



PIERRE CHAPLAIS

## Pierre Chaplais 1920–2006

DAUNTING EXACTITUDE, DAUNTLESS PERSISTENCE in the search for documentary evidence, and an intimidating grasp of precise detail gave Pierre Chaplais the power to identify and resolve problems in medieval historical documents that others could not approach. His successes were the result of a natural disposition to minute accuracy and observation, combined with both method and discipline in the marshalling of facts, and a sense of moral duty to commit his time and talents to unremitting labour. Such attributes might lead one to expect an austere personality behind them, but Pierre was generous, helpful, affable, and full of fun and charm. The cliché ‘Nothing was too much trouble’ aptly captures both his readiness to put himself at the disposal of his students and colleagues and his painstaking thoroughness in his own work. The course of his career was by any measure unusual: from small-town Brittany via Buchenwald to the Public Record Office and later to Oxford and a vineyard in Eynsham. In everything he achieved, he was untaught, schooled only by his instinctive understanding of how to examine primary documents, their forms, their words, their seals, their archival contexts. For twenty-five years he put himself under the most intense pressure. There was a price to be paid, which Pierre rarely counted, but it told on those closest to him more than on those whom he taught or advised. The cost was perhaps unsustainable, and in his fifties and sixties his concentration, his energy, and his publication declined. His skills remained unimpaired even as his eyesight faded, and his last major work, a book on Piers Gaveston, published in 1994, draws on the same command of detail in context that characterises all his best work. No one will go to his publications for the kind of new idea that

changes the direction of a subject. His gift was to show, by practice and example, how expertise in the handling of primary evidence bore fruit that could not be got without it. His technical virtuosity was to some historians admirable, inimitable, and unnecessary. To others it was a foundation and an inspiration.

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Pierre Théophile Victorien Marie Chaplais was born on 8 July 1920 at Châteaubriant, in the département of Loire-Inférieure (now Loire-Atlantique), Brittany, almost equidistant between Rennes and Nantes.<sup>1</sup> Pierre's father Théophile Chaplais was the telephone engineer there, part of a family of public servants. His mother Victorine Roussel Chaplais died when he was a small boy. He had an elder sister, Renée, who would follow family tradition with a career in the telephone service at Nantes. The children were looked after by their father's unmarried sister, a Catholic with very strict views. While Pierre was still young, his father moved to the post office in Redon, in Ille-et-Vilaine, a small historic town, where the abbey of Saint-Sauveur had been founded in 832. Pierre was sent to school at the Collège Saint-Sauveur, run at that period by the Congrégation de Jésus et Marie, known as the Eudistes, and established within the former claustral buildings of the abbey. He did his baccalauréat largely in classics, philosophy, and mathematics—no history—and he hoped to go in for the navy, only to be turned down by the École navale at Brest on the grounds that he was colour-blind.

In 1938 he went up to the University of Rennes to study law.<sup>2</sup> The outbreak of war brought an early interruption. The invasion of Poland by Hitler's Wehrmacht in September 1939 was quickly followed by the Saar offensive, when French armed forces moved forwards from the Maginot Line into the Saarland. The advance stopped within a month, and the Drôle de Guerre set in. Pierre Chaplais volunteered for military service in October 1939 and was sent to the artillery school at Fontainebleau as an

<sup>1</sup>This section relies, with permission and often verbatim, on Cliff Davies's personal memoir, printed in Michael Jones and Malcolm Vale (eds.), *England and her Neighbours 1066–1453. Essays in Honour of Pierre Chaplais* (London, 1989), pp. xiii–xix. That was based largely on conversations with Pierre himself, supported by reading in the history of the Resistance. Cliff Davies also thanked Professor Jacques Brejon de Lavergnée, Pierre's old teacher, and M. Jean-Pierre Chaplet, son of his former pupil-master, for their assistance.

<sup>2</sup>Chaplais's *curriculum vitae* submitted when he applied for his post at Oxford in 1955 supplies facts about his university education. It shows him as enrolled in the Faculté de Droit 1938–46 and the Faculté des Arts 1940–6.

*aspirant* (officer designate), reaching the cavalry rank of *maréchal des logis de carrière* (equated with sergeant). The school was mobilised to fight when the German army attacked France in May 1940. During the *étrange défaite* they made their way south on horseback. Armistice came on 25 June, and Pierre's company was demobilised at Toulouse in September. He returned to Rennes to resume his studies.

At the university Pierre was now enrolled in classics as well as law. He completed his *licence* in law in July 1942 and in classics in June 1943. He fell under the spell of one of his professors, Jacques Brejon de Lavergnée (1911–93), a legal historian and historian of Brittany, with whom he completed his *diplôme d'études supérieures* in legal history in June 1943.<sup>3</sup> His aim was to become an academic lawyer. In France, as in England, it is useful for academic lawyers at least to qualify for practice, and to this end, at least ostensibly, Pierre had been recommended by Brejon to his near namesake, Maître Pierre Chaplet, an eminent lawyer in Rennes. Chaplet was involved in the resistance movement *Défense de la France*.

*Défense de la France* had been started in 1941 by a group of students in Paris, led by Philippe Viannay (1917–86).<sup>4</sup> The organisation produced in the cellars of the Sorbonne *La Défense de la France*, the most successful of the underground newspapers ('de tendance modérée et d'inspiration catholique').<sup>5</sup> It also produced false identity cards on a large scale. By 1943, when it was recognised by Charles de Gaulle, it was building itself up as a military force. Even so, something of the original 'boy-scout' (Pierre's words) inspiration remained in the meetings of small groups, eight or so, of would-be *francs-tireurs* in the Forêt de Paimpont, near Rennes. Pierre joined them in May 1943. In August he was with Maître Chaplet at a clandestine meeting in the forest with Pierre Dunoyer de Segonzac (1906–68), who offered a new concept of leadership among French youth, despising alike totalitarianism and the intellectualist democratic tradition and fostering a catholic and soldierly ethos.<sup>6</sup> *Défense de la France* would succeed in constituting a military force, which played a major part in the Liberation, both in Brittany and in Paris. Pierre and his group, however, were never armed. There was apparently a botched arms

<sup>3</sup> Brejon had only recently completed a thesis in Poitiers entitled *Un jurisconsulte de la Renaissance: André Tiraqueau (1488–1558)* (Paris, 1937), its subject a jurist who was also a humanist and friend of both Guillaume Budé and François Rabelais.

<sup>4</sup> Marie Granet, *Défense de la France. Histoire d'un mouvement de Résistance, 1940–1944* (Paris, 1960); Marcel Baudot, *Libération de la Bretagne* (Paris, 1973).

<sup>5</sup> Baudot, p. 60.

<sup>6</sup> Dunoyer's memoirs appeared posthumously, *Le vieux chef. Mémoires et pages choisies* (Paris, 1971). Discussion in W. D. Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France* (Oxford, 1981).

drop. Chaplet was arrested at seven o'clock in the morning of 21 December 1943; Pierre Chaplais, turning up at Chaplet's home later in the same day, walked into the arms of the Gestapo.

After interrogation at Rennes, they were taken to Compiègne, then on a three-day rail journey to Buchenwald, arriving on 29 January 1944.<sup>7</sup> There is no need to reproduce here the familiar horror-story of the camp, the struggle to survive the cold, hunger, and fatigue, the struggle to retain human values in a régime systematically dedicated to degradation. Maître Chaplet's published account is vivid and moving.<sup>8</sup> And he provides two brief glimpses of Pierre Chaplais. The first is at Compiègne: 'Mon jeune ami Ch(aplais), qui marchait à côté de moi, avec ses lèvres grasses, ses yeux en amande, et l'étrange turban dont il s'était coiffé, ressemblait à un fakir. On se le désignait du doigt. Il souriait imperturbablement comme un prince de carnaval.'<sup>9</sup> In the second, Chaplais discovered in a food parcel received at Buchenwald 'le portrait de sa fiancée qui fit le tour des tables. Le sourire d'Eliane eut un succès considerable. Ch(aplais) en rougissait de confusion, mais il était bien embarrassé pour dissimuler l'image qui était l'oeuvre d'un photographe d'art et prenait une grande place. Il la glissa, après avoir découpé l'entourage du carton, dans la doublure de sa veste rayée. Nous demandions à la voir de temps en temps.'<sup>10</sup> This wartime engagement presumably came about during Pierre's involvement with the Resistance in 1943: Eliane Daëron was herself awarded the Croix de Guerre for her work in the Resistance.<sup>11</sup>

During fifteen months in the concentration camp at Buchenwald, near Weimar in Thüringen, Pierre was put to forced labour in armament factories in the area. The last few weeks of imprisonment, as the Americans approached in March and April 1945, were the most dangerous. The camp authorities might well have done away with the prisoners to remove evi-

<sup>7</sup> Pierre Chaplais (prisoner 43478) and Pierre Chaplet (prisoner 43485) appear side by side in the list of 1584 men transported at this date, published online by the Fondation pour le mémoire de la transportation under the heading 'Transport parti de Compiègne 27 janvier 1944 (I. 173)'; out of 240 who went to Buchenwald, 149 are listed as *décédés*.

<sup>8</sup> P. Chaplet, *Häftling 43485* (Paris, 1947). The book begins with Chaplet's arrest and refers only briefly to his earlier resistance activities. He remained at Buchenwald only until 1 October 1944, after which he was transferred to the subsidiary camp at Dora, returning to France at the end of the war via Bergen-Belsen.

<sup>9</sup> Chaplet, p. 108.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 280–1.

<sup>11</sup> She was much the same age as Pierre, having finished her schooling at the Lycée des Jeunes Filles in Saint-Malo in July 1938 (*L'Ouest-Éclair*, 14 juillet 1938, p. 6). Pierre presumably met her in Rennes. She would marry Philippe Ragueneau (1917–2003), saboteur and commander of a parachute unit, whose later career is well known.

dence of atrocities. Pierre's memory of this was hazy: in those weeks he was himself in the infirmary as a result of American bombing in Weimar, and he played no part in the 'rising' which, according to the hagiography of the official prisoners' organisations, preceded the arrival of Patton's army at the camp. Liberated by the Americans on 12 April 1945, he ran wild through the streets of Weimar. He never returned to Germany. He arrived in Paris on VE Day, 8 May 1945, when his group startled the more staid bourgeoisie as they sang the Internationale from the back of a lorry. He received the Médaille de la Résistance in 1946 and would wear it with pride for the rest of his life.

Pierre now came to the Channel resort of Deauville, where his father had become postmaster. He would go back to Brittany to resume his studies at the University of Rennes, completing his *diplômes d'études supérieures* in public law in October 1945, in private law and in classics in June 1946. For the last he wrote a thesis on Seneca.<sup>12</sup> In November 1945, by dint of having his war service credited, he also qualified as an *avocat* and was formally admitted to the Rennes court by Pierre Chaplet, *bâtonnier*. Academic law was still his objective, and he moved to the Faculté de Droit in Paris, where he set about preparing the substantial thesis demanded for the *agrégation* in law. He determined to work in legal history, and his supervisor was Professor Pierre Petot (1887–1966). Other significant contacts appear at this time. Michel de Bouïard (1909–89), a catholic, communist, and former *déporté*, whom he had met in Deauville, introduced him to Robert Fawtier (1885–1966), professeur des sciences auxiliaires de l'histoire du moyen âge at the University of Bordeaux from 1928 to 1949, and to Édouard Perroy (1901–74), professor of medieval history at Lille from 1934 to 1950. Both had worked in England before the war, and both had been heavily involved with the Resistance. Perroy wrote *La Guerre de cent ans* while on the run from the Gestapo in his native Forez.<sup>13</sup> Fawtier had been arrested in 1942 and, after a period in the notorious prison at Fresnes, was deported, ending the war in the camp at Mauthausen near Linz in Austria.<sup>14</sup> It is not known whether Pierre's contact with Michel de Bouïard

<sup>12</sup> Entitled 'Le Rôle de la mer dans les oeuvres en prose de Sénèque le philosophe', the essay runs to 111 pages of typescript in quarto. Inspired by the well-documented study by Eugène de Saint-Denis, *Le Rôle de la mer dans la poésie latine* (Lyons, 1935), and a thèse complémentaire, *Vocabulaire des manoeuvres nautiques en latin* (Mâcon, 1935), Pierre's work draws almost exclusively on Seneca's writings. The brief bibliography (p. 10) includes two works published in English.

<sup>13</sup> This is mentioned in the *avant-propos* of the book, which was published in 1945, going through nine impressions in that year. There is a brief obituary of Édouard Perroy by Étienne Fournial in *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 17 (1974), 399–400.

<sup>14</sup> Jean Hubert, 'Notice sur la vie et les travaux de M. Robert Fawtier, membre de l'Académie', *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 127 (1983), 470–82.

also led to an introduction to his father, Alain de Bouïard (1882–1955), who taught palaeography and diplomatic at the *École nationale des chartes* until his retirement in 1953.<sup>15</sup> The spirit of comradeship among ex-resisters no doubt did something to open doors, but only Pierre's abilities would have earned him the good offices of such austere scholars. The subject of his intended thesis was sovereignty in Anglo-French relations 1259–1453.

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How the subject came to be chosen and how Pierre prepared himself for his research in English archives are now quite unknown. A grant from the French government allowed him to commence research. Taking advantage also of a three-week holiday, paid for by the newspaper *France-Soir*, successor to *Défense de la France*, he arrived in England on 2 September 1946. He carried letters of introduction from both Fawtier and Perroy to V. H. Galbraith (1889–1976), then director of the Institute of Historical Research. When term began, he remained in London to attend Galbraith's classes on palaeography and diplomatic, and by the end of October he had been induced to register for a London doctorate. He supported himself meanwhile by teaching French at the Linguists' Club in Grosvenor Place—its motto 'Se comprendre c'est la paix'—and occasionally translating into French, notably talks for the BBC. His livelihood was somewhat precarious, but he got stuck into his research. The records in the Public Record Office, Chancery Lane, had become available again in the summer of 1946 after nearly seven years' wartime closure.<sup>16</sup> Galbraith was greatly impressed by Pierre's single-minded devotion to medieval history. Mary Galbraith was a sixth-former at that time, who remembers Pierre 'as a quiet friendly young man, quite prepared to play charades at family Christmas parties, and as a patient, capable teacher when in 1947 he coached me in French for my Oxford entrance exams'.<sup>17</sup> Mrs Galbraith asked Pierre to do this, rather than a more experienced tutor, because it provided a cover for making some payments to him, when he was near

<sup>15</sup>PC was well acquainted with Alain de Bouïard's textbooks, both on palaeography, a revision of Maurice Prou's *Manuel de paléographie*, 4th edn. (Paris, 1924), and on diplomatic, *Manuel de diplomatique française et pontificale* (Paris, 1940). He remained on friendly terms with Michel de Bouïard, who became a prominent historian and archaeologist in Normandy.

<sup>16</sup>The records had been evacuated during the war but returned between September 1945 and June 1946. The Long Room in Chancery Lane reopened, but reopening the Round Room was delayed until May 1947 by building work to repair war-damage (R. H. Ellis, 'Archives 1939–47', *The Year's Work in Librarianship*, 14 (1947), 258–320, at p. 263).

<sup>17</sup>Mary Moore, 22 Feb. 2007.

penniless. Over the next ten years, both in London and after his move in January 1948 to be Regius Professor of Modern History in Oxford, Vivian Galbraith was to be the advocate who got Chaplais's extraordinary abilities noticed and opened up for him the opportunities to develop his talents.

From 1947 a scholarship from the British Council funded his post-graduate research at the Institute in London. For three years he concentrated on his thesis, now defined as *Gascon Appeals to England 1259–1453*. Much of his energy was devoted to finding documents that would reveal the mechanism and context of appeals from Gascony. His concentration was not so single-minded as to let slip the opportunity to meet and woo Doreen Middlemast, who was working in the London office of *The Times of India*, around the corner from Chancery Lane. They were married in London in 1948. The thesis was examined in December 1950 by Goronwy Edwards and C. H. Williams. Pierre's own copy would subsequently swell with added material.

The subject of judicial appeals no doubt derived in the first place from Pierre's aspiration for an academic career in law and legal history. In the context of Gascony under English rule appeals depended on the contested issue of sovereignty in the French lands of the king of England. This led into the investigation of contemporary theorists' views on either side of the question. Edward III's assuming the title King of France in 1340 changed the picture, repatriating nominal sovereignty to France while it continued to be exercised by the king in England or through his officers in Gascony. The creation of a Court of Sovereignty (*Curia Superioritatis*) of Aquitaine would serve to provide the duchy with a buffer against the French king and the Parlement de Paris that would outlast English rule in Gascony. The search for evidence led Pierre into a range of little-known classes in the Public Record Office: Ancient Correspondence (SC1), Ancient Petitions (SC8), Council and Privy Seal Files (E28), Diplomatic Documents (E30 and C47/27–32), Gascon Rolls (C61), Treaty Rolls (C76), Chancery Warrants (C81), and the Accounts of the Constables of Bordeaux (among materials in E101 and E364). This exploration of the Public Record Office shaped more than one aspect of Pierre's later work. His interest widened from a focus on technical issues of appellate jurisdiction in the English Crown's French lands to the whole process of diplomatic contact between the two crowns, and then more largely the processes of diplomacy in the middle ages.

Ten articles were written and published during this period, three in English and the remainder in French.<sup>18</sup> In his very first paper, published in

<sup>18</sup>His publications to 1989, omitting reviews, are listed in *England and her Neighbours*, xxi–xxiv.



the *Bulletin* of the Institute, he thanks ‘My friend Dr G. P. Cuttino for assistance in translating this article into English’.<sup>19</sup> George Peddy Cuttino (1914–91) was an American who had come to Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar in 1936 and written a doctoral thesis under V. H. Galbraith on a subject close to Chaplais’s interests.<sup>20</sup> Thereafter Pierre’s written English needed no such assistance—one suspects that Doreen Chaplais may have helped—but the topics were often intended for a French audience, not generally as comfortable in English as Fawtier and Perroy. One of these papers, published by the *École des chartes*, presents a remarkable discovery of documents missing from the Archives in Paris but found in London.<sup>21</sup> Another, in the *English Historical Review*, already shows how well Chaplais was attuned to the formal understanding of charters, which he would later teach. Chaplais proved that Henry III’s dropping of the titles ‘duke of Normandy’ and ‘count of Anjou’ from his regnal style, a well-known concession to Louis IX of France in 1259, was actually done in two stages, and that the old and new seals were used simultaneously between May and December. For business with Louis, the new style and the new seal were used, but the change was not adopted for English or Gascon business until Henry crossed the Channel in December.<sup>22</sup> This detail is not observable in the documents most often used by historians, copied on the chancery rolls, which usually abbreviate the style; this perception depended on a search in the PRO for originals of the right date with seals and for documents copied with the regnal style in full. This proof demonstrates Pierre’s command of his techniques in diplomatic at an early stage in his career, without specific training and at a time when his research was still primarily concerned with royal diplomacy. Attention to seals was to become a hallmark of his work.

In this period too the young Chaplais wrote what he referred to as ‘sundry reviews’ for the journal *Le Moyen Age*, edited in Belgium by Fernand Vercauteren (1903–79), a student of Henri Pirenne. One title he

<sup>19</sup> ‘English arguments concerning the feudal status of Aquitaine in the fourteenth century’, *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 21 (1946–8), 203–13.

<sup>20</sup> Cuttino’s thesis, ‘The Conduct of English Diplomacy in the Fourteenth Century’, University of Oxford, 1938, was published as *English Diplomatic Administration, 1259–1339* (Oxford, 1940).

<sup>21</sup> ‘Chartes en déficit dans les cartons Angleterre du Trésor des Chartes’, *Bibliothèque de l’École des chartes*, 109 (1951), 96–103. Eleven charters, still in the Archives in 1834, were bought by the British Museum in 1856 as part of the collection of Francis Moore, who had lived nearly fifty years in Paris.

<sup>22</sup> ‘The making of the Treaty of Paris (1259) and the royal style’, *English Historical Review*, 67 (1952), 235–53.

reviewed was *Relations internationales. Le moyen âge* (Paris, 1953), by François-Louis Ganshof (1895–1980), another of Pirenne's school; the book was written to order in a field where the young Chaplais was making the pace far more than the senior Ganshof. Pierre kept Ganshof's letter of acknowledgement as a souvenir.<sup>23</sup>

The documentary research relating to his thesis fed two volumes published by the Royal Historical Society in the Camden Series. The first, *Some Documents concerning the Fulfilment and Interpretation of the Treaty of Brétigny 1361–1369*, occupying eighty-four pages, was paired with the slightly longer collection, *The Anglo-French Negotiations at Bruges, 1374–1377*, edited by Édouard Perroy, to form the Camden Miscellany 19 (1952). Perroy had himself worked extensively in the Public Record Office twenty years earlier and would have been well connected with English medievalists such as V. H. Galbraith.<sup>24</sup> Pierre became a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society in the following year. The second but larger volume focused on an earlier episode, *The War of Saint-Sardos (1323–1325). Gascon Correspondence and Diplomatic Documents*, Camden 3rd Series 87 (1954). John Le Patourel found the book austere.<sup>25</sup>

By the Treaty of Brétigny in 1360 Jean II had ceded the sovereignty of Aquitaine to Edward III of England, subject to certain conditions, which were still unsatisfied in 1369, giving Charles V the pretext to seize Aquitaine and start a war with the Black Prince. He did so fortified with opinions provided by two Bolognese jurists, Riccardo da Saliceto and Giovanni da Legnano, which Chaplais edited along with documents concerning the treaty. He realised that 'four important passages of the two opinions' were incorporated in a French treatise, presented to Charles V in 1378, known by the title *Le Songe du vergier*, of which the presentation copy survived in the British Museum, MS Royal 19 C. iv. This work had been printed as early as 1492 and was included in Jean-Louis Brunet's edition of *Traitez*

<sup>23</sup>F. Vercauteren to PC, 8 Sept. 1953; F. L. Ganshof to PC, 19 Feb. 1955. The review appeared in *Le Moyen Age*, 60 (1954), 476–8. PC had had an article accepted by this journal before his thesis was examined (Vercauteren to PC, 12 Nov. 1950), 'Règlement des conflits internationaux franco-anglais au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle (1293–1377)', *Le Moyen Age*, 57 (1951), 269–302.

<sup>24</sup>E. Perroy, *L'Angleterre et le grand Schisme d'Occident* (Paris, 1933). In the same year Perroy published a selection of documents considerably wider in scope than those used to support the argument of this book in *Diplomatic Correspondence of Richard II*, Camden 3rd Series 48 (1933). During the gathering of material, Perroy had taught French in Glasgow and later in London.

<sup>25</sup>'Though meticulous, the edition is austere. [...] Probably Dr Chaplais is the only person who really knows the surviving documents in London and Paris relating to this war. It is greatly to be hoped that he will write at least a long article on the subject, and soon' (J. Le Patourel, *English Historical Review*, 71 (1956), 141).

*des droits et libertez de l'Église gallicane* (1731).<sup>26</sup> With the presentation copy accessible in London, Chaplais resolved to edit this text and to investigate the relationship between the French and the Latin original, *Somnium Viridarii* (1376), in Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 3522, which had been printed by Melchior Goldast in 1611. He was in touch with the legal historian T. F. T. Plucknett, who wrote: 'I am delighted to hear that you contemplate a full edition of the *Songe du Vergier*: it will necessarily be an elaborate affair.'<sup>27</sup> And again, 'I have just heard from Fawtier who gives us the green light. A lady-chartiste wrote a thesis on the *Songe* some years ago but has married and abandoned it.'<sup>28</sup> The intention was to treat Latin and French together, and Chaplais laboured at this task, which demanded a considerable effort in comparing its wide-ranging legal sources. Despite Fawtier's inquiries, the chartiste reappeared with an article on the manuscript and a plan to edit the text.<sup>29</sup> In 1955, when Chaplais applied to Oxford, he did not refer to the *Songe* as work in progress. The eventual appearance of the French text in Paris in 1982 sent Chaplais back to his mountain of photostats and notes; returning with undimmed engagement to his ideas of thirty years earlier, he wrote up his case for attributing the work to Dom Jean le Fèvre, abbot of Saint-Vaast in Arras, who was a constant adviser to Charles V in the 1370s. Only the detailed knowledge of the text, in both French and Latin, and its sources betrays the amount of work Pierre had done so long before. His article finally appeared in 1996.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> *Le Songe du vergier*, [Lyon]: Jacques Maillet, 20 March 1491/2 (CIBN S316); Paris: Le Petit Laurens, for Jean Petit at Paris and for Jean Alexandre, Jean Alisot and Charles Debougne at Angers, [about April 1499] (CIBN S317). The *editio princeps* was reprinted in the collection *Traitez des droits et libertez de l'Église gallicane*, ed. Jean-Louis Brunel (Paris, 1731).

<sup>27</sup> T. F. T. Plucknett to PC, 10 Feb. 1952.

<sup>28</sup> T. F. T. Plucknett to PC, 17 Oct. 1953. He alludes to Marion Lièvre's work, *Le songe du vergier*, diplôme d'archiviste paléographe, École nationale des chartes, 1947 (*Positions des thèses de l'École des chartes*, 1947, 81–4). She married Frédéric Schnerb in 1951.

<sup>29</sup> Marion Lièvre, 'Notes sur le manuscrit original du Songe du Vergier et sur la librairie de Charles V', *Romania*, 77 (1956), 352–60. The edition, with exiguous apparatus, followed years later: M. Schnerb-Lièvre, *Le Songe du vergier édité d'après le manuscrit Royal 19 C. iv de la British Library*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1982), pp. xcii, 501, 496. Chaplais's published findings on the legal opinions concerning the sovereignty of Guyenne were recorded, vol. i, p. lxvi, but not deployed in the commentary nor in the index of sources. The Latin text, instead of running *en face*, followed later, M. Schnerb-Lièvre, *Somnium Viridarii*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1993–5), pp. lviii, 381, –544.

<sup>30</sup> 'Jean le Fèvre, abbot of Saint-Vaast, Arras, and the *Songe du vergier*', in *Recognitions. Essays presented to Edmund Fryde* (Aberystwyth, 1996), pp. 203–28. In a letter to Michael Jones, dated 7 July 1998, Pierre mentioned 'Marion Schnerb-Lièvre, who has not welcomed my efforts on the *Songe* and promises to blast me and Jean Le Fèvre out of existence'. Obituaries of Mme Schnerb-Lièvre (1921–2005) concede no doubt: 'C'est celle qui a définitivement établi que l'auteur du texte était Évrart du Trémagon' (*Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes*, 163 (2005), 602–3);

Meanwhile Chaplais had found employment in the Public Record Office. He had impressed Harold Johnson (1903–73), who must have come across him when on duty in the Round Room. Johnson had oversight of editorial work, for which he sought to recruit Chaplais. There was an interview with the deputy keeper, Sir Hilary Jenkinson (1882–1961), who commiserated with Pierre over his bad luck in being taught by Galbraith.<sup>31</sup> It was agreed as early as March 1949 that Chaplais should work for the Office as an external editor, paid on a daily rate of three guineas. He was to prepare editions of the Treaty Rolls, the Roman Rolls, and the series of Diplomatic Documents, and as a means to that work ‘to arrange and list parts of the unsorted miscellanea of the Chancery and Exchequer’.<sup>32</sup> The history of the Office deals with these new undertakings as the fruit of Jenkinson’s overhaul of the publication policy.<sup>33</sup> But is it coincidence that the work planned should be so close to Chaplais’s interests? By 1953 an agreement was also reached for the resumption of Charles Bémont’s long-lapsed edition of the Gascon Rolls to be prepared by Yves Renouard under the supervision of Professor Robert Fawtier. The French side of the agreement was represented by Clovis Brunel, Robert Fawtier, Charles Samaran, and Georges Tessier, ‘membres du Comité des Travaux historiques’. In this connection Pierre’s role was ‘to assist the editor of the Gascon Rolls by checking his text and rendering general editorial assistance on the documentation in England relating to Gascony’.<sup>34</sup>

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‘Confirmant une intuition d’Alfred Colville, elle a apporté la preuve que l’oeuvre était du juriste Évrard de Trémagon (†1386)’ (*Annuaire-Bulletin de la Société de l’histoire de France*, Année 2006, 12). The author’s access to and use of Everard’s writings is not evidence of identity.

<sup>31</sup> Davies, p. xviii. Jenkinson had joined the office in 1920, Galbraith in 1921; from 1925 Jenkinson was a part-time reader in diplomatic at King’s College, around the corner from the Record Office in the Strand, but Galbraith was the high flier who left for Oxford in 1928. He would look back on his time as an assistant keeper as ‘a stick in the mud job’, while doubting if he would find nicer mud to stick in (John Cantwell, *The Public Record Office 1838–1958* (London, 1991), p. 406, a book reviewed by P. Chaplais, *English Historical Review*, 110 (1995), 233–5). Chaplais made a careful study of Jenkinson’s publications, but his paper, ‘The study of palaeography and sigillography in England: Sir Hilary Jenkinson’s contribution’, in *Essays in Memory of Sir Hilary Jenkinson*, edited for the Society of Archivists by Albert E. J. Hollaender ([n.p.], 1962), pp. 41–9 (a paper omitted from the bibliography of Chaplais’s works), makes no allusion to personal contacts. With the full grandeur of a deputy keeper, Jenkinson acknowledged the assistance of Chaplais and other Office juniors to his own booklet, *A Guide to Seals in the Public Record Office* (London, 1954), p. x, only through the mediation of a senior assistant keeper, Harold Johnson.

<sup>32</sup> Quotation from PC’s CV.

<sup>33</sup> Cantwell, *Public Record Office 1838–1958*, pp. 446–7.

<sup>34</sup> Renouard’s introduction gives more detail, *Gascon Rolls 1307–1317* (London, 1962), pp. ii–iii. Pierre Chaplais is particularly thanked for ‘le méticuleux collationnement du texte sur l’original’ and for supplying information from other material in the public records. Renouard intended one further volume to complete the rolls of Edward II’s reign. The series C61 continues to 7 Edward

The first volume of the Treaty Rolls was published in 1955 with Chaplais's name on the title page—unusual recognition in those days—and a laconic preface signed by the deputy keeper, D. L. Evans. The ten rolls covered by the volume are identified according to their previous record history: 'The text of the rolls being by no means free from error, an attempt has been made to trace the sealed exemplars ("originals") of the documents enrolled, and thus useful collations of the text have been made possible; drafts and early official copies have been used for the same purpose.'<sup>35</sup> These few words denote a fundamental departure from normal policy in the Office and a massive search to match up the documents lying behind the rolls. The initiative was Chaplais's. He was unable, however, to thwart the parsimony of the publisher, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, which required that documents already printed in the Record Commission edition of Rymer's *Foedera* (1816) should be reduced to top and tail with a brief English summary and a note of any corrections resulting from the collation of the text. It was a grief to the editor to have prepared an improved text of the Latin or the French, only to have to delete a large part of his work in deference to the existence of an ancient edition available only in major libraries. Chaplais remained hostile to the Stationery Office until the end of its existence as a publisher in 1996. A second volume, based on the rolls without any attempt to improve their texts, was seen into print in 1972 by an American student who had completed a doctorate under his supervision.<sup>36</sup>

Evans's preface to the first volume had alluded to much more: 'The history of the class and the diplomatic of the documents enrolled will be

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IV; an edition is now in progress under the direction of Dr Malcolm Vale (Oxford) and Dr Paul Booth (Liverpool). The Comité des Travaux historiques had been set up by the French government as long ago as 1834, its purpose 'diriger les recherches et les publications de documents inédits à l'aide de fonds votés au budget de l'État'. Clovis Brunel (1884–1971) was director of the École nationale des chartes 1930–54, where Georges Tessier (1891–1967) was professor of diplomatic; Charles Samaran (1879–1982) was at this date director of the Archives Nationales.

<sup>35</sup> *Treaty Rolls* i 1234–1325 (London, 1955), p. v.

<sup>36</sup> *Treaty Rolls* ii 1337–1339 (London, 1972), covering the next three rolls (C76/11–13), was the work of John Tyler Ferguson IV (1939–73). It was the fruit of a network centred on Chaplais. Ferguson had studied at Emory University with George Cuttino. He won a Fulbright Fellowship and came to Oxford and Wadham College in 1963 to work with Chaplais on fifteenth-century diplomacy. His thesis, 'English Diplomacy during the reign of Henry VI, 1422–1461', was defended in 1967 and published in 1972. Through Chaplais and former colleagues in the Record Office, H. C. Johnson, L. C. Hector, and R. E. Latham, Ferguson was guided into continuing the work on the rolls. He died at the age of thirty-three, leaving a third volume of the Treaty Rolls in draft and a planned two-volume work, including a selection of documents, on Edward III's claim to the Crown of France, further evidence of Chaplais's influence.

discussed in a separate introductory volume which will also cover the classes of Diplomatic Documents (Exchequer and Chancery) and Roman Rolls to be printed concurrently in parallel series.<sup>37</sup> This sets out an agenda that was only ever partially fulfilled.

A further volume, *Diplomatic Documents i 1101–1272*, was published for the Record Office in 1964, in which Chaplais presented some 444 documents, the great majority of them from the reign of Henry III. This drew in small measure on the classes officially titled Diplomatic Documents (C47/27–32, E30), printing the earliest documents in both series. By far the largest proportion of the texts was drawn from the class of Ancient Correspondence (SC1). A lot of this material was in poor condition: ‘much of the transcription had to be done by using ultra-violet rays, and it required meticulous care, infinite patience, and dogged perseverance’, as George Cuttino observed.<sup>38</sup> By this date Chaplais had come to be regarded within the Record Office as the person who could get the best results from the most difficult material.<sup>39</sup> With these classes, considerable effort was required before a document could be dated or its inclusion in the volume decided. The selection relied on Chaplais’s increasingly refined perception of the procedures behind the conduct of diplomatic business. No second volume followed, and I find no sign of work on the Roman Rolls.

In conjunction with these volumes of texts there was to be an introduction, referred to already in 1955, which was to take the form of a book on *English Medieval Diplomacy*, of which he said: ‘a large section of the work will be devoted to the history of the English diplomatic records and another to the study of the general diplomatic practice in medieval Europe, with special reference to England’.<sup>40</sup> The latter aspect came to predominate, and the archival history of the records is not heard of again. A characteristically understated note, published in 1958, gives a taste of what might have been: in it, Chaplais recovered the drafting and filing procedures of the Privy Seal from the endorsements on scattered

<sup>37</sup> PC’s friend John Le Patourel said in a review, ‘It is difficult to guess how many volumes will be required to complete this undertaking, but it will certainly be a very considerable number’ (*English Historical Review*, 73 (1958), 667–70). This review usefully takes a page to explain the archival history of the material in the volume.

<sup>38</sup> G. P. Cuttino, *Speculum*, 40 (1965), 713–14.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Jones and Malcolm Vale have written that ‘During his time as an Editor at the Public Record Office, fragmentary and decayed documents classified as “illegible” were apparently “given to Chaplais” for successful elucidation’ (*England and her Neighbours*, p. vii).

<sup>40</sup> CV as ‘in preparation’. The book was also mentioned in correspondence in 1958 between PC and D. E. Queller (1925–95), ‘Thirteenth-Century diplomatic envoys: Nuncii and Procuratores’, *Speculum*, 35 (1960), 196–213 (p. 198 n.).

documents.<sup>41</sup> Diplomacy took precedence over administration, but it is not apparent how much was written at what dates. Chaplais's prefaces tend to the same austere brevity as those printed above an official signature, with the effect that his books do not explain their own background. There appeared in 1975 a folio volume of facsimiles entitled *English Medieval Diplomatic Practice*, Part II, *Plates*; then in 1982, still from the reluctant Stationery Office, *English Medieval Diplomatic Practice*, Part I, *Documents and Interpretation*, in two volumes.<sup>42</sup> The 830 pages of the latter presented 420 documents, in Latin, French, and English, selected and organised thematically to illustrate the practice of diplomacy by the English Crown. Seventy-two of them were illustrated in the accompanying plates: documents of English origin preserved in the archives of foreign rulers, mainly from Paris and half a dozen other Continental archives. The coverage is concentrated in the fourteenth century, but there are also documents from the twelfth, thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. The annotation is concise, though it was sometimes allowed to include compressed essays such as that on 'The grant of Guyenne to Edward of Windsor, the great seal, and the royal style', appended to No. 49, letters patent in French from Edward II to Charles IV of France.<sup>43</sup> The document, from the Archives Nationales, had already been printed in *The War of Saint-Sardos*, 241 (no. 211), and the subject derives directly from Chaplais's Ph.D. thesis. Even with the publication of these large volumes, the grand plan was still far from fulfilled. The brief preface in 1982 says, 'An extensive discussion of English diplomatic practice from its origins to the end of the middle ages, originally planned as an introduction to the present volumes, will be published as a separate book, which will also contain a consolidated index.' The proposed book was halted when the Stationery Office decided no longer to handle publications for the Public Record Office, though Pierre would ever after refer to it as 'the PRO book'. It weighed on his conscience. He later revealed a still-larger plan, that two volumes of commentary should accompany these documents, 'examining the two distinct

<sup>41</sup> 'Privy Seal drafts, rolls, and registers (Edward I–Edward II)', *English Historical Review*, 73 (1958), 270–73. Chaplais discovered that Privy Seal drafts were arranged in monthly files with a register built up from quires corresponding to one month's drafts. He identified a surviving leaf from such a quire, subsequently used as a pastedown, in BL MS Royal 13 A. xi. Several hundreds of privy seal drafts survive, 'hopelessly scattered in various classes of the Public Record Office and elsewhere', among which he identified the best-preserved monthly files.

<sup>42</sup> The quality of the facsimiles was indifferent but the publication, in large format, was expensive at £19 in 1975. The two volumes of text were exorbitantly expensive at £95 in 1982 (G. P. Cuttino, *Speculum*, 59 (1984), 630–1).

<sup>43</sup> *Medieval English Diplomatic Practice*, Part I, vol. i, 68–70.

aspects of medieval diplomacy, the exchange of information between governments in one volume and the negotiation and conclusion of agreements between governments in another'.<sup>44</sup> Three substantial chapters towards the first volume were drafted, and between 1990 and 1992 efforts were made to print them. Failing eyesight and advancing age might have ended the matter there, but ten years later Pierre's friends Rees Davies, professor of medieval history, Cliff Davies, for forty years a colleague in Wadham College, and Martin Sheppard, of Hambledon Press, contrived to produce as much as was drafted under a new title, *English Diplomatic Practice in the Middle Ages* (London, 2003).

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The programme of work was conceived on a massive scale. How far the plan grew in the handling, how far it was always intended to be vast, are questions that cannot now be answered. In the early 1950s, however, Chaplais's supporters in the Record Office may have recognised the desirability of harnessing his expertise and industry on a more secure basis. It is said that he would have been given a permanent position as an assistant keeper if he had been willing to take on British nationality and surrender his French passport. He chose not to do that. In 1953 he was in correspondence with Frédéric Joüon des Longrais (1892–1975) about the possibility of completing his *agrégation* in the Faculté de Droit.<sup>45</sup> None the less, he had little appetite to return to France, where too many senior academic positions were held by men who had not resisted Nazi occupation. His wife was English, their two young boys were English, and he was deeply engaged in his research in England. The desirability of a secure position, however, remained.

The opportunity came in 1955. Kathleen Major had been Reader in Diplomatic at Oxford since the end of the Second World War, and since

<sup>44</sup> *English Diplomatic Practice in the Middle Ages* (London, 2003), p. ix.

<sup>45</sup> F. Joüon des Longrais to PC, 31 Aug. 1953, in reply to PC's letter dated 27 June 1953: "La souveraineté et le ressort dans les rapports entre la France et l'Angleterre de 1259 à 1453" est un sujet bien mieux délimité. Il me semble que vous avez procédé de la meilleure manière en copiant à loisir les documents anglo-français que vous étiez mieux placé que quiconque pour trouver, étudier et éditer. Vous n'avez pas à craindre que votre directeur de thèse soit effrayé par l'ampleur de vos pièces justificatives. Tout au contraire, il s'en rejouit d'avance car, comme vous le savez, aux Facultés de droit, il est bien rare d'avoir de bonnes éditions de textes dans les thèses. [...] Si votre goût vous attire vers l'agrégation de droit qui est une noble carrière, je crois, en toute sincérité, que vous aurez quand vous vous y présenterez un indéniable prestige d'éditeur de textes."



1948 her course had dovetailed with the graduate course on the sources for English history from the eleventh to fifteenth centuries, given by the new Regius Professor, Vivian Galbraith.<sup>46</sup> Upon her election as principal of St Hilda's College she resigned with effect from 31 July 1955. The post was advertised in May as lecturer or Reader in Diplomatic, and the electors met on 2 June—A. H. Smith, Warden of New College (as Vice-Chancellor), Professor Galbraith, the Revd Dr [Claude] Jenkins, Mr [Goronwy] Edwards, and Mr [K. B.] McFarlane. Chaplais's application set out his *curriculum vitae* and a list of publications, actual or anticipated. His referees were T. F. T. Plucknett (1897–1965), professor of legal history in London; Harold Johnson, then principal assistant keeper and editorial director at the Public Record Office; and James Conway Davies (1891–1971), reader in palaeography and diplomatic in Durham. Conway Davies had arranged for Chaplais to give five classes in Durham, 1–5 March 1954, on 'English Medieval Diplomacy: Sources and Practice', which proved a success.<sup>47</sup> This was Chaplais's only teaching experience. He was elected to a lectureship at a salary of £1,200 per annum, toward the upper end of the available scale. Kathleen Major was one of those who wrote to congratulate him: 'I hope you will enjoy yourself as much as I have done. It is one of the most rewarding and interesting of posts, I think, and I am glad you are to have it.'<sup>48</sup> In 1957 Galbraith's recommendation got him promoted to the top point of the reader scale, then £1,650 per annum with the expectation of upward revision.<sup>49</sup> University appointments were made for seven years at a time then, and Chaplais was re-elected in 1962 by means of a letter circulated between the five current electors for their assent. Under a new statute he was re-elected until the retiring age in April 1963, and in February 1964 he was allowed for the first time the privilege of an office in one of the houses in Wellington Square.

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<sup>46</sup>G. W. S. Barrow, 'Kathleen Major 1906–2000', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 115, *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows*, I (2002), 319–29 (p. 322).

<sup>47</sup>J. Conway Davies to PC, 7 March 1954: 'While thanking you most sincerely for the seminars, on behalf of my department, may I congratulate you on your enticing and provocative methods of conducting them, which made all a part of the class, participating fully in discussion and deliberation.'

<sup>48</sup>Kathleen Major to PC, 16 June 1955. The letter also offered to show him the teaching collection of facsimiles, seal casts, and books.

<sup>49</sup>V. H. Galbraith to Kenneth Turpin, Secretary of Faculties, 4 Feb. 1957.

This new appointment brought new duties. Chaplais was required to lecture twice weekly every term and to cover diplomatic, primarily for students of English history, over the whole of the medieval period. He began at once to equip himself. Teaching was the driving factor in his becoming the foremost exponent of English royal diplomatic since W. H. Stevenson (1858–1924).

Anyone who has regard for chronology must be struck by the fact that, only two years after his appointment and with no previous interest in the subject, Chaplais co-authored a distinctly innovative work, *Facsimiles of English Royal Writs to A.D. 1100 presented to Vivian Hunter Galbraith*, edited by T. A. M. Bishop and P. Chaplais, produced by the Clarendon Press in 1957. This collaboration was a turning-point for Chaplais, and the circumstances merit unravelling. Galbraith's studio portrait at the front, a 'select' listing of his publications between 1911 and 1957, and a list of more than three hundred subscribers are the only outward signs that this was a Festschrift. The honorand is quoted briefly at the close of the Introduction, but there are no personal tributes. A preface of formal acknowledgements gives only one hint of the background, paying thanks 'in a special measure to Professor C. R. Cheney and Mr R. W. Southern without whom this book would not have come into existence'. Bishop himself tells us that he had attended Galbraith's classes in diplomatic at Oxford. This was presumably during the academic year 1932–3, when he was employed in the department of western manuscripts in the Bodleian between schoolmastering at Glenalmond and postgraduate work with Eileen Power in London.<sup>50</sup> He had had a year teaching at Balliol, replacing Richard Southern in 1946–7, before going to Cambridge as reader in palaeography and diplomatic.<sup>51</sup> Christopher Cheney had been Reader in Diplomatic in Oxford, teaching briefly before the war and more briefly after it before going as professor to Manchester.<sup>52</sup> He joined Bishop in Cambridge in 1955. Were Southern and Cheney responsible for bringing Bishop and Chaplais together to undertake this slim volume of thirty facsimiles of original documents and seals, with facing transcriptions and

<sup>50</sup> Bishop, *Scriptores Regis*, p. [iii]: 'For the idea of the book, which arose in his classes in Diplomatic, and for the Preface which he has now written to it, I am deeply grateful to Professor V. H. Galbraith.' If my dating is correct, the idea predates the appearance of Richard Drögereit's discussion of tenth-century royal scribes in his dissertation, 'Gab es eine angelsächsische Königskanzlei?', *Archiv für Urkundenforschung*, 13 (1935), 335–436.

<sup>51</sup> D. Ganz, 'Terence Alan Martyn Bishop 1907–1994', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 111 (2001), 397–410 (at p. 400).

<sup>52</sup> C. N. L. Brooke, 'Christopher Robert Cheney 1906–1986', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 73 (1987), 425–46.

commentary, and a highly compressed but brilliant introduction? In Chaplais's case this book would appear to have been undertaken from a standing start.<sup>53</sup> Bishop, on the other hand, had already been many years at work on royal scribes; his book, *Scriptores Regis. Facsimiles to identify and illustrate the hands of royal scribes in original charters of Henry I, Stephen, and Henry II*, was published in 1961. The idea for that book arose in Galbraith's diplomatic classes, he tells us, in an uncharacteristically loquacious paragraph of acknowledgements; it profited 'from a collaboration with Mr Pierre Chaplais, in which the advantage was very much on my side'; Cheney encouraged him to think his work was worth publishing; and Galbraith wrote a foreword, mentioning that 'at least twenty years of patient collecting and reflection have gone into this book'. Bishop was the palaeographer skilled in recognising the work of individual royal scribes, Chaplais already had experience of examining seals with equal attention to detail, but *English Royal Writs* is his first published work on documents such as these and his first to discuss script: none the less, judged against other work by the two authors, this book reads like Chaplais more than Bishop. In attention to accuracy in every detail, they were men of like mind—and different temperament—who must have come to agreement on everything that went into the book. Barbara Harvey, Pierre's friend for fifty years, recalls his saying that, when he began the collaboration, he thought those who had said Bishop was difficult were wrong but over time he changed his mind.

In the few years between *English Royal Writs* and *Scriptores Regis* Chaplais published two fundamental articles. 'The seals and original charters of Henry I', *English Historical Review*, 75 (1960), for the first time made clear the relevance of the seals both to dating and to testing the authenticity of the charters of that king, for which an unsatisfactory calendar had appeared as recently as 1956.<sup>54</sup> More surprisingly, in 'Une charte originale de Guillaume le Conquérant pour l'abbaye de Fécamp', published in a local volume for the thirteen-hundredth anniversary of the

<sup>53</sup>That start may have predated his appointment at Oxford, for Barbara Harvey recalls encountering Chaplais in Westminster Abbey Muniments, at work on the original writs of Edward the Confessor, both authentic and false, some months before their first meeting at the Galbraiths' house in Oxford in Michaelmas 1955.

<sup>54</sup>Charles Johnson and H. A. Cronne, *Regesta regum Anglo-Normannorum ii Regesta Henrici primi 1100–1135* (Oxford, 1956). This book was drafted by Johnson before the war, and the acknowledgements suggest little or no engagement with anyone working in the field thereafter. It was reviewed by PC in *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 35 (1957), 883–5. Chaplais's copy, presently in my keeping, is enriched with photographs of many of the charters that survive as originals.

abbey, Chaplais presented the Norman evidence for the earliest recognised royal scribe of the Anglo-Norman period, who worked for William I and William II.<sup>55</sup> Bishop's *Scriptores Regis* begins with a scribe i, who worked for William II and Henry I, but Bishop and Chaplais discuss this earlier scribe in *English Royal Writs*. Chaplais would refer to him as 'scribe nought' (he might remind those familiar with *Scriptores Regis* that this should be a lower case roman nought). I never put the question to Pierre, 'Why did Bishop not extend *Scriptores Regis* earlier to include this one scribe?' It looks as if this discovery was a case of Chaplais's going one better than his colleague's long-term work.

A third person in the collaboration was the honorand himself. There was meant to have been another volume, *Facsimiles of Norman and Anglo-Norman Charters*, edited by V. H. Galbraith and P. Chaplais, 'à paraître à Oxford en 1962', which is cited by Mme Marie Fauroux in her *Recueil des actes des ducs de Normandie de 911 à 1066* (Caen, 1961: 15), and with plate-numbers in the source-notes of some documents. Her acknowledgements scarcely offer an explanation.<sup>56</sup> And Chaplais's own enthusiastic review archly says, 'One could have wished for illustrations, though it is understood that some of the original charters are to be included in a collection of facsimiles of Norman and Anglo-Norman charters by Professor V. H. Galbraith and Mr P. Chaplais to be published this year.'<sup>57</sup> Prints of the photographs, facing transcripts, and some commentary still exist, but the work was never completed. On one of the envelopes in which the draft is contained Pierre added dates to the title: it was to cover the years 1006 to 1135, embracing, therefore, Norman material from the reign of Henry I.<sup>58</sup> Permission to reproduce was refused for two of the documents, however, and there may have been difficulties arising from the cost of producing sixty plates in a large format. Galbraith's contribution is not now detectable; it may have been inspiration and conversation, but Pierre was

<sup>55</sup>'Une chartre originale de Guillaume le Conquérant pour l'abbaye de Fécamp: la donation de Steyning et de Bury (1085)', in *L'Abbaye bénédictine de Fécamp. Ouvrage scientifique du XIIIe centenaire 658-1958* (Fécamp, 1959), i. 93-104.

<sup>56</sup>'M. Chaplais [...] a bien voulu me signaler plusieurs documents conservés en Grande-Bretagne' (p. 10). Mme Fauroux, daughter of Jacques Le Roy Ladurie (1902-88), briefly 'ministre de l'agriculture et du ravitaillement' in the Vichy government but from the beginning of 1943 active in the Resistance, and sister of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, had studied with Michel de Bouïard in Caen before compiling a catalogue of ducal acts for her thesis, directed by Georges Tessier at the École des chartes in 1950.

<sup>57</sup>*Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 2 (1960-4), 324-5.

<sup>58</sup>This is further alluded to in his review of the *Regesta* volume, published at the end of 1957: 'Nous espérons qu'il nous sera possible un jour de présenter ces originaux sous forme de fac-similes.'

clear that it was a joint undertaking. Another collaboration with Galbraith, to produce a guide to English documents from the earliest times to the thirteenth century, was never more than a good idea.<sup>59</sup> Galbraith is the one direct link between Bishop's independent work on royal scribes, the volume written in collaboration with Chaplais, and Chaplais's own work. The books also share an emphasis on reproducing original documents, which had played no part in Chaplais's earlier work but became central to his mature work in diplomatic.

Within very few years of his appointment at Oxford, Chaplais had transformed himself from an expert on the records of Gascony and more broadly on Anglo-French diplomacy to speak with a fresh authority on Anglo-Norman royal diplomatic. It was in 1960, in acknowledging an off-print of the paper on the Fécamp diploma, that Ganshof wrote: 'En vous lisant, je songeais à ce que mon maître Henri Pirenne nous disait avec insistance quand nous étions étudiants, de l'enrichissement constant et considérable que les travaux de diplomatique constituaient pour l'histoire proprement dite. Vos travaux apportent tous la preuve de la justesse de cette observation.'<sup>60</sup>

During the early 1960s an important paper appeared on the forgeries crafted at Westminster Abbey in the time of abbots Herbert and Gervase, in which Chaplais pointed the finger of accusation at Osbert of Clare.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>59</sup>Under the title *Nouum Formulare Anglicanum* the book first appears as Galbraith's in the Selden Society's Annual Report for 1951 and was mentioned in the first booklet listing publications and current members in 1952. Ten years later the council of the society 'received with pleasure Professor Galbraith's intimation that Dr P. Chaplais [...] would be joint editor of this volume with himself' (Annual Report 1961). In 1963 and 1965 it was advertised to members, now with a short description, which reveals that its coverage was intended to start much earlier than Thomas Madox's *Formulare Anglicanum* (1702):

The object of this book is to plot the historical development of the Charter in England, and more especially the Royal Charter, from the earliest times until the 13th century. For this purpose it will draw on the results obtained by experts in specialised studies, though itself not a book on Palaeography or Diplomatic, but simply a book for historical students. Like Madox it will rely so far as possible on surviving originals rather than copies, chosen either as 'typical' or as indicating individual peculiarities. These charters reflect the habits of thought of the age in which they were written, and this very form, changing and growing across the centuries, is a neglected aspect of historical evolution. For they have been used, in general, merely for the dates and facts they contain. Two or three volumes are planned, one covering the time to the Norman Conquest or thereabouts, the second covering the 12th century.

It did not appear in the 1970 booklet. I never heard Pierre mention this project, but he would refer to Madox in his first lecture to his graduate class each year, 'he took great care to print in his *Formulare* original charters only'.

<sup>60</sup>F.-L. Ganshof to PC, 13 Feb. 1960.

<sup>61</sup>'The original charters of Herbert and Gervase, abbots of Westminster (1121–1157)', in *A Medieval Miscellany for Doris Mary Stenton*, Pipe Roll Society new ser. 36 (1962), 89–110.

Other papers in both French and English came out that resulted from his continuing work on the reigns of the three Edwards, and the first and only volume of *Diplomatic Documents* finally issued from the Stationery Office in 1964. By then Chaplais had undertaken a new investigation.

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His new research bore fruit in a series of articles on Anglo-Saxon royal diplomas, a form of document whose obvious formality but lack of formal authentication made it peculiarly challenging to someone with Chaplais's experience of well-organised administrative offices. By this date he was a master of diplomatic technique, and he was fascinated and frustrated by these diplomas. Frank Barlow (1911–2009), professor of medieval history in Exeter, had published an outspoken footnote, in which he said that 'no diploma is authentic in the technical sense'; rather they were to be judged as literary sources.<sup>62</sup> Such a notion is disconcerting to a diplomatist, but Chaplais found that, discussing Anglo-Saxon royal diplomas, W. H. Stevenson, who 'believed in diplomatic tests', none the less could be found 'arguing not a point of authenticity but one of veracity, as though he had been criticizing a chronicle'.<sup>63</sup> Chaplais's survey of the diplomas in favour of the monastery of Exeter, published in May 1966, belongs with four articles published between October 1965 and October 1969 in the *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, edited by Chaplais's friend, Albert Hollaender, an Austrian in exile. Their importance was recognised by the Society, which reprinted them in a volume to honour Hollaender's long editorship of the journal. These papers differ in a number of ways from his previous work. In particular, he knew that what he had to say here was controversial, and his acknowledgements show that he discussed his ideas, and perhaps his drafts, more widely than was the case with any other part of his work.

Already in 1957, Bishop and Chaplais observed that 'the names of several royal clerks have come down to us', but their role was judged to be unsupported by material evidence. Two examples of writs that may have been penned by others led them to say that 'the conclusion that the writing of at least some of our documents was left to the beneficiary cannot be avoided'. All that was secure was that sealing must have 'taken place in a royal office'.<sup>64</sup> While Bishop had identified dozens of later *scriptores*

<sup>62</sup> F. Barlow, *The English Church 1000–1066* (London, 1963), p. 127 n. 2.

<sup>63</sup> P. Chaplais, 'The authenticity of the royal Anglo-Saxon diplomas of Exeter', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 39 (1966), 1–34 (at p. 2).

<sup>64</sup> *Facsimiles of English Royal Writs*, pp. xii–xiii.

*regis*, Chaplais pursued the idea, supported by earlier Anglo-Saxon diplomas, that the writing of unsealed documents required no royal writing-office. Mary Parsons had long ago shown that the scribes from Canterbury Cathedral Priory had written diplomas.<sup>65</sup> And even earlier, Richard Drögereit, who elaborated on W. H. Stevenson's evidence for royal scribes from the reign of Athelstan, none the less posited a complete breakdown in the 950s.<sup>66</sup> Common features observed by Chaplais in the Exeter diplomas suggested local drafting. He developed this idea across a period from the seventh century to the eleventh. In the first of these papers he concluded that 'the diplomas of all the Anglo-Saxon kings were drawn up by ecclesiastics', arguing that in particular instances bishops could be shown to have composed the wording, and that they recruited scribes 'from among the personnel of near-by monastic communities'.<sup>67</sup> In the second he asserted that, despite the appearance of William the Conqueror's taking over a chancery from Edward the Confessor, 'there is not a shred of evidence that at any time between the seventh and the eleventh century Anglo-Saxon diplomas were drafted or written in what might be called, even loosely, a royal secretariat'.<sup>68</sup> The sealed writ, surviving in numerous examples from Edward's reign, was a different matter, but, rather than dealing with its emergence, he avoided the crucial point and sought instead to question the authenticity of the earliest writs, which survive only as copies. The first paper extrapolates from evidence of the tenth century, the second appears concerned to refute arguments to push the history of the writ back by a century from the reign of Aethelred II to that of Alfred. Neither paper makes a clear case that there never was an Anglo-Saxon royal chancery, and there is a reluctance to recognise change over time. The remaining papers in the series concerned very early material, ending with what was for Chaplais a remarkably speculative paper on the seventh

<sup>65</sup> Mary Prescott Parsons (1885–1971), 'Some scribal memoranda for Anglo-Saxon charters of the 8th and 9th centuries', *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Instituts für Geschichtsforschung*, Erg. Bd. 14 (1939), pp. 13–32.

<sup>66</sup> W. H. Stevenson, 'An Old English charter of William the Conqueror in favour of St Martin's-le-Grand, London, AD 1068', *English Historical Review*, 11 (1896), 731–44; R. Drögereit (1908–77), 'Gab es eine angelsächsische Königskanzlei?' *Archiv für Urkundenforschung*, 13 (1935), 335–436. Drögereit gave an offprint to Galbraith, from whom it passed to Chaplais; it is now in Simon Keynes's possession.

<sup>67</sup> 'The origin and authenticity of the royal Anglo-Saxon diploma', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 3 (no. 2, Oct. 1965), 48–61 (quotations from pp. 61 and 59).

<sup>68</sup> 'The Anglo-Saxon chancery: from the diploma to the writ', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 3 (no. 4, Oct. 1966), 160–76.

century.<sup>69</sup> For a decade these papers held a defiant place in the field, confronting the prevailing suppositions of senior Anglo-Saxonists such as Stenton, Harmer, and Whitelock. Frank Stenton and Florence Harmer died in 1967, and Dorothy Whitelock's reactions were not committed to paper. Nicholas Brooks called these articles 'revolutionary', 'most revolutionary' for the tenth and eleventh centuries: 'No other scholar has ranged so widely over the entire field of pre-Conquest charters as Dr Chaplais,' he wrote, 'but his judgements may on occasion be too severe.' Brooks would later allow that Chaplais's view 'had become the prevailing interpretation', but this was for want of open challenge.<sup>70</sup> It was not until the late 1970s that the case for an Anglo-Saxon royal chancery was restated by Simon Keynes.<sup>71</sup> The study of Anglo-Saxon charters had taken a leap forward, but there was a counter-revolution.

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Following the completion of this series of papers in 1969 the obvious phasing in Chaplais's published work comes to an end.

One distinctive book followed in 1971, very much the combined product of his background in the Public Record Office and his teaching. This was *English Royal Documents 1199–1461*, a slim volume of facsimiles of original documents and seals, with facing transcriptions and commentary, and a highly compressed but brilliant introduction. It illustrates the products, both internal and external, of the chancery in the later middle ages. Galbraith had come to the notice of Sir Henry Maxwell-Lyte (1848–1940) in the Record Office because of his skill in finding the references for documents deployed in the great man's *Historical Notes on the Use of the Great Seal of England* (London, 1926), and, as Reader in Diplomatic, his lectures included courses on the great seal and the smaller chancery seals. Chaplais continued that teaching tradition, accumulating photographs of documents for the purpose. This book for the first time made visible to those beyond his classroom some of the intricacies behind the increasing bureaucratisation of the seals. Hitherto the only available reproductions,

<sup>69</sup>'Some early Anglo-Saxon diplomas on single sheets: originals or copies?', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 3 (no. 7, April 1968), 315–36; 'Who introduced charters into England? The case for Augustine', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 3 (no. 10, Oct. 1969), 526–42.

<sup>70</sup>N. P. Brooks, 'Anglo-Saxon charters: the work of the last twenty years', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3 (1974), 211–33 (at pp. 215, 218, 220); reprinted in his *Anglo-Saxon Myths. State and Church 400–1066* (London, 2000), pp. 181–202, with a postscript, 'Anglo-Saxon charters, 1973–1998', pp. 202–15, in which he discusses the ensuing debate (quotation from p. 208).

<sup>71</sup>Simon Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'the Unready' 978–1016* (Cambridge, 1980).



designed to allow would-be readers to become familiar with the handwriting of the records, had been dominated by enrolments. Chaplais concentrated on original documents, including warrants addressed from one tier of bureaucracy to another, each with its own conventions. Even cancelled letters, retained in the mass of chancery files (C202), are retrieved (pl. 6a, 13b). Some of the plates were designed to illustrate the different methods of sealing used with the great seal, the privy seal, and the signet. Here Chaplais adopted the terminology of Jenkinson, who had described the several methods of attachment without relating them to the circumstances of their use. In his paper on Jenkinson's contribution, Chaplais justified the importance of such observation with an illustration all his own, taking three grades of diplomatic document, all sealed with the great seal, whose hierarchy was defined by the method of attachment and the colour of the wax.<sup>72</sup> In the book he brings to visible life the administration of late medieval England, thereby enlightening the reader needing to study great works such as Maxwell-Lyte's own or Tout's *Chapters on the Administrative History of England*. Its concision has never detracted from its value, but it is an aid to study, the fruit of much experience, rather than the working out of an argument from the records. One reviewer, recognising that the volume 'represents a major feat of exposition and compression', wished the author had expounded the link between changes of practice and the circumstances in which they occurred.<sup>73</sup> To do so, in line with Chaplais's standards of evidence, would have risked turning a useful aid to study into another vast enterprise that could not have been finished. The same reviewer, all unaware, picked up the one seemingly tendentious statement in the book: 'It does not seem wise to say without qualification (p. 45) that when Edward II acquired a new personal seal in 1312, the secret seal, this was done in order to replace the privy seal which he no longer controlled. The privy seal,' says Bertie Wilkinson, a student of Tout's, 'did not really escape from the king's control, though it did cease to be his personal seal.' He has read the remark in terms of the progressive distancing of the seals from the king's person, but Chaplais had in mind the precise historical circumstances in which Edward II's enemies sought to block his use of the privy seal. Tout himself had worked out the date of

<sup>72</sup> Jenkinson, *Guide to Seals in the Public Record Office*, 14–21; Chaplais, 'The study of palaeography and sigillography in England: Sir Hilary Jenkinson's contribution' p. 48 (see above, n. 31).

<sup>73</sup> Bertie Wilkinson (1898–1981), *Speculum*, 48 (1973), 122–3. There is a brief memoir of him in *Speculum*, 57 (1982), 708–10.

introduction of the secret seal but not the explanation for it.<sup>74</sup> Chaplais would devote a book to exploring the political importance of control of the seals in this period, but that was not written until more than twenty years later.

After 1971 Chaplais's publications became a mixture of dealing with work backlogged from years ago and, from time to time, bringing out an article to set out some discovery or interpretation first arrived at, one suspects, many years before. We have mentioned *English Medieval Diplomatic Practice* above. And in 1968 Chaplais had signed a contract with Ernest Benn Ltd for a book in their proposed series 'Contours of European History'. He treated this as an opportunity at last to publish his thesis, proposing the title *Royal Sovereignty in English Gascony 1259–1453* and composing a fresh synopsis. No more was done, and the plan was firmly dropped in 1974. There were essays contributed to volumes in honour of his predecessor in office, Kathleen Major (1971), his colleague May McKisack (1971), his old friend Édouard Perroy (1973), and his counsellor on all things to do with Anglo-Saxon script, Neil Ker (1978). The only other articles he published between 1970 and 1985, 'Master John Branketre and the office of notary in chancery, 1355–1375' (1971), and 'Henry II's reissue of the canons of the council of Lillebonne of Whitsun 1080' (1973), both for the Society of Archivists, may have come to fruition on their own. While the former was in press, Chaplais appears to have failed to satisfy an earnest request from Albert Hollaender that, 'as an outstanding contributor and dear friend', he find something for the jubilee issue of the *Journal of the Society of Archivists*.<sup>75</sup> Nothing was forthcoming on this occasion.

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Over the previous twenty years, Chaplais had gradually progressed from an exile in search of a role to a member of the English academic establishment. His professional activities were never taken lightly. Elected to the

<sup>74</sup>T. F. Tout, *Chapters in the Administrative History of Mediaeval England* (Manchester, 1920–33), ii, 286–90, v, 164–70.

<sup>75</sup>A. E. J. Hollaender to PC, 18 Dec. 1970. Offprints of John de Branketre were despatched with a letter, 20 April 1971, containing a reminder, 'Have you thought about a subject for your contribution to the *Journal* "festschrift" next April??? I very much hope that *some* kind of token from you will, as on so many occasions in the past, adorn our *Journal*.' On 23 April 1971 Hollaender acknowledged Pierre's instant reply, proposing a paper on the diplomatic activities of the protonotary in chancery from medieval to modern times, and stressed the need to have the typescript by 1 October 1971.

Royal Historical Society in 1953, he became, with what seems precipitate haste, literary director in succession to Denys Hay in 1958.<sup>76</sup> His demand for accuracy extended to this role. Barbara Harvey tells how he insisted on meeting her in the muniments at Westminster Abbey, where he took it as part of his editorial duty to check her transcriptions for the Camden series volume, *Documents illustrating the rule of Walter de Wenlok, Abbot of Westminster, 1283–1307*, Camden 4th ser. 2 (1965). One such meeting was sufficient in this case. He was reputed even to verify the footnotes of the *Transactions*, whatever period of history was concerned. And on his watch appeared the second edition of the indispensable *Handbook of British Chronology*: although not so challenging as the first edition, the revision was a complex undertaking. Hay, knowing what the task involved, wrote, ‘My heart bleeds for you when I think of the *Handbook of British Chronology*.’<sup>77</sup> And Christopher Cheney, though sympathising with the trouble it caused, continued to send corrections to the last possible moment.<sup>78</sup> Pierre would surely have done the same. When he resigned as literary director in 1964, it took two to replace him. One of them was Geoffrey Barrow, who had taken Kathleen Major’s course in Oxford and joined the Council in 1963. He reports how immensely thorough Pierre was in handing over the literary director’s job to two tiros.<sup>79</sup>

Later in his career he was an influential member of the joint committee formed by the Royal Historical Society and the British Academy to direct a new edition of all Anglo-Saxon charters. In 1965 he had observed that W. H. Stevenson in 1895 and Sir Frank Stenton in 1955 had both identified the want of a really serviceable edition as an obstacle to the understanding of such documents: ‘Without a critical and exhaustive edition of the Anglo-Saxon diplomas, no definitive study of their diplomatic can be contemplated.’<sup>80</sup> This was contested in early discussions during

<sup>76</sup>PC kept the invitation from the president, Dom David Knowles, 27 March 1958. His official file in the university archives shows that he was permitted to receive an annual honorarium of £200 from the Society without adjustment to his salary. Denys Hay (1915–94) had studied with Galbraith in Oxford, and in 1958 he joined Goronwy Edwards as editor of the *English Historical Review*.

<sup>77</sup>Denys Hay to PC, 25 Jan. 1961.

<sup>78</sup>C. R. Cheney to PC, 28 Feb. 1960: ‘I am sorry that the Committee harrassed you about the HBC—very unfairly and unnecessarily, I thought, for you cannot do all the editorial work which the editors have failed to do: there would be no end.’ On 8 Dec. 1960, Cheney asked to amend the date when Roger Northburgh was provided to the see of Lichfield.

<sup>79</sup>G. W. S. Barrow, 30 May 2007.

<sup>80</sup>Chaplais, ‘The origin and authenticity of the royal Anglo-Saxon diploma’, *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 3 (1965–9), 49, citing Stevenson, *The Crawford Collection of Early Charters and Documents* (Oxford, 1895), p. viii, and F. M. Stenton, *The Latin Charters of the Anglo-Saxon Period* (Oxford, 1955), p. 9.

1964–5, but Harmer and Whitelock were outvoted, and Chaplais's view held sway.<sup>81</sup> The committee was formed in 1966; its membership comprised V. H. Galbraith, Francis Wormald, C. R. Cheney (the first chairman), Neil Ker, G. W. S. Barrow, Pierre Chaplais, and P. H. Sawyer (secretary until 1982). It is not hard to see that the driving force for the plan of the series was Chaplais himself. He thought diplomas had to be examined in their archival context, not only as the most appropriate means of understanding the substantive business but also as a necessary means of controlling the evidence for local drafting. By this date Peter Sawyer's *Anglo-Saxon Charters. An Annotated List and Bibliography* was in press with the Royal Historical Society—it appeared in 1968—and Sawyer undertook to edit the charters from the archive of Burton Abbey. Other editors were recruited, but progress was slow. The desire to see a new edition to the highest standards cannot of itself call such a thing into existence. By the time Pierre resigned from the committee in 1985 only Geoffrey Barrow remained active from the original membership and only two volumes had been published.

In 1975 Chaplais joined the Board of Studies in Palaeography, which had existed in the University of London since 1936.<sup>82</sup> This committee looked out for the concerns of the discipline nationally. He served for many years as a member of Council of the Pipe Roll Society, from 1977 until 1997; he resigned shortly before its first meeting held at Kew rather than at Chancery Lane.<sup>83</sup> The project to collect and edit English Episcopal Acta for the period before episcopal registers was launched by Christopher Cheney in 1973. The first volumes appeared in 1980 and 1986, and Pierre came on to the committee in 1984, serving until 1998.

On 30 April 1970 he was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. Thirty years later he gave to the Society his collection of more than three hundred seals, signet rings, and ancient engraved gemstones.<sup>84</sup> The discovery of Richard I's signet ring delighted him.<sup>85</sup> The Commission internationale

<sup>81</sup> S. D. Keynes, 'Anglo-Saxon charters: lost and found', in J. Barrow and A. Wareham (eds.), *Myth, Rulership, Church, and Charters: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Brooks* (Aldershot, 2008), pp. 45–66 (at pp. 46–7), records the voting for and against the proposed new edition.

<sup>82</sup> T. J. Brown to PC, 5 March 1975. Brown mentions this board in his memoir, 'Francis Wormald 1904–1972', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 61 (1975), 523–60 (at pp. 533–4).

<sup>83</sup> Barbara Dodwell to PC, 18 Feb. 1977; Paul Brand, 20 Dec. 2011.

<sup>84</sup> 'Anniversary Address 2001', *Antiquaries Journal*, 81 (2001), 1–14 (at p. 6): 'a collection of no fewer than 358 seals, generously given by our Fellow, Pierre Chaplais. They range from Mesopotamian specimens of the fifth millennium before Christ to a Japanese example later than the last War.'

<sup>85</sup> P. E. Lasko, 'The signet ring of King Richard I of England', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 2 (1960–64), 333–5. Dame Joan Evans gave the ring to the British Museum.

de diplomatique was formally established in 1970, led by Giulio Batelli (1904–2005), Robert-Henri Bautier (1922–2010), and Carlrichard Brühl (1925–97). Pierre Chaplais was a foundation member. Geoffrey Barrow accompanied him to Madrid in 1978 and Rome in 1979 for the meetings of the Commission: ‘Pierre was absolutely splendid, because he refused point-blank to allow Bautier to dominate, effectively blocking our chairman’s proposal that all proceedings should be in French.’<sup>86</sup> He became a Fellow of the British Academy in 1973 and in 1979 he was appointed a Corresponding Fellow of the Medieval Academy of America, in the same year as Bautier.

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Michael Jones and Malcolm Vale opened the volume of essays presented to Chaplais in 1989 with these words:

For over thirty years the classes held by Pierre Chaplais on diplomatic and palaeography served as the main introduction to research at Oxford for most post-graduates pursuing medieval history. [ . . . ] Whether in the formal surroundings of the History Faculty Library or in private conversation, he has shown remarkable patience and unflagging encouragement for the endeavours of countless beginners. His generosity with his time, not simply to those he was officially supervising, but for all those who brought their problems to him, has been prodigious.

The role of the Reader in Diplomatic has always been to inculcate the skills necessary for engagement with primary sources at the parchment face. The focus was very much on English documents and in particular on the public records. Pierre worked in tandem with successive readers in palaeography, N. R. Ker (who retired in 1968) and William Urry (who died in post in 1981 without replacement). They relied on a collection of books and reproductions first brought together for this purpose when Reginald Lane Poole was in post. Miss Major had further built up the collection, housed at first with the Maitland Library in Room 12 of the Examination Schools, moved in 1957 to a new History Faculty Library in Merton Street, and from 1975 in the Powicke Room of the History Faculty in Broad Street, where Pierre was able for the first time to have an office convenient for his teaching and his college. The coming of the xerox machine transformed his work, making it possible for the students to take away copies of the reproductions of original manuscripts that formed the

<sup>86</sup>G. W. S. Barrow, 30 May 2007.

backbone of his teaching. In the second half of his time as Reader research yielded to teaching, and for many of his students there are happy memories of a very large table covered with books, photos, and xeroxes, searching for the perfect illustration of his point. Marie Therese Flanagan writes, 'He had such a light touch that he made diplomatic seem accessible and possible and was always very positive and encouraging. It was also fun.' In the same vein, Emilie Amt wrote that 'Those classes are among my fondest memories of Oxford. He was an unfailingly generous teacher and a lovely person.' It is a token of how much these classes meant to Pierre that he kept the sheets of paper passed round at the first class of each year for his students to sign in with a brief indication of their topics, retaining them even after he gave up his filing cabinets upon retirement. Four years after that Pierre took on one last doctoral candidate, working on one of his old projects, the royal Anglo-Saxon diplomas of Exeter: Charles Insley looks back on their fortnightly sessions in the Powicke Room, 'those meetings were a real voyage of discovery, taking me into the realms of Papal, Ottonian, and Carolingian diplomatic', all of them topics on which Pierre rarely taught and never published. There was always more to his knowledge than one was likely to find in the ordinary course of business. He was often in Duke Humfrey, then the reading room for manuscripts and early printed books as well as home to the antiquarian and topographical collections. The rustle of his 'mac' presaged a greeting, a warm smile, an inquiry about whatever manuscript was on one's desk, and the risk of a long discussion. His readiness to help was unlimited. As Cliff Davies has written, 'Anybody consulting him on, for instance, some small problem in medieval Latin finds himself spending the whole morning going over the document in all its ramifications and is subject thereafter to frequent inquiries about the progress of that piece of research.'

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After the important paper in Neil Ker's *Festschrift* in 1978, much time was taken up with finally seeing into press the two volumes of *English Medieval Diplomatic Practice*, which appeared in 1982. Three late papers followed, which highlight the difference between the younger and the older Chaplais. He was accustomed to pursuing his own investigation, having regard only for the documents and not for what other historians may have thought. He knew that his views on Anglo-Saxon charters were controversial, but he was unsettled to find his conclusion that there was never an Anglo-Saxon royal chancery called into question. Pierre could

not reconsider his position in the light of new arguments. He used the opportunity of a volume in honour of his friend Ralph Davis (1918–91) to respond with ‘The royal Anglo-Saxon “chancery” revisited’, published in 1985. ‘If we are to find an answer at all to the question of the existence or otherwise of a royal chancery in the tenth century, we must turn once again to the documents which the office is supposed to have produced, that is to say the diplomas’: the argument, however, is as much external as internal.<sup>87</sup> He estimated the time it would take to write the diplomas resulting from a *witenagemot* three or four times a year and concluded that a royal chancery would have work for barely one month in the year; ‘Anglo-Saxon kings did not find it necessary or economic to set up a royal chancery in order to deal with Latin charters.’ Some diplomas provide internal indications that they were composed by bishops, and he drew the inference that such men could not write the diplomas during the course of the meeting. The two arguments are almost inconsistent, but he had a conviction that there was no royal writing office. If bishops did some drafting, so, he thought, did monastic scribes, and that produced drafting features characteristic of their own particular house. Hence the importance he attached to approaching diplomas by archive. This thinking fed into another late paper on the writing of Great Domesday Book. Well aware of Galbraith’s work on this subject, and stimulated by recent palaeographical papers from Michael Gullick, Alexander Rumble, and Teresa Webber, he constructed a persuasive argument that William of Saint-Calais, bishop of Durham, was ‘the man behind the Survey’. In arguing this case, two new perspectives emerge in relation to his earlier Anglo-Norman work. He now thinks that the earliest identified scribe working for William I and William II was the *only* scribe working for the king—something that can surely be disproved from witness lists.<sup>88</sup> And in the case of the Pyrford writ for Westminster Abbey, witnessed by Bishop William and dated ‘after the survey of all England’, he now sees in the hand and sealing signs that the scribe worked for the bishop rather than the king.<sup>89</sup> In this case he is probably correct, a judgement endorsed by Michael Gullick, but that does not go against the existence of a royal chancery. In almost every respect this

<sup>87</sup> ‘The royal Anglo-Saxon “chancery” revisited’, in *Studies in Mediaeval History presented to R. H. C. Davis* (London, 1985), pp. 41–51.

<sup>88</sup> ‘William of Saint-Calais and the Domesday Survey’, in J. C. Holt (ed.), *Domesday Studies* (Woodbridge, 1987), pp. 65–77 (at p. 71). He dated to *c.*1095 the increase in the number of royal scribes from one to two. Yet the Bath diploma, written by the one recognised scribe, names eleven members of the chapel royal alongside the chancellor.

<sup>89</sup> ‘Consistent with what one would expect from a Durham scribe’ (*ibid.*, p. 76).

paper shows Chaplais's mind as sharp as ever and applied to material on which he had never before published. But in these two points one sees an *idée fixe* peep through. His third late paper, 'The spelling of Christ's name in medieval Anglo-Latin: *Christus* or *Cristus*?', published with the ever friendly Society of Archivists, was very much the working out of another *idée fixe*. And it was disagreement over this that saw him resign from the Anglo-Saxon Charters Committee in 1985.

He would turn back to work that had engaged him long years before. King Edward II used his privy seal to promote and reward his close friend Piers Gaveston, and warrants under the privy seal refer to him by the title Earl of Cornwall in 1308. This was a rather special earldom with powers and resources that made the Crown ordinarily keep it in royal hands. Edward II's Council, with whom he was at loggerheads, controlled the great seal, and acts drafted in Gaveston's favour consistently deny him the title of Earl of Cornwall.<sup>90</sup> Hardly anyone but Chaplais would have handled the actual documents, none would so consistently have sought out the warrants behind the letters patent, but Chaplais had already worked closely on the privy seal. The contrast set in train a line of thinking about Edward II, Gaveston, and what Conway-Davies called the baronial opposition.<sup>91</sup> Chaplais saw the working out of that opposition through competition for the control of the seals; when Council controlled the great seal, the king used his privy seal; his losing control of that, after Gaveston's death, led to the use instead of his secret seal or signet, emerging in 1312. In the precise wording of the documentary evidence Chaplais found grounds for thinking that the king and Gaveston had adopted one another as brothers. This came out as a short book in 1994, and its publication attracted more attention than Chaplais was used to, because it was seen as arguing against those who saw them as gay lovers. It was the last substantial work he was able to complete.

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When Pierre took up his appointment in Michaelmas 1955, he stayed with the Galbraiths at 1 Garford Road for several days each week until a house was found for Doreen and the boys to move into Oxford.

<sup>90</sup> *Piers Gaveston: Edward II's Adoptive Brother* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 45–9.

<sup>91</sup> J. Conway-Davies, *The Baronial Opposition to Edward II, its Character and Policy. A study in administrative history* (Cambridge, 1918), pp. 158–63, intent on the bureaucratic record, missed the circumstances and reasons for the emergence of the secret seal.



Oxford cannot have been an easy place for him. The memory still rankled forty and fifty years later how during that first term he was persistently chaffed by the Clerk of the Schools, not in the friendliest way, about the fact that he could not be properly gowned for his classes until Congregation passed the decree to award him an MA; the *Gazette* reveals that this did not happen until 29 November. Although as reader Pierre held a university office, there was no obligation on any college to offer him a fellowship, and for nine years none did. There were early contacts with Balliol, where the medieval history tutor, R. W. Southern, was already well known to Pierre. At the end of 1957 Pierre was asked if he would take on a share of teaching at Balliol—on what terms is unrecorded—but he declined, saying that he had already as much work as he could handle in fulfilling his obligations in diplomatic.<sup>92</sup> It was through Lawrence Stone (1919–99), then history tutor at Wadham, that Pierre was invited to become a member of common room there. Galbraith's prompting has been suspected, but Pierre would deny that Stone was targeted because his wife Jeanne was the daughter of the French historian Robert Fawtier.<sup>93</sup> It was only in 1964 that he was made a fellow as part of a push to absorb such people into the college system.

The isolation was more acute for Doreen, an intelligent person confined to a well-ordered domestic life. The collegiate university tended to exclude wives, and the wife of someone who was not a college fellow was doubly excluded. Jeanne Stone, as one of her few contacts with the university world, was unintentionally a problem: not an academic but formidable in her own way, she had an air of rather loudly disapproving of everything around her. And there was a tendency even away from high tables for conversation to be competitive. In 1963 the family moved away from Oxford to settle at Wintles Farm House, 36 Mill Street, Eynsham, where Doreen was able to establish her own sense of community and Pierre set about cultivating his first Oxfordshire vines.<sup>94</sup> His rate of work

<sup>92</sup>Inferred from a letter from the Master of Balliol, Sir David Lindsay Keir, 12 Dec. 1957, who acknowledges Pierre's declining of the offer.

<sup>93</sup>Fawtier had spent seven years in Manchester, employed by the John Rylands Library and also lecturing on French history and French institutions at the university (Hubert, 476). Between January 1919 and February 1921 Galbraith was employed as a temporary lecturer at Manchester, but he appears to have spent most of the time on research in London (R. W. Southern, 'Vivian Hunter Galbraith 1889–1976', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 64 (1978), 397–425, at pp. 404–5). I have not been able to establish whether they got to know one another in England.

<sup>94</sup>Pierre's oenological interests were entirely focused on French wine, and there was presumably some legacy of his early background in his lasting fondness for the unfashionable *gros plant du pays nantais*.

remained demanding, however, and Doreen would say that if Pierre did not resume work after supper she knew there was something wrong. In his fifties the self-imposed pressure slackened, and gardening became an obsession. In Wadham he was for many years keeper of the gardens, a role in which he cheerfully battled with Renée Hampshire, wife of the warden. His ambition to plant trees eventually outgrew the available space, and in 1978 Pierre and Doreen left Eynsham and its thundering gravel lorries for an exposed location between Bampton and Lew. Here he had all the land he needed, and much effort went into starting and managing his plantation. Trouble with his eyes soon began to impinge on rural life as well as on scholarship. A detached retina, treated too late, was the beginning of an increasing impairment of his vision. It soon meant an end to the yellow Triumph Spitfire that he had so enjoyed driving, and he became dependent on Doreen's driving him to catch a bus to Oxford and picking him up on the return. The isolation at Lew did not suit her. After a serious illness there in 1987—it was around the time of Pierre's retirement dinner in June—she would spend extended periods away. Her father Percy Middlemast had been a bank clerk on Tyneside, and she came to inherit a house of her own in Whitley Bay, where she could cultivate her own life in friendly surroundings.

Retirement in 1987 took away the office in the history faculty library and forced a large-scale weeding of his personal files. It put an end to the teaching that had mattered so much to him. But the cultivation of his land at Lew had been planned as a fresh interest for him, and there was still writing to do. After the completion of *Piers Gaveston*, however, he found it increasingly difficult to bring other planned work to publication, and he was increasingly troubled by his failing sight. Visits to Oxford became rare. Doreen's last illness kept him at her side, and she died on 2 July 2000, a few days before Pierre himself turned eighty. He lived on, mostly alone, at Lew for a further six years. Short-term memory loss became a concern at the end, and it was the side-effects of medication for this that put him in hospital. He died within a few days on 26 November 2006.

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With no visible training Pierre had become the best reader and interpreter of difficult and damaged medieval documents. He had studied so much unpublished material, and in depth, that his perception of the writing of the king's letters and the uses of his seal was surely closer to a real understanding of the documents in context than anyone, before or since, has

achieved. A reviewer of Pierre's last book spoke of 'the exploration of a field of inquiry into which the writer has unique insight that transcends everything that has previously been written on a particular subject'.<sup>95</sup> His work on the procedures of diplomacy was an edifice built on primary evidence and first principles. He engaged with the public records, and the administration that created them, at a level that surpassed all official expectations. His work on English royal charters and seals was entirely self-generated and put to shame almost all earlier work in the field. Method in England had not been much regarded, and Pierre appeared to many as a rigorously trained Chartiste, but he was not at all.<sup>96</sup> In his late twenties he had discovered in himself a natural ability to deal with difficult documents and he worked hard to cultivate it. The trained mind, he would say, reads what the eye does not see.<sup>97</sup> Finding the right document and appraising it with a trained eye and mind would, he thought, be sure to unlock a historical problem.

He showed little or no interest in historical argument or historiography. What historians may have thought about a problem was always subordinate to his own power to open up the documentary evidence. Historians of an earlier generation were neither venerated nor decried. In his own time, personal principles matter more than the to and fro of debate. He thought it discourteous to say that someone's opinions were mistaken, even when it was necessary for the progress of the discipline. Was this perhaps a throwback to the ways of French academic life in the 1930s? Or a reflection of his sense of obligation to those who had helped him in the early stages of his career? Galbraith revelled in debate and would not have inculcated such a principle of respect for seniority, right or wrong. Yet so adamant was Pierre about this that it comes as a real surprise to find in his own 1962 essay on the work of Hilary Jenkinson a whole series of mildly worded but cumulative negatives.<sup>98</sup> As he grew into

<sup>95</sup> N. C. Vincent, *Journal of British Studies*, 44 (2005), 922–3.

<sup>96</sup> Even Kathleen Major fell into error on this point, 'The teaching and study of diplomatic in England', *Archives*, 8 (1967–8), 114–18 (at p. 117).

<sup>97</sup> For example, A. J. Robertson, *Anglo-Saxon Charters* (Cambridge, 1956), p. 382, refers to the 'series of capital letters, cut in half', on the edge of a *placitum* in Old English (S 1454), without offering an interpretation; from the tops of the letters, Chaplais read it, realising that the letters of the expected word, *CIROGRAFUM*, alternated with other letters, so as to read, when taken in two sequences, 'Cirografum pletum est' (S. D. Keynes, 'Royal government and the written word in late Anglo-Saxon England', in R. D. McKitterick (ed.), *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 226–57, at p. 250 n. 94; PC to Simon Keynes, 19 Sept. 1984).

<sup>98</sup> 'Some errors of detail could not be avoided in pioneer work' (p. 44), 'here I fear I must disagree with the master' (p. 45), 'it must be admitted with regret' (p. 46), 'Jenkinson's choice of technical terms was not entirely satisfactory' (p. 49).

a senior status himself, he did not like to see any criticism by the young of their elders. None the less, he had his views on distinguished historians who were satisfied without understanding, or the ambition to understand, the documentary evidence in its physical reality. Nor did he approve of putting forward ideas to catch the attention of the reader rather than to reflect the evidence. His own judgements were always arrived at only after careful consideration, and his approach was always thorough. A phrase one often heard from Pierre was that someone ‘worked too fast’.<sup>99</sup> This might cover anything from casual error to a deeper neglect of basic research. A roll of his eyes, however, and a shake of his head were as near as he was likely to come to revealing what he actually thought.

Martin Brett relates a telling story about an occasion when Pierre did not see the joke:

I was reading the miracles of one of the Kentish princess-saints, and laughed out loud in Bodley. Pierre was passing, and hurried over to see what provoked it, so I pointed to the first line of the story: ‘It happened one day that the archbishop of Canterbury was burning some old and useless charters . . .’.<sup>100</sup> Pierre’s face set in stone, and he left me abruptly, saying over his shoulder: ‘Martin, that is not remotely funny’. I vividly recall Pierre’s stumping off down to Selden End and my wondering whether I had forfeited his good opinion for ever.

The destruction of charters, even in a twelfth-century story intended to signal saintly approval for the one that survived the flames—no doubt a recent forgery—was no laughing matter. More than that, Brett’s apprehension that he had irrevocably forfeited Pierre’s opinion was not without some foundation. It was possible to fall from grace. There was a stubbornness, an obstinacy, about Pierre, more noticeable towards the end of his career than earlier. Those who knew him over very many years have thought it must have been there all along, helping him to survive the concentration

<sup>99</sup> One would not expect him to say such a thing in print, but I find the phrase used in citing Mme Schnerb-Lièvre: ‘she admitted that Colville had worked too fast’ (Chaplais, ‘Jean Le Fèvre’, 203, referring to Schnerb-Lièvre, *Le Songe du vergier*, vol. i, p. lxxxv–lxxxvi, ‘mais ici, Colville veut aller trop vite’, and a half-dozen errors are mentioned).

<sup>100</sup> The text about the miraculous survival of one particular charter from the flames can be read in the Miracles of St Eadburga in Hereford Cathedral, MS P. VII. 6 (saec. XII<sup>med</sup>), fol. 190r: ‘Tempore quodam contigit beate Dorobernensis ecclesie archiepiscopum quam plures habere superuacuas et inutiles terrarum cartulas, quas in unum colligens ut igne illas deleteret, arripuit ignorans cum prefatis cartulis etiam cartulam circumcingentem beate Edburge territorium, eamque simul cum aliis cuidam de astantibus ad comburendum dedit. Qui cum implere quod sibi fuerat imperatum studuisset, nullo pacto beate uirginis cartula in ignis calore potuit consumi, reliquis in momento ad fauillam usque redactis. Ac ille reuersus relicta adhuc in incendio cartula, nuntiauit mirabile factum pontifici.’ The occasion would have occurred around 1963, when the manuscript may have been temporarily deposited in the Bodleian.

camp, driving him to long hours of toiling through documents with a will to find the answer to his question. Once he had made up his mind on any point, never lightly or hastily done, he was unlikely to change it. The word austere has come up several times. The outward Pierre was not at all austere, but his scholarship was austere, and it is hard to believe that the inner man was not more truly reflected in his scholarship than in his entertaining presence.

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*Note.* Pierre Chaplais left no memoranda with the Academy, but Cliff Davies drew on conversations with him for his account of Pierre's early life. Oxford University Archives hold Pierre's *curriculum vitae* and other papers concerning his appointment in Oxford. Such letters as Pierre kept and other personal papers, including his own copy of his Ph.D. thesis, are held by Wadham College archives. I am grateful to those who have shared their memories of Pierre or otherwise provided information, and in particular Paul Chaplais, Cliff Davies, Barbara Harvey, Emilie Amt, Geoffrey Barrow, Julia Barrow, Paul Brand, Martin Brett, Marie Therese Flanagan, Jean-Philippe Genet, Michael Gullick, William Hodges, Charles Insley, Michael Jones, Mary Moore, Victor Tunkel.