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constructed. An example. Some 'alien' charters, of land which we know from Domesday Book was certainly not in the abbey's hands in the eleventh century, relate to land which had been promised to it, and the promise accompanied by a charter, but never delivered. Some more had belonged to the Godwinesons, who had been friends of the house, and who may have used it as a safe deposit. But some – and this must have implications for the way we use charter material – related to land which the abbey had once held entire, but which subsequently had fragmented, or which it had disposed of. The original charter was kept, but it was only one link in what became a chain of documentation. Stenton rejected the chroniclers' account of the abbey's ancient foundation – the tradition of its move from a supposed early site near Boars Hill to its present site marked by the propitious discovery of a black cross, the migration of its twin nunnery, an early abbot called Haeha. Since he wrote, archaeological work has done something to redeem parts of it. The argument here rescues still more: an early minster, part of a Thames network, used as an important pawn in controlling the area and its important commercial connections first by Mercian then by West Saxon kings. It was the period between the depredations of the Vikings and Aethelwold's refoundation, when the abbey declined into little more than a royal headquarters, that needed the boost of fabricated charters to emphasize the continuity of religious life there, and this was amply provided. Nevertheless, although none of these were genuine, they may reflect a genuine tradition. Abingdon dominated in Berkshire and west Oxfordshire as the major landowner – you could virtually have walked from Thames to Kennet in 1086 without setting foot off its land. That much we know from Domesday. It is the appearance out of the shadows of other major players in the mid-tenth century that adds a new dimension. Of the two most powerful, thanks to Ann Williams, we have already met Aelfhere 'prince of the Mercian people'. The other, Wulfric Cufing, has featured in the history of nucleated settlement in England: Della Hooke has argued that it was through his acquisition of two separate estates at Woolstone, and his subsequent establishment of his *tun* there across the boundary between the two, that we can date the origins of the village of Woolstone. Now we can see just what a big cheese he was: with 105 hides in Berkshire alone. That these two figure so prominently in Abingdon's documentation is not because they were its generous benefactors, but simply that they were the big players locally: any land which came to the abbey is likely to have been through their hands at one time or another.

The role of the abbey as a major proprietor involved it with local families in the same 'dance of gift and counter-gift', of patronage and dispute which Barbara Rosenwein has so vividly depicted for Cluny. In Aethelwold's time this dance became more frenzied, with his drive to endow his foundations and re-foundations. *Pace* Dr Kelly, who draws a parallel between the two, there seems to be an important difference in this respect between Abingdon and Ely, and that is in the size of the units of land which they acquired. While my entirely unscholarly count shows that many Abingdon charters certainly dealt with amounts of land of five hides or less, the abbey does not seem to have been the market for the tiny scraps, mills and weirs and odd fields, which Aethelwold was happy to get his hands on for Ely. Is this a difference in the documentation, or a real difference between Wessex and East Anglia? One of the treasures of this edition is the inclusion of solutions of the many vernacular charter bounds carefully preserved at the abbey into the thirteenth century – were people then

still able to read the Old English? In one of these we find the *Orhaema*: the people of Oare, still a township in the twentieth century. What a very old country this is! And how lucky it is to have dedicated and insightful scholars such as Dr Kelly, who has done so much for the British Academy's charter editions.

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Millennium in Central Europe: A History of Hungary, by László Kontler (Budapest: Atlantisz Publishing, 1999; pp. 537. Pb.n.p.).

This is the last, but the most outstanding, work on the short yet rather distinguished list of twentieth-century single-author short histories of Hungary (apart from Arthur Yolland's early propagandistic efforts) specifically aimed at the English reader. C. A. Macartney's 1934 account is the first memorable volume on this list, which continues with the survey that Dominic (Domokos) Kosáry, still active in his ninth decade, published in 1941 and still bears re-reading, while the post-1956 account by Denis (Dénes) Sinor, Macartney's 'short history' of 1962 (not mentioned in Kontler's excellent biography), and Paul Ignotus's 1972 survey (which characteristically includes an appendix on the Hungarian language), were all written more or less as counterweights to the decades of committee-produced, sometimes comically and sometimes tragically tortuous, distortions of the People's Republic period. Not that individual distinguished scholarship inside Hungary was lacking: figures like Erik Fügedi and the highly original thinker Jenő Szűcs – whose influence pervades the present volume – must be counted among the outstanding historians in Europe. On this showing, Kontler is not far behind them. This is a comprehensive, even-handed, broadly drawn yet in-depth history of Hungary, confidently written in good English and finely produced by Atlantisz, with a small but carefully-chosen selection of illustrations and a few (not enough) maps. One area in which it is perhaps too soon to expect a persuasive overview is that of the 'magyarization' policies pursued in the final decades of the Monarchy; more research is needed from all sides to put this still-burning issue into a more manageable political and cultural perspective. And subsequent editions (and there will be many) will, it is to be hoped, drop the main title, something that – like the London Millennium Dome – may have seemed like a good idea at the time but is rapidly receding into history.

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The Normans, by Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000; pp. 191. £19.99).

This study is a valuable contribution to a series of short accounts of European peoples that have already established themselves as coherent and stimulating introductions to their subjects. While some of these peoples, such as the Basques and Bretons, have survived with their own cultures and languages intact to the present day, the Normans and their *pays* have been absorbed into