

Hilaire Puibusque OSB (1737-89) as Archivist and Correspondent of the *Cabinet des Chartes*

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Modern research into the medieval past owes a great deal to the efforts of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century researchers. Labouring in secular and especially ecclesiastical archives, they transcribed, inventoried, and subsequently also disseminated the contents of original documents, many of which were later confiscated, dispersed, or destroyed during the revolutionary period. Arguably the most ambitious of these efforts was coordinated by the Cabinet des Chartes, an office specially created for this purpose by the government. Here, over the course of less than three decades (1762-90), the staff assembled an extraordinary collection of tens of thousands of copies of charters pertaining to the history of France.² Nearly two thousand volumes full of charter copies, letters, and working papers in the Collection Moreau of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris bear witness to the enormous scope of the project, the Cabinet's origins, and its internal organization. They also reveal the challenges faced by director Jacob-Nicolas Moreau (1717-1803) in realizing the analogue precursor of the modern full-text database that was the Dépôt des Chartes.³ By far the greatest of these challenges was the Cabinet's underfunding, which meant it was impossible to employ salaried clerks to travel the country, visiting archives and copying interesting documents.⁴ In response, Moreau built a vast network of approximately one hundred unpaid correspondents. Besides enlisting a number of lay individuals, his solution involved religious congregations, calling on them to submit the names of members who were willing and able to carry out the work. While the Benedictine Congregation of Saint-Maur offered crucial support in the Cabinet's first two decades, that of Saint-Vanne and Saint-Hydelphie would be by far its most energetic ally in its final years.⁵ On 13 March 1787

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² D. GEMBICKI, 'Das Dépôt des chartes (1762-1790). Ein historisches Forschungszentrum', in K. HAMMER and J. VOSS eds., *Historische Forschung im 18. Jahrhundert. Organization, Zielsetzung, Ergebnisse* (Bonn 1976), 207-35; ID., *Histoire et politique à la fin de l'Ancien Régime: Jacob-Nicolas Moreau (1717-1803)* (Paris 1979), 85-165; and B. KRIEGLER, *L'histoire à l'âge classique. 4: La république incertaine* (Paris 1988), 7-93.

³ The exact number of volumes is 1834: L. DELISLE, *Le cabinet des manuscrits de la bibliothèque impériale: étude sur la formation de ce dépôt comprenant les éléments d'une histoire de la calligraphie de la miniature, de la reliure, et du commerce des livres à Paris avant l'invention de l'imprimerie* 1 (Paris 1868), 557-75 and H. OMONT, *Inventaire des manuscrits de la Collection Moreau* (Paris 1891).

⁴ D. GEMBICKI, *Das Dépôt*, 194 and ID., 'La condition historique à la fin de l'Ancien Régime', *Dix-huitième siècle* 13 (1981), 241-87, at 272 and 274.

⁵ DIDIER-LAURENT, 'Correspondance des Bénédictins de Lorraine avec Moreau, historiographe de France', *Mémoires de la Société d'archéologie Lorraine et du Musée historique Lorrain* 46 (1896), 147-94, at 149-50 and C. FALTRAUER, 'Les réseaux au service de la vie intellectuelle des vannistes', in Ph. MARTIN ed., *La correspondance: Le mythe de l'individu dévoilé?* (Louvain-la-Neuve 2014), 127-37, at 132-33. On the Congregation's origins refer to G. MICHAUX, 'Dom Didier de La Cour et la réforme des Bénédictins de Saint-Vanne', in D.-M. DAUZET and M. PLOUVIER eds., *Les Prémontrés et la Lorraine XIIIe-XVIIIe siècle. XXIIIe colloque*

Moreau published a list of correspondents that assigned the regions of Lorraine, Champagne, Franche-Comté, Luxemburg, and Switzerland to members of this Congregational movement.⁶ Over the next two and a half years about thirty 'Vannist' monks submitted annotated transcriptions of charters to the Dépôt.⁷

When he set out to recruit these monastic correspondents for his project, Moreau had no choice but to trust the judgement of the Congregation's president Etienne Pierre and his visitators, who (so it turned out) selected individuals with little or no experience in working with historical documents. And following that, Moreau had few options for training these men and monitoring their work beyond sending them a brochure with summary instructions, and, afterwards, sending them feedback on their submitted transcriptions. Inevitably the quality of the transcriptions often left much to be desired, as was also the case with the notes on the condition of the original charters, their palaeography, appearance, and other formal aspects that Moreau had instructed each correspondent to append to his transcriptions.⁸ Letters by Vannist monks to staff members of the Cabinet also lay bare how difficult it was for them to sustain their enthusiasm for the project beyond the initial excitement of being invited.⁹ There were some who quickly grew tired of labouring in dusty archives, especially after they realized that their connection to the Cabinet yielded no real opportunities to promote their intellectual talents or to ascend the social ladder.¹⁰ Some also complained about the fact that their work copying charters for Moreau kept them from more financially and socially rewarding pursuits, and implied that they saw in Moreau a poor patron.¹¹ Others do seem to have taken a genuine interest in studying the written legacies of the nation's medieval past. But they too struggled to sustain this interest, bogged down as they were by the difficulties of getting permission to consult certain archives and the absence of financial or logistical support from the Cabinet

du Centre d'études et de recherches prémontrées (Paris 1998), 125-44 and ID., 'Une grande réforme monastique du XVII^e siècle: la congrégation bénédictine de Saint-Vanne et Saint-Hydulphe', in *Autour de la congrégation de Saint-Vanne et de Saint-Hydulphe. L'idée de réforme religieuse en Lorraine* (Bar-le-Duc 2006), 81-103.

⁶ B. KRIEGL, *L'histoire*, 50.

⁷ DIDIER-LAURENT, *Correspondance*.

⁸ Refer to the commentary in DIDIER-LAURENT, *Correspondance* and further in this paper. Compare also with the notes on the mediocre quality of transcriptions made by the lawyer Louis-Henri Lambert de Barive, of more than 5000 charters from the archives of Cluny in S. BARRET, 'Un avocat au service du Cabinet des chartes: Les travaux de Louis-Henri Lambert de Barive dans les archives de Cluny (v. 1770-v. 1790)', *Histoire et archives* 15 (2004), 29-64, at 46-48 and 52-53.

⁹ The original letters are now in Bibliothèque Nationale de France (henceforth BNF), Collection Moreau, 337. They were faithfully copied, along with the responses by Moreau and members of the Cabinet's staff and in chronological order, in volumes 352-55 of the same collection and can be digitally consulted at <https://archivesetmanuscripts.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc34004z>. For reasons of convenience I have chosen to reference the copied letters and replies in the footnotes to this paper.

¹⁰ D. GEMBICKI, *La condition*, 274-75 and ID., *Histoire*, 107-8. The Vannist monk Sébastien Etienne tried in vain to use Moreau as a middleman to get publishers interested in his brochure on a treatment against convulsions. After Etienne was appointed visitator of the Congregation in May 1789 (and was therefore no longer able to work for the Cabinet) he angled for an invitation to meet Moreau in Paris; DIDIER-LAURENT, *La correspondance*, 159-61.

¹¹ Such complaints were not typical of the Cabinet's Vannist correspondents; S. BARRET, *Un avocat*, 34-37.

and the Congregation. Moreau and his staff also obviously lacked interest in their personal struggles as well as in their social and intellectual ambitions.¹²

So far most of the relevant scholarship has looked at the correspondence between these Benedictines and the Cabinet to better understand the obstacles faced by Moreau in trying to give his mission a second wind in the mid-1780s.¹³ In contrast there has been little interest in looking at the Cabinet's letter collection and other relevant documentation from a bottom-up, or biographical perspective.¹⁴ This would situate the monks' work for the Cabinet in a broader discussion of their activities at the time (including those that we might consider had historiographical merit), and would look at how they tried to balance their various obligations towards local patrons, their superiors in the Congregation, and Moreau himself. Despite the lack of interest thus far, such an approach has the potential to shed new light on how well prepared these men were when they took on their assignments, why they picked certain archives, what choices they made when they earmarked specific charters for transcription, and what factors determined the scope and timing of their work. In order to illustrate the relevance of this biographical perspective, this paper takes the case of Nicolas-Hilaire (de) Puibusque (1737-89). His involvement in Moreau's project merits closer study because he has left us an extensive correspondence, at least fifteen annotated copies of original charters for the Cabinet, and fairly abundant evidence of an archival 'side project' for the canonesses of Bouxières. In addition to giving more depth to our understanding of the scope and nature of his efforts for the Cabinet, looking closely at these efforts reveals that Puibusque had a great deal more to gain, financially but arguably also intellectually, from his archival work for local patrons than from his distant and increasingly fraught relationship with Moreau and the other Cabinet staff.

The early correspondence between Puibusque and Moreau

Little is known about Hilaire Puibusque before he got involved with Moreau. The son of Jacques-Cléophas Puibusque (who is identified in a parish record from the Nancy church of Saint-Nicolas as a receiver of the king's farms),¹⁵ aged twenty he entered the monastic life at the abbey of Saint-Mihiel.¹⁶ On 18 November 1780 we find him at Saint-Evre, from where he sent a letter to the *Journal historique et littéraire* in which he described a perpetual calendar he had recently invented.¹⁷ And by the time Moreau invited him to participate in the Cabinet's

¹² D. GEMBICKI, *Histoire*, 120-24.

¹³ DIDIER-LAURENT, *Correspondance*; D. GEMBICKI, *Das Dépôt*; Id., *Histoire*; B. KRIEGLER, *L'histoire*; and C. FALTRAUER, *Les réseaux*.

¹⁴ An important precedent, but for a lay correspondent, is S. BARRET's above-mentioned study of de Barive; *Un avocat*.

¹⁵ H. LEPAGE, *Les archives de Nancy ou documents inédits relatifs à l'histoire de cette ville* 4 (Nancy 1845), 58.

¹⁶ J. GODEFROY, *Bibliothèque des bénédictins de la Congrégation de Saint-Vanne et Saint-Hydulphe* (Ligugé/Paris 1925), 96 and DIDIER-LAURENT, *Correspondance*, 169-70.

¹⁷ *Journal historique et littéraire*, 1 February 1781, 185-86; also G. MICHAUX, 'La vie intellectuelle de la congrégation de Saint-Vanne dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle', in *Sous la règle de saint Benoît. Structures monastiques et sociétés en France du Moyen Âge à l'époque moderne* (Genève/Paris 1982), 325-44, at 343-44.

project in the early months of 1786, the then 49-year-old monk was living at the small Vosges priory of Saint-Mont, not far from the abbey of Remiremont.¹⁸ Unfortunately we no longer have Moreau's letter, which was probably just a version of one he sent to countless contributors of the Cabinet. But we do have Puibusque's reply, which is dated 21 March and was written at Saint-Mont. In it he indicates that he sees in the director's request an opportunity to advance himself socially and to be recognized as a member of the intellectual community: 'The hope of one day appearing before the eyes of His Majesty, the advantage the head of state sees (in this project), and (the hope) of providing some services to the Humanities: (these things) will support me in my work, which cannot but result in some success.' However Puibusque is also aware of the need to acknowledge his the core monastic virtues of obedience and humility. Accordingly he admits that this 'success' will be in large measure due to his monastic superior, whom he notes has instructed him to make copies of four documents from Saint-Mont to demonstrate to Moreau the level of his relevant skills.¹⁹ In a second letter from 21 March, he acknowledges receipt of the formal confirmation by the Garde des Sceaux of his status as a correspondent of the Cabinet. And he also states that he has carefully read Moreau's brochure on how to transcribe and comment on original charters, and joins to the letter four copies of charters from the archives of Saint-Mont for the director's approval.²⁰

We are fortunate to have Moreau's reply from 6 April, which illuminates his approach to correspondents at this stage of the Cabinet's existence. He takes care to praise Puibusque, by saying that the four submitted transcriptions 'tell me that you will be among the more zealous (of our contributors), and prove to me that you have the (right) taste and the necessary knowledge for this type of work'. But the director is also forthright about his intention of giving instructions on what documents to look for (older ones than the twelfth-to-fifteenth-century documents Puibusque had copied from Saint-Mont) and what archives to work in (Saint-Mont, the collegial chapter of Saint-Dié, and others in the Vosges region).²¹ Seemingly uneasy at Moreau's focus on his role

¹⁸ Saint-Mont had recently seen a fair amount of historiographical activity, which may or may not have inspired Puibusque; G. MICHAUX, 'Le prieuré du Saint-Mont aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles', *Le Pays de Remiremont* 7 (1985), 38-71 and C. FALTRAUER, *Le cadre de vie et de prière des bénédictins de la congrégation de Saint-Vanne et Saint-Hydulphe de la province de Lorraine aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, 2 vols, unpublished doctoral dissertation (Université Lumière Lyon 2, 2014), 1: 419-32.

¹⁹ BNF, Collection Moreau, 353, fol. 31r (entry for 28 March 1786): 'Monseigneur, je suis entièrement flaté de l'honneur que Votre Excellence veut bien me faire de me mettre au nombre de ceux qui auront l'avantage de servir le gouvernement en contribuant au progrès de science utile. A la lecture de votre invitation, Monseigneur, j'ai senti naître mon emulation et mon ardeur pour un travail si honorable: puisent mes faibles efforts repondre à l'idée que je m'en suis formé (...) L'espoir d'être mis un jour peut être sous le yeux de Son Altesse, l'avantage d'être entré dans les vues du premier homme de l'Etat, et de rendre quelque service aux Lettres sont les motifs qui vont me soutenir dans mon travail. Il ne peut manquer d'avoir quelque succes. Je le devrai moins à mes talents qu'au feu pur et noble qu'un sage Ministre vient d'allumer dans mes veines'.

²⁰ BNF, Collection Moreau, 353, fol. 31v (entry for 30 March 1786).

²¹ BNF, Collection Moreau, 353, fol. 31v (left margin, entry for 30 March 1786): 'Votre premier envoy que j'ai reçu m'annonce que vous ne serez pas un des moins zelés, et me prouve que vous avez le gout, et les connaissances propres à ce genre de travail. Les 4 chartes du St-Mont que vous m'avez envoyé sont du 12 et 15e siecles: cela n'est pas très ancien et vraisemblablement la fondation de votre abbaye ne remonte pas plus haut. Au reste elles

as a mere provider of copied charters and the director's silence on what rewards this service might bring to him personally, Puibusque decided to test the waters and immediately ask for a return favour. On 3 or 9 May he wrote back with the sole purpose of asking Moreau to intervene with the Garde des Sceaux, the Marquis de Miromesnil, so that his widowed niece, who had found herself in a difficult situation, could obtain an introduction to the minister.²²

Moreau did not bother to reply, so we learn from another of Puibusque's letters, dated 3 November. This, and the director's subsequent response, mark a notable change in tone in the correspondence between the two men. Puibusque apologizes for the delay in sending any new charter transcriptions, which he states is not due to a diminishing 'zeal for the work I love', or to a growing insensitivity to the honour that is associated with it. Rather, he says, it is because he has moved north to Lorraine and is currently working to bring order to the archive of the noble canonesses of Bouxières, a small hilltop institution some two kilometres to the north-east of Lorraine's capital, Nancy, and is currently drafting an archive inventory for them. Puibusque makes it clear that he has no intention of following Moreau's instructions to continue working on the archive of Saint-Mont before moving to Saint-Dié and other Vosges institutions. But at the same time, he also assures the director that he is interested in submitting annotated copies of pieces from his new host institution, which he notes was founded in the (for Moreau, attractive) tenth century. The reason, Puibusque continues, why it has proven impossible to prepare such copies is that his work on the canonesses' archives is part of the preparations for the convent's relocation from the rural site at Bouxières to an urban one at Nancy, and that the project's overseer, Archbishop of Toulouse Loménie de Brienne, insists that the new inventory ought to be finished before the relocation takes place in eighteen to twenty months. At the end of the letter Puibusque also enquires if his earlier communication, in which he sought an introduction for his niece, has arrived, since she has given him no news since then.²³

Cognizant of the power shift in their working relationship, Moreau replied thirteen days later, on the 16 November 1786. 'I cannot but applaud your efforts to organize the archives of the Ladies of Bouxières and I call upon you to do your utmost to meet the expectations of the prelate who has tasked you with this job', he writes, and adds, 'I hope that you will draw some benefit from this work.' With that comment he signalled his acceptance of the fact that Puibusque's local allegiances had compelled him to adjust the institutional focus of his assigned mission. But it also prompted Moreau to remind the monk that along with the absence of financial reward, his

ne sont pas moins dignes de trouver place dans notre Depot; mais je vous serai obligé de nous envoyer d'abord tout ce que vous trouverez du plus antique dans les depots du district que vous avez à parcourir (celui qui vous est assigné dans la lettre envoyé par par votre supérieur à M. le garde des Sceaux comprend l'abbaye de St-Mont, St-Diez et les Vosges) et puisque vous avez commence le depouillement de votre abbaye, je vous invite à le continuer et à le comter à fond avant d'entreprendre un autre'.

²² BNF, Collection Moreau, 353, fol. 44v (entry for 29 May 1786).

²³ BNF, Collection Moreau, 353, fol. 85r (entry for 7 November 1786): 'Ce n'est pas que mon zele soit ralenti pour un travail que j'aime, ou que sois moins sensible à l'honneur qui y est attaché, mais c'est que je suis actuellement occupé à mettre en ordre l'archive du chapitre noble des Dames de Bouxieres, et que je n'ai point encore trouvé le moment de copier les bonnes pieces que j'y ai rencontrées, et d'y faire les observations qu'elles exigent pour vous les envoyer. La raison pour laquelle les moments me manquent pour préparer cet envoi, c'est que l'on me presse pour finir cet ouvrage et que Monsieur l'Archeveque de Toulouse qui travaille à la translation de ce chapitre veut qu'il soit fini avant qu'elle se fasse, ce qui je crois pourra arriver dans dix huit ou vingt mois.'

relationship with the Cabinet would not be transactional in any other sense either. Accordingly he rejected Puibusque's request to draw de Miromesnil's attention to the plight of the monk's widowed niece, saying that such an action would antagonize the minister against Moreau and would have no beneficial effect for either the niece or for the monk himself.²⁴ Puibusque had driven Moreau to the point whereby the director could not be other than blunt about what he could – and could not – offer to his Lorraine correspondent. Puibusque realized that there was no point in insisting on any favours, and so he did not. For nearly seventeen months there would be no contact between the two men.

Hilaire Puibusque's 'side job' at Bouxières

Even though Moreau's list of correspondents from March 1787 laid out in detail the area that each of the *Cabinet's* Lorraine correspondents was supposed to cover, at the time of writing he knew that these men would seldom be in a position to actually proceed like this. By that stage he and his staff had grown accustomed to hearing that local correspondents had changed their plans because archive-holders were resistant to allowing access, the personal situation of the correspondents themselves changed, and a host of other reasons. Moreau and the Cabinet staff also knew that the most pragmatic course of action on receiving such news was to express their gratitude that these men were still willing to pursue their mission and to offer some guidance on how to proceed. In the case of his exchanges with Hilaire Puibusque we can guess that Moreau was happy to do both of these things. Already in the eighteenth century the archives of the Vosges abbey held few interesting documents from the early medieval period (which we already saw was of the greatest interest to Moreau), while the Bouxières archives, in contrast, contained a rare cache of nearly two dozen original charters from the tenth to twelfth centuries.²⁵ Furthermore, the opportunity to have Puibusque work on these documents was all the more attractive since he had been given (nearly, we shall see later) unrestricted access to the canonesses' archive as

²⁴ BNF, Collection Moreau, 353, folio 85r (left margin, entry for 7 November 1786): 'Je reçois avec plaisir les nouvelles assurances de votre zèle pour nos recherches et il m'est agréable de pouvoir toujours vous compter au nombre de nos collaborateurs. Je ne peux qu'applaudir à l'ordre que vous travaillez à mettre dans les archives des Dames de Bouxieres et vous invite à ne rien négliger pour remplir les vues du Prélat qui vous a charge de cette besogne. J'espère que vous tirerez vous même quelque'avantage de ce travail, et je vous aurai une véritable obligation si vous voudrez bien nous messenger des copies des monumens de cette abbaye dont la fondation me paroît assez ancienne, que vous jugerez dignes d'enter dans notre collection'.

²⁵ All these documents were edited in R.-H. BAUTIER, *Les origines de l'abbaye de Bouxières-aux-Dames au diocèse de Toul: reconstitution du chartrier et édition critique des chartes antérieures à 1200* (Nancy 1987). Following the rediscovery of the original of Gozelin's 938 foundation charter in 2000, a new edition was published in K. OSCEMA, 'Zur Gründung des Benediktinerinnenklosters Notre-Dame de Bouxières. Eine wiedergefundene Urkunde des 10. Jahrhunderts', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 110 (2002), 182-90. For a discussion of the Bouxières charter collection's during the medieval and early modern eras and of its fate following the abbey's dissolution in early 1791, refer now to S. VANDERPUTTEN, 'Encased in Silk. The Women of Bouxières and Their Medieval Archives', in L. GATHAGAN and C. INSLEY eds., *Gender, Memory and Documentary Culture, 900-1200*, forthcoming and Id., *Dismantling the Medieval. Early Modern Perceptions of a Female Convent's Past*, Turnhout, Chapters 1 and 5, in press.

part of his job to reorganize it. In these two respects, Puibusque's sudden announcement that he had landed a long-term job as an archivist at Bouxières was a 'dream scenario' come true.

For many decades, historians of the regional and national past had known that the small size and unassuming appearance of Bouxières abbey belied the riches of its medieval charter collection. Beginning in the late seventeenth century, the canonesses had realized the potential interest for historians and genealogists of this type of material and had arranged for someone to draft a brochure that listed the collection's most significant pieces. That unpublished guide gave brief regests, suggested approximate (and sometimes wildly inaccurate) datings, and provided information on formal aspects such as the state of preservation, the presence of seals, the script, and so on.²⁶ It or an early eighteenth-century redaction²⁷ may have come to the attention of the Vannist scholar Augustin Calmet (1692-1757), who published several pieces in the first and second edition of his *History of Lorraine*.²⁸ His editions and those by later scholars were widely known, consulted, and in some cases also reprinted throughout the eighteenth century, to the point that the Bouxières charter treasure gained wide notoriety among the French intellectual elite.²⁹ It would not be surprising to find that Moreau and his staff hoped that the Cabinet's anticipated role in recording and possibly publishing these documents might help boost its profile with those who were in a position to perpetuate and perhaps even increase its funding.

But Puibusque's involvement with the Bouxières archives was also significant to the Cabinet in another sense, which had to do with the fact that the relocation of the convent was a highly politicized affair. In the mid-eighteenth century Bouxières abbey had been reorganized to recruit girls and women from the highest echelons of the French aristocracy, with an emphasis on individuals from families that were linked to the royal court. The appointment in 1773 of Abbess Marie-Angélique de Messey and her subsequent project to abandon the site atop the hill at Bouxières must be understood in light of efforts to further elevate the elite status of this small institution and turn it into a convent school for aristocratic young ladies.³⁰ To make these plans possible, a connection was established with French royals Adelaïde and Victorine, King Louis XVI's aunts, who agreed to cover a large part of the costs and lobbied with the king to obtain his approval. Archbishop de Brienne, a confidant of the two royal aunts, was subsequently deputized to organize the relocation process. He was to help

²⁶ *Memoire tiré des tiltres du tresor de l'abbaye de Bouxieres aux Dames*, Paris, BNF, Collection de Lorraine, 717, fols 215-22.

²⁷ Nancy, Bibliothèque Stanislas, 413/1, fols 234-40.

²⁸ A. CALMET published five royal, episcopal, and papal charters from the tenth to early twelfth centuries in *Histoire ecclésiastique et civile de Lorraine*, 4 vols (Nancy 1728), 1, Preuves, 335, 350-51, 370-73, 402, and 474-75 (BAUTIER, *Les origines*, nos 1, 13, 31, 40, and 41) and added one more document in *Histoire de Lorraine*, 7 vols (Nancy 1745-57), 4, Preuves, col. 340 (BAUTIER, *Les origines*, no. 6). His contemporary Ch.-L. HUGO edited one document in *Sacrae antiquitatis monumenta historica, dogmatica, diplomatica, notis illustrata* 1 (Etival 1725), 191 (BAUTIER, *Les origines*, no. 31).

²⁹ Vanderputten, *Dismantling*, Chapter 4. The staff of the Cabinet used L. DE BREQUIGNY's *Table chronologique des diplômes, chartes, titres et actes imprimés concernant l'histoire de France*, the first volume of which was edited in Paris in 1769 and on p. 398 mentions Gozelin's foundation charter.

³⁰ C. POIRIER, 'La translation du chapitre noble de Bouxières à Nancy à la fin du XVIIe siècle', *Annales de l'Est* (2007), 123-40.

with acquiring real estate in Nancy, with ironing out all the legal obstacles, and with hiring (in 1786) an archivist to draft a full inventory of the abbey's papers.³¹ By this point members of the king's administration would definitely have been aware of the fact that any actions relating to the convent's new status (including the redaction of a new archive inventory by Puibusque) were happening under royal auspices. And for Moreau and his staff, having one of their correspondents involved might well have sounded like an ideal opportunity to draw attention to the useful work that was being done by the Cabinet.

What the director might not have realized is that there was in fact little incentive for Puibusque to quickly submit annotated copies of original charters from the abbey's archives. Moreau had made it clear that neither financial rewards nor any social favours could be expected from him or his institution. In contrast, Archbishop de Brienne and Abbess de Messey (neither of whom would have cared much about the Cabinet's mission) had apparently been willing to pay the monk for his services and keep him occupied in comfortable circumstances for an extended period of time. Their commissioning of the inventory also gave him the opportunity to call himself an archivist, which by all accounts was a more prestigious professional description (and a great deal more attractive in terms of future employment) than a mere supplier of transcribed charters. Accordingly, following Moreau's letter of November 1786, Puibusque did not bother to write back for a year and a half. Finally, in a letter dated 30 June 1788, he reported to Moreau that the Bouxières inventory was finished and that he had found a new employer in Abbess Anne-Catherine-Honorée de Choiseul of Poussay (1787-89), who had arranged for him to reorganize her institution's archives. He added that he had selected no fewer than eighteen documents from the Bouxières archives for copying, towards 'that grand project which you are undertaking', but that his new assignment would delay the production and delivery of the transcriptions for at least seven or eight months, unless he were to be asked to draft an actual inventory of the Poussay archives, in which case it would take even longer.³² With this casual statement, Puibusque indicated that making copies for the Cabinet had tumbled far down on his list of priorities.

The letter sparked another flurry of correspondence. In a letter dated 28 July Moreau made no secret of his feelings that Puibusque was deliberately stalling delivery of the transcribed charters.³³ Soon he began to doubt that any of these would ever materialize. On 3 August 1788, Puibusque wrote to Moreau to tell him that

³¹ As the new genealogist, the Vannist monk Marc Probst was appointed. He and Puibusque both moved into the small priory of Saint-Léopold in Nancy; DIDIER-LAURENT, *Correspondance*, 166 and B. KRIEGL, *L'histoire*, 50.

³² BNF, Collection Moreau, 354, pp. 160-61 (entry for 8 July 1786): 'Monsieur, j'a fini l'arrangement de l'archive des Dames de Bouxieres où j'ai tiré dix huit copies de diplomes et chartes que j'ai cru pouvoir contribuer à remplir le grand objet dont vous vous occupez. J'allais travailler à tel mettre au net, et y joindre des notes et observations qui pourront en constater l'authenticité, et faciliter l'intelligence, mais Madame la Comtesse de Choiseul abbesse en ce chapitre vient de m'engager à fair dans son archive la meme operation que celle que je viens de faire à Bouxieres, et ne me laisse pas le moment de préparer mon envoi. Je vais donc repondre au desir de cette Dame, et recevoir en arrangeant son archive les pieces que je croirai pouvoir entrer dans la collection générale. Je vous enverrai le tout aussitot que j'aurai fini mon ouvrage ici, ce qui ne passera pas sept ou huit (mois), à moins que l'on ne me fasse faire un cartulaire. Pardon, Monsieur, de mes retards'.

³³ BNF, Collection Moreau, 353, pp. 160-61 (left margin, entry for 8 July 1788).

he was still unable to make the transcriptions of the Bouxières charters himself but had hired a clerk at the Cabinet's expense. Regrettably he would also be unable to add the requested notes to the transcriptions, but for that problem too he had a solution: Moreau, he said, would have no trouble finding the relevant information in Calmet's *Histoire de Lorraine*. In an added paragraph that made it even more obvious that Puibusque had lost interest in working on the Bouxières charters, he offered to transcribe two sixteenth-century documents from the *assises générales* of Lorraine he had found in the Poussay archives.³⁴ On 12 August Moreau replied, offering to cover the cost of the clerk's copying work: no doubt in an effort to humour Puibusque, he also agreed to look at the copies of the *assises* documents from Poussay.³⁵ This second letter struck the right chord with Puibusque. From the preserved copies of Bouxières's original charters in the Collection Moreau (listed in the table appended to this paper), we can infer that he spent part of August 1788 back at Bouxières studying the abbey's most precious charters and (contradicting his earlier declaration that he would have no time to do so) making notes on them. A clerk arrived on or shortly before the 24th to copy the documents Puibusque had selected.

The copies from the Bouxières archives

³⁴ BNF, Collection Moreau, 354, pp. 192-93 (entry for 28 July 1788): 'le tems qu'il exige à raison du nombre de pieces que j'ai receuillies ne pouvant etre pris sans celui que j'emploie à l'arrangement et à l'analyse des titres de cette archive pour laquelle on me presse, j'ai pris un ecrivain qui travaille sous mes yeux, et dont je collatione les copies sur celles que j'ai tirées moi même sur les originaux afin que mon certificat ait toute la vérité qu'il doit avoir. J'aurais bien voulu pouvoir solder moi-même cet ecrivain, mais la modicité de mes honoraires ne me le permet pas; la religion ne me fournissant rien ni pour la vie ni pour l'habit; au reste je mettrai tant d'economie dans le traitement que je ferai avec cet homme et pour sa main, et pour le papier qu'il fournit, que cette dépense sera relative à la modicité des fonds dont vous etes dépositaire, et qui sont destinés à ma maison, si dans ce moment je n'étais pas censé hors du Corps, quoique cet ecrivain travaille déjà, cependant j'attendrai de votre part un petit détail sur ce que vous entendez que je lui donne par cote, ou par page. Le papier et les plumes, je les lui rembourserai au prix coutant. Je pense, Monsieur que vous ne desaprouverez pas ce moyen que j'emploie pour vous faire passer plutot un envoi qui malgré tout ma bonne volonté, et mon desir sincere d'ajouter quelque pieces à l'immense collection don't vous vous occupez infatigablement, et si utilement pour l'Etat, auroit souffert de longs retards. Ce même défaut de temps ne me permettra pas de fair les notes et les reflexions que les matieres de ces copies sembloient exiger; mais vous y pourrez suppléer par la notice de Lorraine par Dom Calmet, surtout pour la division de l'Eveché de Toul en trois Comtés de Chaumontois, de Scarpenois, ou le Comté de Charpeigne, et le Saintois'.

³⁵ BNF, Collection Moreau, 353, p. 192 (left margin, entry for 7 August 1788).

Out of eighteen documents that Puibusque promised to send to the Cabinet, fifteen have so far been identified in the volumes of the Collection Moreau.³⁶ All appear to date from late August 1788,³⁷ were written by the same professional hand, and carry a subscription in Puibusque's distinctive handwriting on the condition of the pieces – any remaining seals or monograms, the script, lay out, and suchlike – as well as a note in which he identifies himself as 'archivist' and certifies that the copy conforms to the original document from the abbey archives.³⁸ It is obvious that the monk's work for the Bouxières canonesses to a very significant extent determined the scope and contents of the documentation that he subsequently sent to the Cabinet. Prior to selecting the relevant documents, Puibusque had thoroughly rearranged the abbey's collection of medieval and early modern charters, relegating a number of documents pertaining to specific estates to thematic sections of the archive and allocating the others to four folders in a separate archival category named the *Trésor des chartes*. The fifteen known transcriptions that he sent to Moreau all derive from documents that he allocated to three of these folders. As we can see in the table at the end of this paper, they span a period from before the abbey's foundation in the early tenth century to the middle of the twelfth century. Besides the authenticity and sheer age of the pieces, the monk's selection criteria at first sight seem random. However, a closer look reveals that he picked documents on account of the fact that he had pre-selected them for inclusion in the *Trésor*, which itself functioned as a signifier that he thought their historical relevance surpassed that of documents about specific localities. And a subordinate criterion was that the documents were issued by prominent historical figures (sovereign rulers King Charles the Simple of West Francia, Emperors Otto I and II, Conrad II; Popes Stephen VIII and Innocent II; and

³⁶ Refer to the table at the end of this paper. It is unclear if Puibusque actually sent eighteen transcriptions as he had promised in his letter of June 1788. The most likely contenders for the three 'missing' charter copies are one from 996-1019 by Bishop Berthold of Toul; another from 1245 by Count Thiebaut of Bar; and one from 1441 by Duchess Isabella of Lorraine. However, the first is not listed in the TELMA database, which covers all transcriptions in the Collection Moreau up to 1208 (<http://telma-chartes.irht.cnrs.fr/moreau/page/introduction>, accessed 3 June 2021): this either means that it was lost before or after being sent to the Cabinet, or that it was never made in the first place. Regarding the other two 'missing' transcription, at the time of writing this paper the relevant volumes 164-165 and 250 were inaccessible for consultation at the BNF due to the Covid 19-pandemic. However, there is a possibility that Puibusque never got around to arranging for the clerk to copy these due to Moreau's lack of interest in chronologically later documents.

³⁷ The subscriptions of the copies of the three oldest documents carry the date 24 August 1788 (see again the appended table). A comparison of the script, lay out, and other formal features of these pieces with those of the other transcriptions indicates that all were written over the course of a single copying campaign.

³⁸ H. LEPAGE edited five of these subscriptions in 'Cinq chartes inédites de l'abbaye de Bouxières', *Mémoires de la Société d'archéologie lorraine* 4 (1862), 121-48, at 135, 137, 139, 141, and 148. That on Gozelin of Toul's 923 charter (no. 2 in BAUTIER, *Les origines*), reads as follows: 'Cette charte, saine et entière, en velin, portant 9 pouces 9 lignes de haut sur 18 pouces de large, sans reply, n'y ayant point de sceau pendant. Il n'y a qu'un paraphe place, comme on le voit, au bout de la signature du chancelier. Tirée des archives de Bouxières, layette des chartes, liasse 1re. Les lignes de ce titre sont à la distance de 8 lignes l'une de l'autre. Belle écriture caroline, un peu menue. Je soussigné, destiné à la recherche des chartes et monuments concernant le droit public de la monarchie française, certifie la présente, figurée ainsi qu'il vient d'être dit, tirée du chartrier du chapitre de Bouxières, en Lorraine, conforme à son original, remis audit chartrier, ce jourd'huy 24 août 1788. D. Hilaire de Puibusque, archiviste'.

four bishops of Toul, Gozelin, Gerard, Pibo, and Henry), which explains why at least two private charters were not set aside for transcription.

Up until today, the annotated transcriptions for the Cabinet remain valuable to scholars. Out of all the original documents from which they were copied (albeit that some of these originals were themselves copies), just one (Bishop Gozelin's 938 foundation charter) has been preserved.³⁹ And while we do have a number of sixteenth- to eighteenth-century copies of some of the other charters, the value of the transcriptions for reconstructing the original text, and of his notes for providing information about the charters' size and formal appearance, remains beyond doubt. Nevertheless, the quality of these transcriptions is certainly not beyond reproach. Already in the middle decades of the nineteenth century (which is when a handful of copies of these pieces were first spotted in the volumes of the Collection Moreau), scholars noted that they contain a significant number of scribal errors and misreadings.⁴⁰ Furthermore, not all copies are what they claim to be. The most blatant example is the above-mentioned foundation charter, which claims to be based on the original but actually derives from a deficient early eighteenth-century copy.⁴¹ Likewise, Puibusque's notes are not those of an expert palaeographer and observer of diplomatic minutiae: they too contain numerous imprecise statements and outright errors. But anyway, upon receiving these pieces Moreau and his collaborators would not have had the time to verify the quality of the transcriptions or of Puibusque's selection criteria. At the last count in 1786, the *Dépôt des chartes* already owned a staggering amount: 46,432 copies of original charters, 1042 originals, and 21,758 regests of additional documents. For the small staff to spend any significant amount of time reviewing incoming transcriptions would have been impossible.⁴²

Although Puibusque's transcriptions and notes were all made around the same time, they did not arrive at the Cabinet in one delivery. On 27 September 1788 he sent another letter to Moreau, to which he added four appendices. The first was a set of four transcribed charters from the period 1070-1163 (which almost certainly corresponds with the final four transcribed documents that are listed in the table appended below). The second appendix comprised the transcriptions of the two above-mentioned sixteenth-century documents from Poussay. The third was a note on the clerk's expenses, to the sum of 118 *livres*; and the fourth contained the letter of Puibusque's appointment by de Miromesnil. In the letter itself Puibusque mentions having found nothing of great importance at Poussay and expands on his interest in the archives at Mirecourt, adding that he urgently needs the new Garde des Sceaux, Charles de Barentin, to renew his patent letters in order to gain access to various

³⁹ Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Ser. n. 12672, edited in K. OSCEMA, *Zur Gründung*. On the post-dissolution fate of this document, see now VANDERPUTTEN, *Dismantling*, Chapter 1.

⁴⁰ H. LEPAGE, *Cinq chartes*, 122.

⁴¹ M. PARISSE, 'Un évêque réformateur: Gauzelin de Toul (922-962)', in J.-F. COTTIER, M. GRAVEL, and S. ROSSIGNOL eds., *Ad Libros! Mélanges d'études médiévales offerts à Denise Angers et Joseph-Claude Poulin* (Montréal 2010), 69-82, Appendix 2. The original document was likely off limits to Puibusque on account of the fact that the canonesses regarded it as a secondary relic of their founder; refer to his comments in Nancy, Bibliothèque Stanislas, 175, p. 1 and Paris, BNF, Collection Moreau, 5, fol. 148r.

⁴² D. GEMBICKI, *Das Dépôt*, 203.

archives in the region.⁴³ A positive response from Barentin was sent on 11 October.⁴⁴ However the reply from the Cabinet, written by one of Moreau's staff, both took a week longer and was far less flattering. It drily states, 'I shall not hide from you that we find the (clerk's costs) somewhat inflated, but as it is only an occasional expense, we have paid no attention to it: however, *Monsieur* Moreau charges me to tell you that (...) in future you shall spare us from this expense for the discoveries that you shall send us.'⁴⁵ Evidently Moreau was less than pleased about the exorbitant cost of the clerk's services and at not receiving a signed receipt of Puibusque's expenses. However, he surely also realized that the monk had sent him the most recent and therefore (to Moreau) least interesting pieces from the Bouxières selection, and was deliberately holding back a dozen or more choice pieces of far greater age and of far more prestigious authorship.

Exactly when Puibusque sent the rest of the annotated transcriptions is unknown. But we do know that his confidence as we find it expressed in his letters from early summer 1788 was quickly eroding. Even before he obtained Barentin's letter, he wrote to Moreau on 15 October that his involvement with the Poussay canonesses was coming to an end. Abbess de Choiseul was to be absent from her home for several months and had requested he vacate his rooms in her residence within a few days. Still intent on working for a month or two at the nearby Registry (*greffe*) of Mirecourt, he declared that without financial support from the Cabinet, he would be unable to cover his lodging and other expenses.⁴⁶ Moreau's reply, which he uncharacteristically delayed for a few days, was likewise blunt in rejecting both Puibusque's offer to work at Mirecourt and the suggestion that the Cabinet cover his expenses. Moreau also indicated that the monk should write in future directly to the Garde des Sceaux to discuss such research costs, and that he had heard that some Vannist monks were actually receiving financial aid from their Congregation.⁴⁷ Evidently Moreau had lost his patience with Puibusque and his manipulative tactics.

⁴³ BNF, Collection Moreau, 354, pp. 223-25 (entry for 30 September 1788).

⁴⁴ BNF, Collection Moreau, 354, pp. 231-33 (entry for 11 October 1788).

⁴⁵ BNF, Collection Moreau, 354, p. 223 (left margin, entry for 30 September 1788): 'Je ne vous dissimulerai pas que nous avons trouvé ce memoire un peu enflé, comme ce n'est qu'une depense éventuelle, nous n'y avons pas fait attention; mais Monsieur Moreau qui me charge de vous offrir complimens et remerciemens parce qu'il est indisposé, espere que par la suite, comme vos confrères vous nous epargneront cette depense pour celles de vos decouvertes que vous nos destinerez, et nous attendons dorenavant que votre loisir et votre commodité vous permettent de nous les transcrire'.

⁴⁶ BNF, Collection Moreau, 354, p. 241 (entry for 20 October 1788): 'je n'aye point fini mon ouvrage dans ce chapitre, je vais cependant le quitter pour quelques mois, à raison de l'absence que Madame l'abbesse (chez qui je loge) est obligée de faire (...) je ne suis nullement en état de fournir à la dépense d'un logement et de ma nourriture, ce qui pourrait au plus bas deporter à deux Louis par mois. Je serai à Mircourt occupé à ces recherches environ deux mois, si vous jugez à propos de fournir à ma dépense, je m'établirai dans cette ville aussitôt que j'aurai reçu votre réponse. Je souhaite voir qu'elle ne tardât pas, car Madame l'abbesse part au premier jour'.

⁴⁷ BNF, Collection Moreau, 354, p. 241 (left margin, entry for 20 October 1788): 'Il seroit convenable de le mettre à même de juger si les decouvertes que vous comptez faire à Mircourt en meritent la peine. Monsieur de Valeart vous a deja prié de ma part de nous epargner à l'avenir les frais de copiste, et je ne vous ai adresse cette priere que parceque j'au cru que comme tous vos confreres vous etiez defrayé par votre Congregation; et que plusieurs de vos superieurs m'ont assuré qu'ils fourniroient à ceux de ces membres qui se livrent à nos recherches les petits secours dont ils pourroient avoir besoin, et dont ils leur donneroient connoissance'.

Did Puibusque subsequently lose his nerve? Did he try to placate Moreau by sending him the rest of the documents in a single batch? None of the preserved letters in the Collection Moreau leaves us any the wiser. However, the fact that the volumes of the Cabinet contain at least fifteen transcribed charters does tell us that the monk eventually did release more such documents at an unknown point in either late 1788 or (less likely) early 1789. A final letter, dated 29 October 1788 (presumably the last one he sent to the Bureau before his death the next year), finds him submitting the receipt of the clerk's expenses, acquiescing to the postponement of his research trip to Mirecourt, and agreeing that the Congregation should in fact cover his expenses. Implicitly acknowledging that he has overplayed his hand with Moreau, he promises to write to the Congregation's president Etienne Pierre 'so that I shall know where I stand with regard to the financial means without which I would not be able to carry out an assignment that I wish to carry out with zeal and honour'. And he admits that he has only been temporarily dismissed from his job at Poussay, that it earns him fifty *Louis* per annum, and that he would be willing to take on other such assignments 'if they are offered to me'. Signing off his letter, he promises to 'take care to make copies of all the pieces that I believe will contribute to the Government's project on public law and on the history of France, and I shall send them to the Dépôt, even though this shall happen not as often as I would wish'.⁴⁸ A polite but nevertheless fierce battle of wills thus ended in something of a defeat for Puibusque, who had been economical with the truth about his real situation.⁴⁹ For his part, the Director was probably relieved to find that his firm treatment of the strong-willed but hapless monk had finally paid off.

The Sommier of Bouxières: A historiographical endeavour?

Assessing Puibusque's legacy as a researcher of the past purely on the basis of his work for Moreau would be misguided, as we now know that the assignment for the Cabinet was not at the heart of his archival work. To get a better sense of the monk's historical interests and ambitions, we must focus instead on the Bouxières inventory, which he researched and wrote between the fall of 1786 and the summer of 1788. Now preserved at Nancy's Bibliothèque Stanislas and measuring an impressive 410 by 270 millimetres, this 500-page tome titled *Sommier contentant l'analyse des tritres de l'insigne chapitre de Bouxières* is by far the most neatly organized

⁴⁸ BNF, Collection Moreau, 354, pp. 251-52 (entry for 2 November 1788): 'Je suis d'avis comme lui que c'est la Congrégation qui doit m'entretenir et fournir aux frais qu'exigent indispensablement les recherches dans des archives éloignées de ma maison. J'en écrirai au Seigneur President à fin que je sache à quoi m'en tenir relativement aux moyens sans lesquels je ne pourrais suivre une commission dont je desire m'acquitter avec zèle et avec honneur. En attendant, je continuerai l'arrangement des archives de ce chapitre et d'autres qui me sont offertes, d'autant plus que ce travail ne coûte rien à ma Province, et me rapporte 50 Louis par an. J'aurai soin de prendre dans ces archives des copies de toutes les pièces que je croirai pouvoir contribuer au projet du Gouvernement sur le droit public et sur l'histoire de France, et je les enverrai au dépôt, ce qui m'arrivera pas aussi souvent que je souhaiterais'.

⁴⁹ I was unable to find any indication that Puibusque's work at Poussay moved beyond the preparatory stage. On what little is currently left of the abbey archives, refer to E. GASPARD, 'Abbaye et chapitre de Poussay', *Mémoires de la Société d'archéologie Lorraine* 13 (1871), 88-129 and F. BOQUILLON, 'Le chapitre de Poussay à l'époque moderne. Institutions et recrutement', in *Mirecourt et Poussay. Journées d'études vosgiennes 22.23 mai 1982* (Nancy 1984), 125-55.

and visually impressive of all the abbey's early modern archive inventories.⁵⁰ It also marks the transition to a new stage in the perception and treatment of the canonesses' written legacies, fundamentally rearranging archival categories, creating new ones, and introducing a new numbering system. Of nearly all the documents Puibusque drafted summary descriptions, some of which were quite extensive. And for the charters he also added notes on whether they were written on parchment or paper, whether they were originals or not, and if there were copies or translations in the archives. While a full description of the *Sommier* would go beyond the scope of this paper, it is nevertheless worth looking at three passages in the first section since arguably they qualify as attempts by Puibusque to either revise or perpetuate aspects of Bouxières abbey's historical memory.⁵¹

The first of these sections was the product of the partial dismantling of a late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century archive category known locally as *Fondation* (literally 'Foundation'). This mostly contained documents from the abbey's earliest history in the tenth to early twelfth centuries and documented how its original estate had been created and legally consolidated.⁵² As already noted, Puibusque moved some of these documents to folders dedicated to specific estates, while the remaining charters were inserted in a series of four folders that became the so-called *Trésor des chartes*. By a stroke of good fortune, we have a fairly good idea of how the *Trésor* came into being. The codex Nancy, Bibliothèque Stanislas, 413/1 is one of two nineteenth-century miscellanies that gather a large selection of loose papers from the office of the Bouxières' abbess or secretary that were confiscated at the time of the abbey's dissolution in early 1791. On folios 228r-33v it features an early attempt by Puibusque to group the abbey's most significant charters into a new archival category, by creating a single carton titled *Layette chartes* with a total of twenty-four items (shown in the table appended to this paper). However as the table below shows, he changed his mind about the composition of this archival assemblage and subsequently broke it up into several parts that correspond (with a few minor exceptions) with *liasses* 1 to 3 of the *Trésor des chartes*.

But Puibusque's interventions did not stop at reorganizing *Fondation*. After having dismantled this medieval assemblage, he experimented with various options to replace its account of the abbey's origins and the emergence of its estate with a new one that covered the high points in the abbey's entire medieval and early modern past. To do so he weeded out a number of less relevant older documents (most notably a bull by Pope Clemens VIII) and added key documents by three bishops and one duke of Lorraine, an agreement between the abbess and chapter on one side and the villagers of Bouxières on the other, and an entire folder (which became the fourth in the *Trésor*) that dealt with the Vaudémont chapter. He then arranged the resulting selection of twenty-seven documents (not all of which were original charters, and some of which were joined by additional copies and/or translations) in a roughly chronological order. The purpose of this exercise was ostensibly to chart

⁵⁰ Nancy, Bibliothèque Stanislas, 175.

⁵¹ Contemporary congregation members who produced historiographical works are J. François, who is known for his somewhat derivative *Bibliothèque générale des écrivains de l'O.S.B.* (1777–78); Dom Grappin who authored *Les guerres du XVI^e siècle dans le Comté de Bourgogne* (1788); Joseph Cajot, Bernardin Pierron, J. François, and Nicolas Tabouillot, all of whom wrote on the history of the city of Metz; and a number of monks who produced institutional histories, most of which remained unpublished; G. MICHAUX, *La vie intellectuelle*, 341–43.

⁵² S. VANDERPUTTEN, *Encased in Silk*.

the estate's development over the abbey's eight-hundred-year history, from the 930s until the present. As such, Puibusque replaced a medieval (archival) narrative of Bouxières's past by one that brought the story up to date, all the while retaining a chronological logic.

Another indication of Puibusque's intention to insert a historiographical arc in the *Sommier* is the extensive description, further on in the inventory, of a set of documents relating to a heated and long-lasting conflict between Abbess Anne-Françoise de Ludres (1553-1603) and the other convent members.⁵³ This part as it were bridges the narrative gap between the abbey's medieval incarnation, which saw it evolve from a Benedictine nunnery into an institution increasingly defined by its members' noble ancestry and their right to own prebends, and its secular role in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁵⁴ As such it portrays the second half of the sixteenth century as a transitional phase in which convent members fought a traumatizing battle to discard their former monastic identity and trade it for one that today we recognize as being that of noble canonesses.⁵⁵ As Puibusque tells us in his extensive notes on the now-lost documentation on de Ludres' abbacy, at the beginning of her tenure she took steps to restore a strict monastic regime marked by communal service, shared spaces, individual poverty, and stability.⁵⁶ The members and their relatives, who had become used to a more relaxed regime where the right to own private property was a key feature, fiercely resisted this policy and ultimately helped to accelerate the transition towards a secular identity. Subsequent abbesses of Bouxières would be very cautious not to trigger any such disputes again, and in at least one case, that of Abbess Anne-Marie de Simiane de Moncha (1685-1716), actively manipulated the abbey's narrative of origins to insist on the legitimacy of the canonesses' secular status.⁵⁷ And for the remainder of the convent's existence, de Ludres's catastrophic tenure was remembered as a traumatic but necessary episode. A token of its perceived importance to the canonesses' understanding of the communal past is that it ended up being mentioned in Calmet's 1728 *Histoire ecclésiastique*.⁵⁸ And another six decades later, the lasting memory of this troubled phase evidently was enough justification for Puibusque to give it special mention in the *Sommier*. We must therefore strongly suspect that he let his account of Bouxières's history be influenced by local perceptions of the communal past.

Yet more suggestive evidence of the monk's putative status as a local historiographer and of local allegiance to the canonesses and their narrative of self is found in a subsection of the *Sommier* titled *Statuts*. In

⁵³ Nancy, Bibliothèque Stanislas, 175, pp. 176-86.

⁵⁴ C. MARCHAL, 'Les chapitres nobles de dames lorrains et comtois au XVIIIe siècle: les caractères uniformisateurs d'une identité nobiliaire d'exclusion', in F. ROTH ed., *Lorraine, Bourgogne et Franche-Comté. Mille ans d'histoire* (Moyenmotier 2001), 271-88.

⁵⁵ EAD., 'Les abbayes de chanoinesses nobles de Franche-Comté confrontées à la réforme post-tridentine', in M.-E. HENNEAU, C. MARCHAL, and J. PIRONT eds., *Entre ciel et terre: oeuvres et résistances de femmes de Gênes à Liège (xe-xviii siècle)*, forthcoming.

⁵⁶ C. POIRIER, *Le chapitre de dames nobles de Bouxières-aux-Dames*, unpublished master's thesis (Université Nancy II 2001-2), 138-41.

⁵⁷ S. VANDERPUTTEN, 'They Lived Under that Rule as do Those Who Have Succeeded Them. Simultaneity and Conflict in the Foundation Accounts of a French Women's Convent (10th-18th Centuries)', *The Downside Review* 139 (2021), 82-97.

⁵⁸ A. CALMET, *Histoire ecclésiastique* 3, lxxx.

it he chronologically arranged and described all the versions of the canonesses' statutes he could find. In taking this exhaustive approach, he was able to chart the evolution of the abbey's inner customs, the legal and financial status of the convent members and their male associates, and the relationship of the convent with regard to the area's lay and ecclesiastical authorities since the beginning of the early modern period. In itself this section reads as a historical reconstruction of how the convent's late eighteenth-century status came into being. But surely the most revealing passage is the one that concerns an unfinished set of statutes from 1622. The completion and application of this document had been prevented by an outbreak of the plague and subsequent warfare, but instead of just mentioning the document for completeness' sake, Puibusque insisted that readers know the subject of all five surviving statutes.⁵⁹ In making such detailed notes, the archivist echoed the Bouxières' canonesses previous efforts to submit a detailed reconstruction of certain aspects of the past. Specifically, how their status as secular canonesses, the internal hierarchy of the convent and its administrative procedures, and especially their stringent admission policies had been legally consolidated over the course of the sixteenth to early eighteenth century. The most recent of these efforts dated back to the early 1760s, when an internal dispute between the chapter members and the incumbent deaconess, Anne-Catherine de Briey de Landres, had erupted over the abbey's strict admission rules. To justify their position the abbess and chapter members issued two printed brochures, the first of which was issued in 1763 and contained a detailed discussion of earlier statutes, including the 1622 ones.⁶⁰ The fact that the *Sommier* echoes the canonesses' approach in the brochure arguably tells us that Puibusque aligned his archival account of the institutional past to their preferred version. With some stretch of the imagination this and the two abovementioned interventions in the inventory's account of the abbey's past qualify him as a monastic historiographer, alongside his other roles as an archivist and as Moreau's correspondent.

Conclusions

Even though the Bouxières *Sommier* is certainly an impressive achievement in terms of its scope and detail, it is fair to say that its creator, the Benedictine monk Nicolas-Hilaire Puibusque, was neither a great intellectual nor an exceptionally gifted archivist. However, his preserved output as a reorganizer of archives, a student of medieval diplomatic practices, and a correspondent of the Cabinet is nevertheless evidence of his ambitious nature and his qualities as an adept networker. His letters to Moreau quite openly express his desire to be recognized for his intellectual work and to be able to use his connection with the *Cabinet des chartes* to be

⁵⁹ Nancy, Bibliothèque Stanislas, 175, p. 185: 'On y traite: 1° De l'état de l'église; du nombre des dames et autres ministres d'icelles; 2° De l'office divin; 3° De la charge de la dame trésorière; 4° De l'office des chanoines; 5° De l'autorité du chapitre et de la manière dont il doit le tenir'.

⁶⁰ *Mémoire pour les dames abbesse, chanoinesses & chapitre de l'insigne église de Notre-Dame de Bouxières, contre la dame de Briey de Landres, doyenne* (s.l. 1763), 10-11. The mid-eighteenth century was a time when many communities of noble canonesses faced internal strife due to disagreements over admission requirements and individual members' financial status; e.g. C. MAZELLA-LERICHE, 'Le chapitre noble de Maubeuge à l'heure de son apogée (XVIIe–XVIIIe),' in J. HEUCLIN and C. LEDUC eds., *Chanoines et chanoinesses des anciens Pays-Bas: Le chapitre de Maubeuge du IXe au XVIIIe siècle* (Villeneuve-d'Ascq 2019), 185-208, at 192-93.

introduced into the high elite of his age, and maybe derive some financial benefits from it for himself and his relatives. Furthermore the reconstruction in this paper of his career trajectory in the late 1780s shows that he adapted his professional priorities once it became evident that Moreau would not help him in this respect and took care to nurture his connections in the Nancy area and to raise his profile with local patrons. Having obtained his job working at Bouxières through Archbishop Loménie de Brienne, Puibusque subsequently used his assignment there as a *carte de visite* to find a new employer in the person of Abbess de Choiseul of Poussay. In addition to these attitudes and strategies, his written legacy also reflects his interest in contributing to the historiographical memory of a religious community. The latter becomes apparent on closely reading the *Sommier*, the contents of which were informed by the canonesses' perception of the communal past. And even though no one apparently noticed at the time, his work at Bouxières in turn informed his selection of transcribed charters for the Cabinet, several of which subsequently became unique witnesses to lost charters from the abbey archives. Unbeknownst to director Moreau and his staff, he anchored some of the historical self-perception of that community in the Dépôt, thus preserving it for future scholars to study. Further research on the biographical trajectories of other Vannist monks will show if Puibusque's approach in this respect was exceptional or not.

Appendix: Medieval and Early Modern Documents in Archival Folders Cha. Li. 1-3 of the Bouxières Sommier, Compared to Puibusque's Draft Description and the Transcriptions for Moreau

Original charters and other documents, by year and author, followed by their number in R.-H. Bautier, <i>Les origines</i>	Number in de Puibusque's draft description (Nancy, Bibliothèque Stanislas, 413/1, fols 228r-33v), late 1786-early 1788	Folder number in de Puibusque's <i>Sommier</i> (Nancy, Bibliothèque Stanislas, 175), spring-summer 1788	De Puibusque's 1788 copies in the volumes of the <i>Collection Moreau</i> , late August 1788
912, King Charles the Simple (1)	Layette chartes 1	Cha(rtes) Li(asse) 1	4, fol. 18
923, Bishop Gozelin of Toul (2)	Layette chartes 2	Cha. Li. 1	4, fol. 104
923-31, Bishop Gozelin of Toul (4)	Layette chartes 3	Cha. Li. 1	4, fol. 141
938, Bishop Gozelin of Toul (6)	Layette chartes 4	Cha. Li. 1	5, fols 147r-48r
941, Pope Stephen VIII (forgery, 13)	Layette chartes 6	Cha. Li. 1	6, fol. 223
960, Emperor Otto I (25)	Layette chartes 8	Cha. Li. 1	9, fol. 113
965, Emperor Otto I (31)	Layette chartes 9	Cha. Li. 1	10, fols 24-25
959-60, Lay abbot Odelric (15)	Layette chartes 5	Cha. Li. 2	
966, Duke Frederic of Lotharingia (33)	Layette chartes 11	Cha. Li. 2	10, fol. 68
966, Ermenaidis (32)	Layette chartes 10	Cha. Li. 2	
963-65, Bishop Gerard of Toul (26)	Layette chartes 7	Cha. Li. 2	10, fol. 13
976, Emperor Otto II (37)	Layette chartes 12	Cha. Li. 2	11, fol. 193
996-1019, Bishop Berthold of Toul (39)		Cha. Li. 2	
1027, Emperor Conrad II (40)	Layette chartes 13	Cha. Li. 2	20, fol. 203
1073, Bishop Pibo of Toul (41)	Layette chartes 14	Cha. Li. 3	
1137, Pope Innocent II (47)	Layette chartes 16	Cha. Li. 3	57, fol. 98
1136, Bishop Henry of Toul (45)	Layette chartes 15	Cha. Li. 3	
1146, Bishop Henry of Toul (49)	Layette chartes 17	Cha. Li. 3	62, fol. 108
1163, Bishop Henry of Toul (52)		Cha. Li. 3	72, fol. 33
1101-7, Bishop Pibo of Toul (42)		Cha. Li. 3	30, fol. 78
1245, Count Thiebaut of Bar	Layette chartes 23	Cha. Li. 3	
1341, Count Raoul of Lorraine		Cha. Li. 3	
1441, Duchess Isabella of Lorraine	Layette chartes 24	Cha. Li. 3	
1385, Abbess and chapter of Bouxières (copy)	Layette chartes 18	Cha. Li. 3	
Four charters by dukes of Lorraine (copies) and transcripts of all four of these	Layette chartes 21-22	Cha. Li. 3	
Three charters by dukes of Lorraine (copies)	Layette chartes 19	Cha. Li. 3	
1592, Pope Clemens VIII	Layette chartes 20		

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