthpiece for the sidelined Thurstan. At just this period the role of the banners of St John and St Peter in the muster of Yorkshire is credibly attested by Alfred the Sacrist, who adds that by providing the uexillarius St John’s minster at Beverley exempted its lands and men from the common burden of answering the summons to serve in the fyrd. The canons of York claimed the same privilege of the banner, but their evidence is sufficiently tainted that it lacks credibility. The contrast between Alfred’s tract and the York forgeries leaves us unsure whether these saints’ banners customarily went to war with the fyrd or did so only as an innovation, approved by both Thurstan and Alfred but shunned by Aelred. The canons of Beverley cherished a story that St John’s banner had brought victory over the Scots to King Athelstan, who rewarded their church with wealth and rare privileges.

There is a direct link from this to our second topic, the royal custom of taking the banners of St John and St Cuthbert when the king went to war against the Scots. This role was not dependent on any continuous tradition but on King Edward I’s desire to draw in all possible aid in his Scottish wars. He acted on the basis of what the canons of Beverley had told him. The banner did not go to war before 1296, and even in this context the banners’ presence on expedition is not mentioned in narrative sources. We rely on the bureaucratic record of orders and payments, sources that are not consistently preserved and have not been systematically searched. It is as if chroniclers regarded it as beneath their

Octave of Whitsun ‘non est deferenda crux sine uexillo ad processionem nisi ad officium mortuorum’ (‘a cross without a banner must not be carried in procession except for the office of the dead’). This suggests something similar to small ancient and early medieval uexilla attached to the staff of a processional cross.
notice: a quaint superstitious practice, perhaps, confined to the North and not really evidence that saints and their banners help to bring success in war.

Wider questions beckon, and unless they can be answered these two stories of saints’ banners in the north of England stand in strange isolation.

*Saints’ Banners on the Continent and in England*

The history of processional banners is not well recorded, and scholarship on the subject is thin. None the less I take it that by the twelfth century many parish churches had them, in England and through most if not all of Christendom. Church inventories provide the earliest mentions of liturgical banners in England. First in fact if not in record is found among Athelstan’s gifts to St Cuthbert’s community, at Chester-le-Street in the tenth century, including ‘duo uexilla et unam lanceam’. A secure example from the mid-eleventh century occurs alongside altar plate and service-books given by Bishop Leofric to his minster at Exeter, ‘ij gúþfana 7 j merc’. References of this sort are common in ecclesiastical inventories surviving on the Continent from the ninth century onwards. There is evidence to think that in the early middle ages such banners were relatively small. A rare surviving example from the tenth century is

129 The list in Latin was included in the twelfth century in *Historia de S. Cuthberto*, § 26, ed. T. Johnson South, *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto: A history of Saint Cuthbert and a record of his patrimony* (Cambridge, 2002), 64. It is thought to be a confection that merges more than one Old English source, themselves perhaps from the late tenth century (S. D. Keynes, ‘King Athelstan’s books’, *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England. Studies presented to Peter Clemoes* (Cambridge, 1985), 143–201 (at pp. 175–76).

130 The record of Bishop Leofric’s gifts was entered into two of the books he gave; it has been edited with notes by Max Förster, ‘The donations of Leofric to Exeter’, in *The Exeter Book of Old English Poetry* (Exeter, 1933), 10–32 (at pp. 24–25, nn. 70–71). Both words may be expected to refer to banners for liturgical use, but any implicit difference in form is now obscure. The first element *gúþ* ’war’ may indicate calquing from *gunfanon*, a compound of war + banner, which is used in strictly liturgical contexts (see next note); *gufôna* is also used to render Latin *signa* in a Roman context in the Old English version of Orosius, and in a contemporary military context in Anglo-Saxon Chronicle D s.a. 878. This is the only liturgical example of *mearc*, ’mark, sign, ensign’, which is used for military standard in glossing Lucan, ‘uictricia tollite signa, nymad pa sigefæsten mearca’ (*Ælfric*, *Excerptiones de arte grammatica anglice*, ed. Julius Zußtza, *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar* (Berlin, 1880), 71). In the inventory, might it represent the stave rather than the cloth?

131 Examples from published inventories from Germany are given in another paper (see first note).
some 330 mm square, which accords with early depictions. The banner at the end of the middle ages was nearly a metre wide and more than a metre deep, with the white square representing the holy corporal some 450 mm each side. Surviving examples from the thirteenth century can be more than four metres tall and very heavy, but these are exceptional. The evolution of such banners is difficult to trace, but that is no reason to deny their existence. In textual sources it can be difficult to determine whether a *uexillum* hung by its upper edge from a cross-bar, so as to remain always open, in the processional style, or was attached at the side as a war banner. We have had to build inferences from St Cuthbert’s banner in seeking to picture the banners of St John and St Peter, and such inferences are needed in almost all cases. A few references must serve to justify my proposition that processional banners were universal by the twelfth century. It was ostensibly in 1066 that the monks of Mont-St-Michel lent the banner of St Michael to Count Robert of Mortain, who had its support at the battle of Hastings, for which he showed his gratitude after the conquest of England, though the source is hardly a contemporary charter. In 1126 Duke Soběslav of Bohemia sent for the banner of St Adalbert:

| 132 | The banner was found in 1864 among the textiles used to enfold the relics in the reliquary of the Three Kings in Cologne cathedral; its tenth-century date derives from the identification of Gerberga, whose name as donor is sewn into the cloth, with Countess Gerberga, sister of Emperor Otto I (A. von Euw, ‘Zur Ikonographie der sog. Kriegsfahne im Kölnner Domschatz’, Kölner Domblatt 21/22 (1963), 37–48). Date, origin, and function have been much debated. |
| 133 | Above, pp. 5–6. |
| 134 | The Kiliansfahne, also called Cyriakusbanner, 4.9 × 3.0 metres, in the Mainfränkisches Museum in Würzburg, is dated from words on the dorse, ‘Anno Domini MCCLXVI factus est conflictus in die Sancti Cyriaki’. The banner from San Giorgio in Velabro, in Rome, 4.2 × 2.8 metres, silk over leather, is displayed in the Musei di Campidoglio in Rome; it is thought to have been commissioned between 1295 and 1301 for Cardinal Jacopo Stefaneschi. |
| 136 | The source is a chronicle attributed to a canon of Vyšehrad; *Fontes rerum Bohemicarum* (Prague, 1871–93), ii, 204. The church in Vrbčany is dedicated to St Wenceslas. Discussed by Petr Charvát, ‘Der heilige Adalbert von Prag und das böhmische Staatswesen (*uexillum sancti Adalberti*)’, Civis 35 (2003), 37–48. |
he sent his chaplain to the village named Vrbčany, to whom it was a thing well
known; he found on the wall of the church the banner of St Adalbert the bishop,
and it was hung on the lance of St Wenceslas the martyr in time of war against the
Saxons, when God defeated them.

The chaplain fetched the saint's banner, which, hung on another saint's lance,
brought victory. This was surely a liturgical banner. And in Cornwall, during
the reign of Henry I, we learn that two of the king's clerks gave to the church
of St Stephen in their home parish a banner, described for us by their brother's
grandson:137

uxeillum unum quod est coloris indici auro brusdatum, in quo Agnus in medio,
auro intextus est, et inferius lapidatio sancti Stephani, et ad quattuor cornua,
quattuor evangelistarum ymagines sunt depicte, quod adhuc in eadem ecclesia in
magna habetur ueneratione.

a dark blue banner embroidered with gold, in the middle of which is woven in
gold the Agnus Dei, below this the stoning of St Stephen, and at its four corners
are depicted the symbols of the four evangelists. This banner is still held there in
great veneration.

Such descriptive testimonies are not readily found.138 Yet if we follow Aelred's
alteration to Richard of Hexham's account of Archbishop Thurstan's decree
in 1138, just about every parish church must have had a banner for process-
sions, and many of these were surely associated with and very likely depicted
the patron saint of the church. At Redbourn near St Albans in the twelfth
century, we are told, the people assembled, ‘ex antiqua traditio’ (‘in accord-

137 Peter of Cornwall, Liber reuelationum, L 6 § 11, ed. R. Easting and R. Sharpe, Peter of
Cornwall's Book of Revelations (Toronto, 2013), 198–99.

138 Many references to uexilla are collected by Otto Lehmann-Brockhaus, Lateinische
Schriftquellen zur Kunst in England, Wales und Schottland vom Jahre 901 bis zum Jahre 1307
(Munich, 1955–60), indexed, v, 447–48, where his index sufficiently indicates where the source
provides more than just the word. Descriptive sources under Fahne, ib. iii, 405–10, are in most
cases well known to historians. After 1307 there are many inventories, often unpublished, but
again descriptions are unusual. In the archdeacon’s visitation of the diocese of Norwich, 1368,
for example, only at Ranworth is there so full an entry as ‘duo uexilla pro processionibus qua-
rum unum cum ymage sancte Trinitatis’ (presumably the symbolic image) ‘aliud cum ymagine
sancte Helene’ (‘two banners for processions, one of them with an image of the Holy Trinity,
the other with an image of St Helen’) (A. Warke, Archdeaconry of Norwich. Inventory of Church
Goods, Norfolk Record Society 19 (1947–8), i, 36; the parish church here was and is dedicated
to St Helen. A later addition (p. 17) mentions two processional banners at St Swithin’s parish
church in Norwich ‘cum ymaginibus sanctorum Iohannis et Egidii’.
ance with ancient tradition’) for the annual procession to the abbey on the green around two mounds known (in Roger of Wendover’s Latin) as Colles uexillorum.139 Supposing that parish banners can be taken for granted from this period onwards in England, and that holy banners associated with patron saints were widespread, it behoves us to seek evidence elsewhere in England before we proclaim special status for the banners of the northern saints.

Great churches are likely to be better documented than minor ones, and in a few cases we have information about their banners. While the chamberlain’s accounts at York minster produced very little, they confirmed the continuing role of St Peter’s banner in the annual round of processions. The poet John Skelton, in a contemporary poem about the duke of Albany’s failure to capture Wark castle in 1523, mentions St William’s banner alongside St Cuthbert’s, which may have come from York, where St William had been enshrined since the thirteenth century.140 This banner is otherwise unknown and may have been Skelton’s poetical fiction to honour his patron Cardinal Thomas Wolsey as archbishop of York. An inventory from Canterbury cathedral in 1315 reveals the banner of St Thomas, first among several uexilla pro Rogationibus, ‘Vexillum sancti Thome de panno albo de serico brudato’ (‘of white cloth of silk embroidered’). Other banners had secular designs and even their form is uncertain.141 The published selections from the compotus rolls of Winchester and Worcester reveal nothing about the processional banners of those great churches which might, one would think, represent St Swithin and St Wulfstan.142 Westminster

139 Roger of Wendover, Flores historiarum, ed. H. G. Hewlett, RS 84 (1886–9), i, 110.
140 ‘As an hoost royall, After the auncient manner, With sainct Cutberdes banner, And sainct Williams also’, quoted by [Nicolas], ‘On the banners’, 102, and Longstaffe, ‘St Cuthbert’s cross and banner’, 62; the source is Howe the douty Duke of Albany, lines 63–64, ed. J. Scattergood, The Complete English Poems of John Skelton (Liverpool, 2015), 317, with note, 501. The poem was written to undermine Albany for Cardinal Wolsey, who had been archbishop of York since 1514 and had also held the see of Durham since early in 1523.
141 J. Wickham Legg and W. H. St John Hope, Inventories of Christchurch Canterbury (Westminster, 1902), 76. Besides the banner of St Thomas were two each with the arms of England, the earl of Gloucester, the earl Warenne, Hastings, and two of red samite with gold leopards (seemingly the ancient arms of England). When Archbishop Baldwin took part in the third crusade, his banner there was referred to as St Thomas’s banner (Itinerarium peregrinorum et gesta regis Ricardi, I § 61, ed. W. Stubbs, Rolls Series 38 (1864), i, 116). Its form is unknown.
142 This is presumably a reflection on the selection. It may be assumed that the sacrist was the office most likely to be responsible for expenditure on liturgical paraments, but titles and responsibilities will vary from church to church. Editors may have been more focused, for example, on building work rather than the recurrent liturgy.
abbey had many banners in the later middle ages, of which one stands out as the
great banner, but there is none associated with either St Peter or St Edward.143
In the early thirteenth century at Salisbury cathedral the principal banners had
military names, *Leo* and *Draco*, and the latter is actually depicted as a dragon.144
Exeter cathedral, dedicated to St Peter, had ‘duo uexilla cum Petro et Paulo’
(‘two banners with Peter and Paul’), but they appear only in inventories.145 The
simple fact may be that it is only unusual circumstances that bring these ban-
ners into the historical record.

Looking to such late medieval evidence, there is added room for confusion.
War banners came to have the names of saints. St Edmund’s banner, for exam-
ple, from the abbey of Bury St Edmund, led out three loyal earls into battle
against the earl of Leicester at nearby Fornham in October 1173.146 Was this

143 J. Wickham Legg, ‘On an inventory of the vestry in Westminster Abbey taken in 1388’,
*Archaeologia* 52 (1890), 2–286 (banners at pp. 226–27). This list raises many questions. It begins,
‘Vexilla quidem sunt sexdecim quorum quatuor sunt depicta super cruces tempore paschali defer-
enda cum sex tintinabulis eisdem deputatis. Quintum uero magnum uexillum album cum ymag-
inibus brudatis ex utraque parte uideliciet Crucifixi, Marie et Johannis et duorum Cherubyn’
(‘There are sixteen banners; four of them painted, to be carried upon crosses at Eastertide with
six bells assigned to them; the fifth is a big white banner, embroidered with images on either side,
namely the Crucifixion with Mary and John and two angels’). This one seems to be the proces-
sional banner, with a central image and four angle-fillers. Others with the arms of England, old
or new, and of the abbey, and an addition says that King Richard II gave three *uexilla*, ‘uidelici-
et domini Imperatoris Romani, sancti Edwardi, et sancti Edmundi, cum aliis xliij diuersorum
regum ducum et comitum et totidem penisellis’ (‘namely those of the Roman Emperor, of
St Edward, and of St Edmund, with forty-three others of various kings, dukes, earls, and as many
little pennons’), as if the inventory does not differentiate church banners from secular banners.

144 Mentioned in cathedral inventory in 1214, *The Register of S. Osmund*, Rolls Series 78
(1883–4), ii, 135; and in use, e.g. the Monday of Rogationtide, ‘In principio processionis de-
eratur Draco, tribus uexillis rubeis precedentibus, secundo loco Leo, tertio loco cetera uexilla’
(‘at the front of the procession the Dragon is carried, with three red banners before it, followed
by the Lion, and then the other banners’) (*Processionale ad usum insignis ac praecellae ecclesiae
Salerni* (Rouen, 1508), ed. W. G. Henderson (Leeds, 1882), 104); R. W. Pfaff, *The Liturgy in
Medieval England. A history* (Cambridge, 2009), 380. The relevant depiction is reproduced
from the earliest extant printed processional, Westminster, 1501, by R. W. Pfaff in *Lambeth
Palace Library. Treasures from the collection of the Archbishops of Canterbury* (London, 2010),
84); this was copied in mirror image in the 1508 printing (Henderson, 122).

145 F. C. Hingeston-Randolph, *The Registers of Walter Bronescome (AD 1257–1280), and
Peter Quivil (AD 1280–1291), Bishops of Exeter* (London, 1889), 298–99; George Oliver,
*Lives of the Bishops of Exeter and a history of the cathedral* (Exeter, 1861), 328–29 (AD 1506),
where *uexilla* are distinguished from *baneria*.

146 Roger of Howden, *Gesta regis Henrici*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols, Rolls Series 49 (1867), i,
a church banner, like St John’s, or a war banner? The Bury chronicler Jocelin of Brakelond tells a story about an argument over the banner around 1190: Thomas de Mendham had the right to carry the banner ‘in exercitu’, but it was also claimed by Earl Roger Bigod (who carried it at Fornham) and Earl Richard de Clare.\footnote{Jocelin of Brakelond, *Chronica*, § 43, ed. T. Arnold, *Memorials of St Edmund*, i, 261–62; ed. H. E. Butler (Edinburgh, 1949), 57; translated by D. E. Greenway and J. E. Sayers (Oxford, 1989), 52.} We do not know what it looked like. By 1300 St Edmund’s banner, a design rather than an individual thing, was one of the representative banners of England at Caerlaverock alongside those of St George and St Edward.\footnote{Above, n. 10. Discussed by [Nicolas], ‘Banners used in the English army’, 97–100.} In this capacity it was given its due by the fifteenth-century poet from Bury St Edmunds, John Lydgate.\footnote{Reproduced from the presentation copy, BL MS Harley 2278 (AD 1433), ed. A. S. G. Edwards, *The Life of St Edmund, King and martyr: John Lydgate’s illustrated verse Life presented to Henry VI* (London, 2004), fol. 3. Lydgate also shows a square banner depicting Adam and Eve with the Agnus Dei above them (fol. 1); one might have taken this for a church banner, but at fol. 50 it is shown carried in battle. It has been doubtfully identified with the Abbot’s own banner in the context of Abbot Samson’s appearing in armour and leading many knights (Jocelin of Brakelond, *Chronica*, 55; translated by Greenway and Sayers, 49, with note at 138–39).} The fyrd of London was summoned by the bells of St Paul’s cathedral, and they are said to have mustered behind the banner of St Paul, which was kept in the cathedral but was the responsibility of the mayor. Its form is not known, but it was red with the figure of St Paul worked in gold and silver and holding his emblem of a sword.\footnote{The banner is described in a short text on the services and rights of Robert fitz Walter (d. 1235), ‘chief banner-bearer of London’: ‘la baniere vermaille, ove une ymage de seint Poul de or, od les pies, e les mayns, et la teste, de argent, et une espeie en la main de la dite ymage’ (‘the bright red banner with an image of saint Paul, in gold with the feet and hands and head in silver, and a sword in the hand of the said image’) (copied in *Liber custumarum*, ed. H. T. Riley, *Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis*, Rolls Series 42 (1859–62), ii, 148).} It is tempting to envisage a processional banner. By contrast the seal of the barons of London in the early thirteenth century depicted St Paul, towering over the city and holding a military banner with three leopards, presumed to be the royal banner of England.\footnote{T. A. Heslop in *Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England, 1200–1400*, ed. J. J. G. Alexander & P. Binski (London, 1987), 273 (§ 193); E. A. New, ‘The common seal and common identity in medieval London’, in *Medieval Coins and Seals: Constructing Identity, Signifying Power* (Turnhout, 2015), 297–318.} The banner of St Peter from Peterborough abbey, ‘uexillum
cum clauibus sancti Petri, ‘uexillum monasterii sancti Petri’, was exposed on the walls of Northampton along with those of rebel earls and barons in 1264, when Henry III and Lord Edward were about to lay siege to the town; the king interpreted this as a hostile act by the monastic community. Its form is not documented, but it may have been the abbey’s main processional banner.

The Northern Saints’ Distinctive Role

The evidence from northern England in this light begins to seem distinctive. At one level we may put it down to a quirk in the evidence, that the battle of the Standard brought something into the historical record that might not otherwise have been recorded. Even so, it is the kind of episode that could turn up in a saint’s Life or chronicle almost anywhere. The story of St John’s banner’s miraculous help for King Athelstan is just such an episode. It becomes the more real because we have the work of Alfred the Sacrist, giving a remarkable glimpse of saints’ banners carried before the fyrd, even as the banner would go before the cross in church processions. When the story was brought to the attention of King Edward I in 1291, he showed his devotion to the saint at Beverley and regularly took St John’s banner, and that of St Cuthbert, in his campaigns against the Scots. Both banners had continued to serve their liturgical role, unreported, since the middle of the twelfth century. It was King Edward’s decision to take them to war that gave them new visibility, limited as it is, but there was nothing inevitable about it. From the same king’s Welsh wars, we hear of no marcher saint whose power was taken into battle through his or her banner. The annals kept at St Werburg’s abbey in Chester recorded only that Edward I heard mass at the abbey and presented a precious cloth in May 1283 after the conquest of Wales. If St Werburg of Chester, St Mildburg of Much Wenlock, or even St Peter, patron of both Shrewsbury and Gloucester, had ever helped ancient kings against the Welsh, their stories had not reached King Edward.

Fuller investigation may permit a better survey of ecclesiastical banners in high medieval England, but it is likely that what will emerge is evidence from inventories that may describe the textiles. Most narrative sources have by now

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152 Walter of Whittlesey in the house chronicle of Peterborough abbey, ed. J. Sparke, Histo riae coenobii Burgensis scriptores uarii (London, 1723), 134. My thanks to Prof. Edmund King for this reference.

153 Annales Cestrienses, ed. R. C. Copley, Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society 14 (1886), 112.
been studied. Miracles of the kind described by Reginald at Durham seem not to be widely known. We are left, therefore, with the spectacle of processional banners that go to war, and Alfred the Sacrist perhaps gives us the clue to what is distinctive. The circumstances in which he envisages the uexillarius at the front of the fyrd of the East Riding are limited:154 ‘si ad edictum regis generaliter de toto Eboracensi comitatu in Scotiam aut in Wallioniam uel contra externas gentes pro patrie defensione proficiscetur’ (‘if at the King’s proclamation there will be a general mobilization from the whole of Yorkshire whether into Scotland or into Wales or against foreign peoples for the defence of the country’). How this might affect discussion of the twelfth-century fyrd is not clear. None the less, the common feature in our stories is war against the Scots. Athelstan had to fight off King Constantine, Archbishop Thurstan opposed King David’s invasion, and successive kings from Edward I onwards either invaded Scotland or resisted invasion from Scotland. The saints of the North of England were a bulwark. If this did not give their banners peculiar merit, it at least provided the occasion for our knowing that they were taken to war.

154 Above, n. 92.
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