Conserving Johann Remmelin’s *Catoptrum Microcosmicum*

There were two reasons why I was looking forward to compiling the condition and treatment report on Remmelin’s *Catoptrum Microcosmicum* (Allestree E.1.4). This is the first anatomical atlas to use dozens of engravings superimposed as a series of opening flaps as method of illustration. The edition at Christ Church dates from 1619 and was printed in Augsburg by David Franck. Although I have reported on the volume before (see *Christ Church Library Newsletter* Vol 6, issue 2, Hilary term 2010), I was now looking at it as the Oxford Conservation Consortium’s first piece of work for the Christ Church library and archive collections since the College joined the Oxford Conservation Consortium in October. We are all looking forward to our involvement with these remarkable collections, both in terms of practical repair work and having an oversight of their ongoing preservation.

continued on page 9

FROM MANUSCRIPTS TO MANDRAKE ROOTS

Christ Church Library, Its History and Treasures

A library like this contains not just books but also objects, some obvious additions to the library’s collections, some less so. Inevitably, this will be a partial account, based on my own likes and prejudices, but I hope that it will give you some idea of the wonderful institution which is Christ Church Library.

In 1525 Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, Archbishop of York and Henry VIII’s Chancellor of England, founded a major Oxford college on the site of the former Augustinian priory of St Frideswide. Wolsey wanted to leave it as a monument to his own greatness, and with characteristic vanity he called it “Cardinal College”. He built three sides of the main quadrangle, a grand kitchen and hall, and started work on demolishing the old priory church. However, then he came unstuck.

continued on page 2

**THIS ISSUE**

Conserving Remmelin’s *Catoptrum*

From Manuscripts to Mandrake Roots

Cooking and Dining at Christ Church

Time Capsule under Restoration

Medieval Tiles in the Allestree Library

Funding the Allestree Library Restoration

Medieval MSS from Mainz in Oxford – Part 2

Illuminations and Icons in the Making

Breaking the Canon?

Manuscript 28 and the Traditions of Byzantine vs Western Illumination

Detail in MS 93 fol. 221v. This fifteenth century manuscript (c. 1464-1500) contains the *Hours of St Denis*. It is one of the finest examples of French style of illumination, attributed by Otto Pächt to Maître François, whose workshop was in Paris. His miniatures are accompanied by richly decorated borders. The calligrapher was probably Jehan Dubreuillet.
He failed to provide what Henry most wanted, an annulment of his first marriage to Katherine of Aragon, so that he could marry Anne Boleyn.

In 1530 Wolsey was on his way to York for his much delayed enthronement as Archbishop of York when he was arrested on Henry's orders and summoned to return to London. He must have known what was awaiting him, but he died at Leicester Abbey on his journey back south. Although the contemporary accounts of his final illness sound unpleasant, his death was probably less unpleasant than the one Henry had in mind for him, had he made it back to London, since this would probably have involved the severing of his head from his shoulders. The firescreen at the west end of the Upper Library depicts his arrival at Leicester Abbey. He was by this time very ill, and had to be helped to dismount from his mule. He died on 27th November, and all his property, including his embryonic college, passed to the Crown.

So far as we know, Wolsey's plans for Cardinal College did not include a library. However, our collections include one book which certainly belonged to Wolsey. It is one volume of a two-volume lectionary (a work which contains the scriptural readings for high feast days and the feast days of English saints, particularly those associated with Wolsey's offices and foundations). These two volumes were commissioned by Wolsey, who spared no expense on the books, engaging Pieter Meghen, who later became scribe to Henry VIII, to write out the text and then engaging a Flemish artist for the thirty-eight miniatures. Wolsey's personal emblems, mottoes or arms appear on every illuminated page, to ensure that the viewer could not forget who was responsible for all this magnificence. After Wolsey's fall, the two volumes passed into Henry VIII's library, and somehow (no-one knows exactly how) both passed out of the royal collections later and were split up. The Gospel volume was subsequently presented to Magdalen College, Oxford, while the volume containing the Epistles was given to Christ Church in 1614 by John Lant. The two volumes occasionally meet up, most recently for an exhibition at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles and then at the Royal Academy in London.

Fire screen enclosing a tapestry depicting Cardinal Wolsey.

Illuminated page from the Epistle Lectionary (MS 101, fol. 12). The miniature represents St Frideswide, the patron saint of Oxford. The manuscript dates from 1528 and was commissioned by Thomas Wolsey for Christ Church.

Christ Church also houses Cardinal Wolsey's hat. We cannot prove that the hat was Wolsey's, but we firmly believe that it was. It is for Christ Church the fortieth article of the Church of England. The hat was found in the Great Wardrobe by Bishop Burnet in 1710, when Burnet was Clerk of the Closet. It subsequently belonged to Horace Walpole (1776). At the Strawberry Hill sale (1842), the Catalogue of which described the hat as Wolsey's, it was bought for £21 by Charles Kean the actor, who is said to have worn it more than once when playing Wolsey in Henry VIII. Kean had the hat stand made to house the hat, in gothic style to commemorate the Walpole/Strawberry Hill connection. After the death of Kean's only child, the hat was bought for £63 by members of Christ Church, notably the Rev. A.W. Oxford, and presented to the college.

The college had a difficult few years following the Crown's acquisition of Wolsey's property, but finally Henry refounded the college on 4th November 1546 as Aedes Christi, in English the House of Christ or Christ Church. Today the college is still referred to
as “The House”. In what has been described as “an act of imaginative parsimony”, Henry bound college and cathedral together so inextricably that it would take an act of Parliament to disentangle them! The diocese of Oxford had been established in 1542, with its cathedral at Osney, but at some point during 1545 Henry decided to move the cathedral to Oxford, and make it part of his new college. As a result, the Dean of the cathedral is also the head of the college, a conflation of religious and academic responsibility. Henry died on 28th January 1547, before he had the time to draw up any statutes for the new institution, and so Christ Church remained without formal statutes until the nineteenth century.

Henry didn’t leave Christ Church a library any more than Wolsey did, but by the 1560s the building which had been the refectory in the days of St Frideswide’s Priory was being used as a library. It was fitted with wooden lecterns to which the books were chained. These were mostly large Latin folios on theology and patristics; about 140 volumes are still in the library collections, and can be identified from the holes in the boards to show where the chains were attached.

In 1610-11 the Old Library was refitted with bookcases, placed across the main axis of the room and each incorporating its own desk and bench. The refurbishment was financed by Otho Nicolson, a wealthy Chancery lawyer, who is better known as the donor of the great water conduit which once stood at Carfax, Oxford’s central crossroads. In addition to £800 for the restoration of the Old Library, Nicolson gave a further £100 to buy books. In recognition of his generosity, his coat of arms is emblazoned on the cover of the new library Donors’ Book, started in 1614, and his name appears prominently on the first page. Some of the books bought with his gift are still shelved in the Upper Library under his name.

One of the other books listed in the Donors’ Book as a gift from George Salteren in 1721 is one of my favourite manuscripts. It is a text of Augustine’s sermons, written for Buildwas Abbey in 1167. It is one of the earliest dated English manuscripts.

It is an “ordinary” manuscript, not one written for a wealthy patron with gorgeous illumination, but a practical text, probably to be read aloud from over meals in the refectory. Accordingly, when the vellum sheets developed a hole from having been stretched too taut, the scribe continued to use the parchment, writing around the holes, and in some cases stitching the hole up, since vellum was an expensive commodity. If he had been writing a special presentation copy, he would probably have used a new, perfect sheet of vellum. The binding of this volume, too, reflects its ordinary, humble origins, with very thick boards, covered with leather which has been cobbled together with large Frankenstein-type stitches.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the Old Library was completely full, and the college desperately needed a new building. Henry Aldrich, Dean of Christ Church from 1689 until his death in 1710, put forward a plan in 1705 for a building, derived from the Palace of Versailles, to complete Peckwater Quadrangle. The ground plan makes it clear that Aldrich envisaged a residential block, but he died before building work could begin. He bequeathed to the House a substantial collection of printed and manuscript music, twenty albums of fine prints, and a large collection of books on architecture. This gift seems to have precipitated the decision to build a new library, and on 20 September 1716 Canon Stratford wrote to Edward Harley that “in our new building we shall observe Dr Aldrich’s model as to the case, but we design to turn the inside into a
library and to make it the finest library that belongs to any society in Europe.” Aldrich’s design was adapted by Dr George Clarke of All Souls, with master mason William Townsend, and early in 1717 the clearing away of the old buildings to make way for the New Library was begun. The New Library cost a total of £15,517, the bulk of which (£13,312) was obtained from the 306 members of the House, who gave an average of £43 each. The money came in over a long period of time – it dribbled in rather than gushed – and so the Library Building Account was not closed until 1779, 63 years after the beginning of construction.

Engraving of the South Prospect of Peckwater Quad proposed by Henry Aldrich (1648-1710).

The original plan was for a grand first-floor library, to avoid damp and flooding, with an open loggia on the ground floor, and the shell of the building was complete by the death of William Townsend, the mason, in 1739. It seems that the original intention was to have bookcases running into the room, between the windows, rather like Duke Humfrey’s library in the Bodleian. However, so many decades were spent in the construction of the building that by the time the fitting out of the Upper Library began, fashions had changed, and several large bequests of books also necessitated a change of plan.

In the early 1750s, a gallery was inserted in the Upper Library to house the collection of Charles Boyle, fourth earl of Orrery, which had arrived in 1733. Boyle was very interested in the natural sciences, and was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 1706. He supported the scientific instrument-maker George Graham, whose tellurion (an instrument to display the motion of the moon, sun and earth) was renamed the orrery after the earl, his patron. The fourth earl fell out with his son John, the future fifth earl, who did not approve of his father’s relationship with Margaret Swordfeger, the wife of his secretary, who became the earl’s consort and mistress, and with whom he had four children. Charles, the fourth earl, redrafted his will in favour of Margaret Swordfeger and her children, and bequeathed his library and instrument collection to Christ Church, claiming that his son lacked “the inclination either for entertainment or knowledge which study and learning afford”. Although father and son were reconciled before the fourth earl’s death, the will was never revised, so Christ Church got the books and scientific instruments in 1733. The scientific instruments are on deposit at the Museum of the History of Science in Broad Street, including the original orrery.

Also in the 1750s four windows on the north wall were concealed behind bookcases to accommodate further bequests. From the outside there are seven windows, but inside there are only three. In 1752 the execution of the plasterwork in the Upper Library was entrusted to Thomas Roberts, an excellent craftsman who had decorated many important buildings in Oxford and the surrounding district. He was paid £92 12s for the ceiling of the stairwell, and a further £663 11s 3d for the magnificent ceiling of the Upper Library. There were later payments for stucco work, which included the festoons depicting musical and scientific instruments on the north wall.

The statue of John Locke, the philosopher and one of Christ Church’s most famous alumni, was given to the Library in 1758 by one William Lock, who claimed to be related to John Locke. The statue was made by the famous Flemish sculptor, Michael Rysbrack, and must have presided over a building site for the first few years of its residence in the niche half way up the stairs. The pedestal is in fact rendered into the wall, and the statue was in place before the ceiling of the stairwell was complete, because when the statue was cleaned about five years ago, the conservators found pieces of plaster which had been lobbed behind it by the workmen who clearly thought that some of the workmanship wasn’t sufficiently crisp. William Lock paid for the statue, but Christ Church commissioned the pedestal from Rysbrack, who sent in his bill in May 1759 for £38 12s 2d. In April 1768, he sent a remarkably polite letter to the new Dean, William Markham, respectfully requesting payment of the original bill. It was finally paid on 6th July 1768.

In the early 1760s there was yet another major change of plan from the original design, caused by another benefaction, this time of paintings. General John Guise, a member of the college at the beginning of the century, left to Christ Church over 900 drawings and 258 pictures. The ground floor of the library was still an open piazza with a stairwell leading to the great first-floor room, but under the supervision of the architect Henry Keene the arches were altered into windows, and the ground floor was converted into two large rooms, with a vestibule
between them, in order to accommodate the paintings.

The Old Library continued to function during the eighteenth century while the New Library was undergoing construction, but finally in 1763 books began to go onto the shelves in the new building. Christ Church had received several very large bequests of books during the early part of the eighteenth century, including the Orrery bequest which I have already mentioned and which necessitated the insertion of the gallery. The largest single collection of all was received from William Wake, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1716 until his death in 1737. Wake left to the college his printed books, his papers, both personal and official, a large collection of Greek manuscripts, and his collection of coins. The coins are now on deposit in the Ashmolean Museum but for two hundred years they lived in coin cabinets in one of the side rooms. Of the Archbishops of Canterbury’s papers which survive, only William Wake’s are not at Lambeth Palace Library. Lambeth has a set of the microfilms, but Christ Church has the 31 volumes of the original letters.

Wake’s collection of Greek manuscripts includes a large number of New Testament texts. It appears that Wake was planning a recension of the New Testament, and to that end he gathered together a large number of manuscripts of the Gospels. However, he never got around to it, nor did he find an amanuensis to do the work for him. But Christ Church benefits from his collecting.

One of my favourite printed books came to us from William Wake. It is a New Testament in Malabaric, modern Tamil, the language spoken on the Malabar coast of India.

Missionaries were sent out from Halle in Germany, to spread the Good Word among the Indian natives. A printer and a printing press were also sent out, together with a lot of movable type in Malabaric. The first printer fell overboard just outside Gibraltar, so a replacement, Mr. Adler, had to be sent out. Once settled in Tranquebar, the missionaries began to print the New Testament in Malabaric, but the type they had been sent with was rather large, and was using up too much paper. So they melted down the lead covers of Cheshire cheeses which had been sent out for the missionaries to eat, and made a new smaller type, which was used to print the Epistles and Revelation. We know all this because our copy of the New Testament was a presentation copy to Archbishop Wake, and came with a letter from Henry Newman, the missionary, which is pasted to the rear down to his own time, which includes a mention of the meeting between Charlemagne and the Pope in AD 799, the year before Charlemagne was crowned Holy Roman Emperor. This manuscript probably dates from the end of the ninth or the beginning of the tenth century. It is not very exciting to look at, and the Greek is not easy to read, since it’s full of contractions and ligatures (the joining of one letter to another, to stand in for frequent letter combinations and make the task of the scribe quicker), but it’s one of the two earliest manuscripts of Theophanes. The other is in Russia. Greek manuscripts did not change in style or format for hundreds of years, which makes dating them rather difficult.
cover, explaining the history of the volume. This is in fact the second copy which Wake received, since the first one was faulty or incomplete, and had to be replaced. Reverend Newman's letter concludes by telling Wake that several Indians have been instructed by Mr. Adler to do the work so well that though he be dead, the missionaries seem not to lament the loss of him.

A manuscript which links further to the story of the missionaries on the Malabar coast of India is Christ Church MS. 233, a Book of Common Prayer in Malabaric, written on strips of palm leaf by Benjamin Schulze, Protestant Missionary, in 1726.

The Library has another manuscript written on strips of palm leaf, given to us by John Sneyd, who came up to Christ Church in 1782, and took his BA in 1786. At that time, all students had to give a public speech in Hall in order to obtain their degree, but Sneyd was given dispensation to read his speech privately to the Dean, because he had a speech impediment. He went on to become a rector in Staffordshire. We don't know how he acquired the palm leaf manuscript, nor do we know what exactly it is. We think it may be in Malayalam, but we don't yet know what the text says. Investigations are under way!

The executors of John Fell, who was Dean of Christ Church from 1660 and then Bishop of Oxford from 1676 to his death ten years later (uniquely he was allowed to hold the bishopric and the deanery at the same time), gave to the library “two mandrakes in a silver box”, according to the Donors' Book.

Mandrake roots are shaped roughly like a parsnip, and can look almost human, with the result that they were believed to have magical properties, and to scream when they were pulled from the ground. Most people are familiar with the mandrake from the Harry Potter novels. Our mandrake roots are nowhere near as big as the ones depicted in the film, but they are rather more sinister. One is carved to represent a man’s head, with long unkempt hair (roots), while the other is a complete human figure, jointed so as to join bits of root together. Fell kept them in a silver box, and I’m sure that in his mind the mandrake roots were the important part of the gift, and that the box was just the receptacle. However, the silver filigree box is today of much more importance than the mandrake roots, which are no longer kept inside it, since they tend to tarnish the silver.

John Fell was the subject of the rhyme penned by a mischievous student, Thomas Brown:

I do not love thee, Dr Fell,  
The reason why I cannot tell;  
But this I know, and know full well,  
I do not love thee, Dr Fell.

It is an adapted translation of an epigram by the Roman poet Martial. John Fell’s father, Samuel, had been Dean of Christ Church from 1638 to 1648. During the Civil War, Samuel Fell was loyal to the King, but after the victory of the Parliamentary party, he was ordered to quit his lodgings, which he refused to do. Eventually, on 12 April 1648 his wife, Margaret, and her younger children were forcibly removed from the Deanery. There is a story that she had to be carried out on her chair because she refused to leave the building!

The major collections at Christ Church were acquired by gift or bequest. One of the unique and wonderful features of the library is that collections have largely been kept together, so that all Wake's books are on the wall beneath the gallery, with the Earl of Orrery's books above. On the north wall are the collection of books purchased with the £100 given by Otho Nicolson in 1611, books belonging to Henry Aldrich, Canon Stratford, and finally John Morris. Morris was Regius Professor of Hebrew, who died in 1648, leaving his books to his successors in perpetuity, and setting up a trust fund to provide £5 annually to buy further books for the study of Hebrew. This is the only part of the collection to grow, and the overflow lives in the current Regius Professor's rooms. Professor Williamson's immediate predecessors tied up the income from the trust fund in journal subscriptions, which go up exponentially, and so ate...
into the capital. As a result, Professor Williamson has an income of about 50p a year, and so can’t buy anything at the moment. He’s allowing the capital to build up again, in the hope that in a few years’ time he might be able to afford a paperback. With so many bequests of books, it must have meant that nearly all the shelves of the New Library were filled as soon as they were installed by the carpenters; only a few gaps remained in the Orrery gallery, which were filled in by subsequent librarians, who ahor a vacuum. The remaining books from the Old Library were unchained, and the Old Library was finally empty by 1770. Five years later it was converted into residential accommodation. The small south rooms off the Upper Library were filled with Wake’s manuscripts and his coins, the music of Aldrich, Orrery’s scientific instruments, travel books and pamphlets.

In the room with the music, there is also a pair of treble cornets, an early wind instrument, played like a recorder but with a trumpet-like mouthpiece, which gives a tone quality vaguely resembling a modern saxophone. One seventeenth-century document compares them to a ray of sunshine piercing the shadows when heard with the choir voices in cathedrals or chapels.

A pair of treble cornets (1605).

The Christ Church instruments are made of leather-covered wood with silver mounts, and are still in playing condition. They were bought in 1605, at a cost of £2 13s, for the visit of James I and his queen, which took place on 27th August of that year. The cornets would have been used to accompany the choir, both in the cathedral and out of doors. After 1605, the instruments were probably kept in the cathedral, until they were moved in to the New Library in the latter part of the eighteenth century. The mahogany case in which they are now kept was made in 1970 by Mr Jackson, a craftsman from the Ashmolean. For over a century after its completion, the New Library was used as its builders had intended: the senior members referred to its books, signing out those which they needed to borrow in borrowers’ registers; occasionally privileged undergraduates were ‘indulged’ with permission to use the volumes; and visitors were allowed in to view the works of art on the ground floor. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, tours of the paintings were conducted by the Library’s janitor and charwoman, Mrs. Showell. The modern books were shelved at the east end of the ground floor, with limited space for expansion on account of the paintings. Annual expenditure on books increased steadily, and in 1869 a Venetian Gothic gallery was introduced in the East Library on the ground floor, providing much needed extra shelving. In the 1960s the new Picture Gallery was built off Canterbury Quadrangle, and the remaining works of art were moved out, allowing the western half of the ground floor to be shelved for undergraduate use. The Library still retains a number of paintings, mostly portraits, on the walls above the bookcases, but the chief function of the lower rooms is now to house the modern books used by our undergraduate and postgraduate students. Between 1960 and 1962, the north, east and west faces of the library were refaced, replacing the original Headington stone which had weathered very badly. The stairwell and vestibule were repainted in 1957 in an intriguing apricot colour, and in 1964-66 it was the turn of the Upper Library: after much debate, a scheme by John Fowler was chosen, in “Neapolitan pink” with extensive gilding. Last summer, the entrance hall was repainted, in the same shade, and the Upper Library underwent a “conservation clean”, thereby removing fifty years’ of dust and grime, and restoring it to the magnificence envisaged by Fowler.

I have not yet mentioned one of our most famous alumni, the Reverend Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, better known to most people as Lewis Carroll. Dodgson was the son of a clergyman from Cheshire, who had himself studied at Christ Church. Charles came up to Christ Church in 1851, and spent most of the rest of his life here. He obtained First Class Honours in the Final Mathematical School in 1854, and in January 1855 began his teaching career at Christ Church. In February of that same year he was appointed sub-librarian at Christ Church, an administrative post held for a few years which involved ensuring that the dons signed books in and out correctly. He developed an interest in the fledgling art of photography, and wrote books on mathematics and logic, but he is most famous for his friendship with Alice Liddell, the daughter of the Dean, and for the books which she inspired. Alice’s first recorded meeting with Charles Dodgson took place on 25th April 1856, when Dodgson was helping his friend, Reginald Southey, to take a photograph of the cathedral. Six days later Dodgson’s own new camera arrived at Christ Church, and on 3rd June 1856 he used it to take the first of many photographs of Alice and the other children. Over the years that followed, Dodgson continued and improved his friendship with the Liddell children, and boating expeditions were quite a frequent occurrence during the summer months. On 4th July 1862, Dodgson and his friend Robinson Duckworth took Lorina, Alice and Edith Liddell on a boating expedition, which had far-reaching consequences for the history of children’s literature. On this occasion Dodgson first related the story of
‘Alice’s adventures under ground’. The “interminable fairy-tale”, as Dodgson referred to it in his diary, lasted through many later boating trips. Alice asked for the story to be written out for her, and Dodgson records in his diary that he wrote out the headings the very next day (July 6th 1862) on his way to London. He began writing the manuscript copy on November 13th 1862, and had finished the text by February 1863. The illustrations caused him much more trouble. On 10th March 1863, he called at the Deanery to borrow a natural history book to assist him in the drawings, but even so the pictures were not completed until September 13th 1864. The manuscript was presented to Alice as an early Christmas present on 26th November 1864, by which time the story was already well on its way to publication. Dodgson had shown the story to his friend, George Macdonald, who encouraged him to publish it. He took this advice seriously, and records in his diary on July 2nd 1863 that he had “received from Mr. Combe a second trial page, larger for ‘Alice’s adventures’”. He added more chapters, incidents and characters to the original tale, and found a publisher, Macmillan. Dodgson himself paid for all the costs of producing the book.

Initially, Dodgson had hoped to illustrate the published version himself, but he soon realised that his artistic skills were not sufficient. In December 1863, he wrote to a friend, Tom Taylor, asking for his help in approaching John Tenniel, the Punch cartoonist, with a request to produce a dozen wood-cuts, since “of all artists on wood, I should prefer Mr. Tenniel. If he should be willing to undertake them, I would send him the book to look over, not that he should at all follow my pictures, but simply to give him an idea of the sort of thing I want”. In April 1864 Tenniel agreed to illustrate the book. On May 2nd, Dodgson sent to Tenniel the first slip set up for ‘Alice’s adventures’, from the beginning of Chapter III (the scene in which Alice encounters the giant puppy).

There are many “Alice”-related items which can be displayed from the Christ Church collections – draft sketches for the manuscript which Dodgson gave to Alice, Dodgson’s detailed chart to show Tenniel and Macmillan exactly where each illustration should be placed, the advertisement which he put on the notice board of the Senior Common Room for his brother’s orange marmalade, now preserved in the college archive - but I have chosen one very contemporary object. While he was sub-librarian, Dodgson would, of course, have seen every day the pair of globes which stand at the entrance to the Upper Library, one terrestrial, one celestial. A theory has been proposed that all the characters in the “Alice” books are based on the constellations, and an enterprising globe-maker from the Isle of Wight has created an “Alice” globe, in which the constellations are shown as figures from “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland”. Some special pleading is required in order to match up all the constellations with “Alice” characters, but even though the theory is almost certainly incorrect, the globe is nonetheless rather fun.

The two original globes date from around 1765. The clue lies in the shape of Australia. Many libraries in the eighteenth century were adorned with pairs of globes, and the Queen’s College has a pair almost identical to ours, but not in such good condition!

This has inevitably been a personal view of the Library and its collections, but I hope it has given you some idea of the wonderful items which the library houses.

Janet McMullin
Christ Church

Note
A version of this article was presented during the Oxford Literary Festival on 7 April 2011.
Returning to the volume after a period of time, I was able to appreciate again what a hugely impressive object it is, both in terms of its impact as an object and as a major conservation project.

The initial assessment of any book undergoing conservation treatment is very important. It is essential to note all aspects of the book’s original structure and condition so that post treatment comparisons can be made and the value of the treatment assessed, and to provide a record for curatorial staff both now and in the future. This procedure is completed before any invasive work is begun.

The assessment consists of two complementary processes: firstly, the completion of a standardized treatment report sheet; and secondly, photographing the book to substantiate what is written in the report.

The treatment report sheet can be broken down into three parts: an analysis of the structure and the condition of both the text block and the binding and finally the proposed treatment. In the case of Allestree E.1.4, the textblock and end leaves are constructed of laid paper as would be expected at this date.

An interesting aspect of the printing, and one which is common to many books printed in Germany at this date, is the offsetting and striking through of the printer’s ink onto the verso of the sheets and the facing pages. German printers commonly used unsized paper, it being the binder’s responsibility to size the paper. This resulted in the ink leeching into the relatively porous paper during printing.

The structure of the binding is of great interest. Firstly, red ruling inks have been used on the endpapers, and the account book style of these indicates that they were probably printers’ or binders’ waste materials.

The use of such materials for endpapers was common practice until the middle of the seventeenth century, although by 1619 the use of waste was starting to die out and certainly for the higher end of the printing market such as we see here.

The second feature of interest is the method of sewing used. The majority of bound volumes use the sewing supports to attach the boards to the text block. E.1.4 is different, not least in that it is a limp parchment binding with no boards.

It is constructed by a combination of primary stitching through the text block to hold together the quires, and stabbing through the textblock. The book seems to be made up of single leaves and so the stitching to hold these together is through the depth of the textblock, in this case using a double length of
thread, and tied with a substantial knot on the upper textblock. Small strips of parchment have then also been stabbed through the depth of the textblock, and these have been laced through holes in the cover, attaching the textblock to the cover.

Finally, the parchment cover itself has evidence of a previous fold on the head and tail turn-ins in the form of a distinct line of discolouration. Clearly this is a piece of reused material. The use of waste materials for the cover and the endpapers, and the use of a sewing structure such as stitching to form the text block on such a high status book all indicate that the current binding was intended to be temporary cover until the book was rebound according to the owner’s taste.

Commonly, this is how books were sold, and so the cost of the binding was incurred not by the bookseller but by the buyer. In the case of E.1.4, the owner never got around to having the book rebound and it remains in its temporary binding, a rare and wonderful thing.

The next part of the treatment report is to assess the condition of the textblock and the binding. The poor condition of the leaves presents the greatest challenge in terms of the conservation and the future use of this book. The endpapers and leaves are dirty, torn, heavily water stained, softened and have losses to the edges.

The method of construction and the stiffness of the covering parchment mean that the book has somewhat restricted opening. This, combined with repeated flexing in the joint area through use, has caused a split in the upper joint area of the cover at both the head and the tail of the spine.

The distortion of the parchment cover is also problematic as it is abrading the adjacent leaves. As a result of the water damage to the book the edges of the endpapers became adhered to the cover and have incurred losses when they have become detached once more, leaving parts of the endleaves stuck to the turn-ins of the binding. However, the stitching and the stabbed parchment laces attaching the case are all in good condition. When we make the photographic record of the book we include at least images of the upper and lower boards, spine, head, tail and foredge and sometimes the board paper and flyleaf.

As E.1.4 is a thin volume I have also taken an image of every leaf, as I will be working on the majority of the leaves during the course of the treatment either through their cleaning, repair or humidification. At the Oxford Conservation Consortium we predominantly use digital photography as this allows us to quickly examine the images for clarity and accuracy.

Finally, before starting conservation work, we had to determine (in consultation with the custodians of the object) the most appropriate treatment for this particular volume.

The aim for E.1.4 is to allow the book to be opened, handled and displayed without further risk. Also, to alter, if possible, the harmful aspects of its current condition. The main priorities are the reduction of the surface dirt and discolouration, the repair of the damaged leaves and the reduction of the distortions in the covering parchment.

The cleaning, resizing and humidification procedures involved in preparing the textblock for repair are detailed in the above mentioned article on E.1.4 in the Hilary 2010 issue of the Christ Church Library Newsletter.

Surface cleaning the volume allowed me to remove all the loose dirt created by storage and handling, but the ingrained dirt within the paper fibres could not be removed.

Working through the textblock during the surface cleaning process also allowed me to better assess its condition and provide temporary stabilization of any areas that were at risk of being easily detached or further damaged by opening and handling during treatment.

Following initial surface cleaning, I have been concentrating on reducing the distracting heavy water stain tide lines to the illustrated pages. Although the water stain is apparent throughout the text block the printed text information can still be easily read and the stain does not appear to be having a negative effect on the paper substrate.

However, the magnificent title page and anatomical diagrams are visually important objects in their own right, and I felt that the stained area on these was detracting from their overall impact. This had the
effect of making the viewer focus on the stain rather than the image, a problem if these leaves are to be used for exhibition display.

My goal was to make the stained area less defined and even out the tone of paper substrate, rather than create a clean line within an overall discoloured page. As with all interventive conservation methods I started the treatment with due caution, using a very small localised spot test on an unobtrusive area of the title page to assess if the stain was water soluble and how easily it could be reduced.

This involved localised controlled wetting of the area using a small amount of warm water applied with a fine brush and immediately blotting on both sides of the leaf. The process was repeated until the severity of the stain line was reduced and the overall tone of stained area was evened out.

The results were very positive. As the staining is extensive and the procedure relatively time consuming it was agreed that only the staining on the support sheet and the uppermost flaps of the anatomical pages be treated.

I will now move on to repairing the edge tears and infilling the losses to the leaves where necessary using thin, toned Japanese tissue and wheat starch paste as an adhesive. Accurate colour matching will be an important aspect of this so as to tone all the repairs in with the overall colour of the sheet.

With regard to the cover, my aim is to humidify and flatten the parchment to reduce the severity of the distortions caused by the water damage. The treatment to the cover will be completed by repair to the splits in the joint area using a thicker toned Japanese paper to bridge the gap which has formed and prevent the split from increasing along the joint.

As the conservation of E.1.4 is involved and complex, research into the binding and aspects of
the textblock is also advantageous when making the decisions about its treatment. Therefore, I am also looking at the other two copies of this edition housed in the Oxford collections to try and ascertain the location of the few loose pieces of anatomical diagram within the textblock so that they can be accurately reinstated, and also to see how these copies are bound.

The conservation of E.1.4 is a wonderful opportunity to enable access to this remarkable object and I am extremely pleased to have been given this opportunity to work on this project. It will be interesting to update readers on the progress of the treatment and show, through the during-treatment photographic images, how the overall stabilization of the book is achieved.

Victoria Stevens
Oxford Conservation Consortium

CHRIST CHURCH
COOKING AND DINING THROUGH THE CENTURIES

Food and drink have always been important at Christ Church. An army, said Napoleon, marches on its stomach and the same can surely be said of an academic institution. Without good nourishment, no real research can be undertaken, no essays written, and no accounts properly kept. Right from the beginning, the records of victuals bought and consumed at the House occupy the pages of the college’s records, from the daily bread and beer to the expensive and rich items brought in for great banquets and special occasions.

Much to the critical amusement of his enemies, Cardinal Wolsey ensured that the kitchen and the dining hall were the first buildings completed when he first began to build, in 1525, on the site of the old priory. The size of both reflected the grandness of his design. Although Wolsey’s statutes stated that meals were not to be lingered over, the Hall was expected to be a place where men gathered around the open fire on cold evenings for useful conversation and entertainment.

Soon after Christ Church was founded, the college was blessed, during the 1560s and 1570s, with a manciple with a passion for record-keeping. John Furnivall kept a detailed account of his purchases for the kitchen day in and day out. Supplies arrived every day of the week, including Sundays and feast days. He purchased eggs, butter, cream by the gallon, mutton in every conceivable joint, whole veal and pigs, chickens, geese, game birds, fruit and wine. There were two fish days during the week - Fridays, and Wednesdays too - with an equal variety: ling was the commonest but there was also salmon, skate, cod (both fresh and salt), haddock, eels, whiting, pickerells, oysters, and crayfish.

In the last three months of 1583, the kitchen took delivery of £87 worth of bread, 308 kilders of beer at 22d per kilder, £11 worth of butter, and for the Hall 62 dozen candles and 18 napkins. One hundred old lings were purchased for £9 and for the carriage of those fish another 24 shillings. But it was sheep that formed the backbone of the Christ Church diet in the 16th century; on 17 September 1583, the manciple bought 60 sheep at 6s 4d each from a Mr Elles and a further 16 at the bargain price of 5s 4d each from Richard Howell of Wootton. Four days later another 14 arrived. In October, 222 more were added to the stocks. Just to ring the changes, 6 bullocks were purchased in September. Then, Christ Church had its own slaughterhouse, so meat was bought on the hoof from markets in nearby towns like Woodstock and Abingdon. The kitchen was regularly supplied with pots and knives; the Hall with drinking vessels, trenchers, tablecloths and napkins; and the buttery ensured that members would never go thirsty.

Published by Rudolph Ackerman in his History of Oxford (1814), this illustration shows the kitchen in the early 19th century, although the evidence suggests that this is much as it would have been in the 16th.

The 16th and 17th centuries were the great era for royal and embassy visits to Christ Church. We know that banquets were provided for Elizabeth I in 1566 and again in 1592, the latter visit costing the college £127 10s 9d. 200 eggs were bought for the day of the banquet alone, but we have little evidence for what dishes the queen was actually fed. And all we can say from the visit of James at the end of August 1605 is that the wine cost 57s. It is possible that both had swan; during the 16th century, Christ Church had the right of swans on the Thames, and the gentleman to whom the rights were leased was obliged, with appropriate notice and the payment of 5s, to provide a swan for table.
During the 18th century, some college chefs often supplied food for undergraduates to take back to their own rooms for parties - a much grander version of today's delivered pizza. Some even advertised in the local newspaper, and one New College cook ran a sausage-making business from the Wheatsheaf Inn. But this was also the time of the grandest of dinners and, in 1793, Christ Church hosted some of the celebrations for the installation of the Duke of Portland as Chancellor. The Chancellor lodged at Wadham College, and the Duchess at Christ Church for a full week. On the afternoon of 4th July, a huge banquet was held in Hall. Turtle soup was one of the most popular dishes at Christ Church from the eighteenth century right into the twentieth, and legend has it that the turtle, which was brought live from London at a cost of 10s 6d just for the carriage, was put into Mercury until the time came for its slaughter, and the smaller of the canons' children were allowed to ride on the turtle's back. All sorts of provisions were brought in including green baize cloth for the tables, extra glassware, crockery, and flatware, and additional mahogany tables and chairs. Orders were placed for melons and pineapples, for pies, jellies, and other fruits. Agency staff, then as now, were required to serve the meal which varied depending on the guests' importance. The noblemen, for example, had turbot in lobster sauce, followed by roast beef, lamb, duck, goose, chicken, and veal pie, with a fool to finish. The chaplains, at the far end of the Hall, ‘made do’ with salmon, lamb, and peas. This enormous meal took place in the middle of the afternoon of 4th July, before a concert in the new Chancellor’s honour at the Sheldonian Theatre.

Meals at Christ Church have always been appreciated but, as is always the case in catering establishments, complaints have been made throughout the centuries. In 1596, the Students complained that their 9oz daily allowance of bread was insufficient. They were reprimanded for being greedy at this ‘time of dearth’ by no lesser men that the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal. In 1643, with the Civil War in full swing, and with the King and Court in residence at Christ Church, the Students once more berated the Dean and Chapter for reducing their commons to one meal a day ‘farre below what they conceive as their due’ especially as ‘the greatest part of them [were] in Armes’.

At the beginning of the First World War, the senior members of Christ Church decided to follow the King’s example and to give up alcohol for the duration. Meals were reduced when rationing was introduced in 1918 - meat was only served on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and guests were only permitted on ‘meatless’ days. The exigencies of war, however, did not stop the complaints: J.G.C. Anderson wrote in July to the Steward’s secretary: ‘turnip soup ...had better be avoided in the future. It is food for cows and there is absolutely no need to serve such stuff. Haddock is a fish that needs far more skilful handling than the Christ Church staff is capable of, to be palatable at all. The spaghetti was solid food but very uninteresting. [...] I think the Ch. Ch. staff would do well to use a cookery book, as they appear not to have the slightest idea of what to serve’.

However abstemious the senior members were, the officers of the Royal Flying Corps, who were billeted on Christ Church, managed to make substantial inroads into the Common Room cellars.

There was one complaint, though, which had a more dramatic effect for Christ Church than its signatories imagined. In 1865, a petition against the cost and quality of food prompted the celebrated ‘Bread and Butter Row’. From about 1600, the food and drink that undergraduates consumed was purchased wholesale by the butler, the manciple, and the cook, who then charged the students whatever price they felt they could get away with. The butler was making a 60% profit on the market price of bread and butter. Cost was not the only issue; according to the 108 undergraduates who signed the petition of 4 March 1865, the quality of dinners and the beer was well below par.

The matter reached the press; correspondence appeared in The Times and other London papers - largely because one of the prime instigators of the petition was the eldest son of the proprietor of The Times - and, like so many small things that go public, the row took on bigger proportions than was originally intended.

The debate became entangled with the wider issue of the constitution of the college. But, in its original intent, the petition of 4 March was successful; in December 1865, the office of Steward was created, whose responsibility would be for all the domestic arrangements within Christ Church. Catering staff would be remunerated by fixed salaries, and dinner costs would be fixed.

There have been a dozen Stewards since the first. Today’s oversees a broader department, one that includes Custodians, to look after the tourists, and Porters (male and female) to staff the two Lodges and keep the place secure.

The last 20 years have seen the accommodation grow too: as the House expands across the road to St Aldate’s Quad, and beyond the Plain to the Liddell Building. There are now 48 staircases’s worth of rooms, and a Scout for each.

The Hall, Kitchen and Buttery are populated by the diligent descendants of the past catering staff, and
the Steward’s Office by a Manciple, who still superintends the purchase of food and drink, even if her own meticulous records are on a computer disk and not in a ledger.

The Kitchen and Hall continue to provide food to members of the House, just as both have done for almost five centuries. This is more than a truism, and not something to be taken for granted. Today’s undergraduate has plenty of eating choice, and Hall dining is not likely to be everyone’s choice every night. This sharpens the caterer’s appetite for a good turnout at two sittings of dinner, and the preservation of a long tradition.

Sad to say, that in some places Hall dining is becoming a minority interest. But not at the House, where the gavel bangs and grace is said daily ‘at 7.15 p.m. by the Cathedral Clock’ as the by-law has it. Three courses for £1.68, plus a “free” breakfast, for season-ticket holders.

Kitchen apprenticeships are still offered at Christ Church, bringing essential new talent – male and female – into the brigade each year. Until just a few years ago, Head Chef Roland Dépit, 25 years in the House’s service, supervised the whole thing with benign calm and fatherly control. The Kitchen, now under the direction of Chris Simms, provides an equally high standard of cuisine.

And he needs a talented brigade to cope with the vacations! Today there are no closed periods or quieter times. Function businesses, weddings and banquets crowd the vacation and overlap into term. For 20 weeks a year, Christ Church has a different feel, a different culture and a different population. It is a marketing challenge to sell our modernised ensuite rooms as well as the more traditional ones, where modernisation is only ‘planned’.

But sell them we do, and all of their occupants head to the Hall to take their meals. It is in meeting their culinary and dietary expectations, that the House’s caterers extend their range and develop their skills. A marketing innovation of the last five years has brought us our own conference clients, many of them old members. And new culinary horizons for those who still work in Wolsey’s Kitchen and serve in his Hall.

But however innovative the marketing, the food is still cooked in a building that was constructed separately from the Hall, which it serves.

Happily, food is no longer carried up an outside stone stair on baize covered wooden trays, by a team of Scullions, through the dark and the gloom, and the winter winds as well as the summer sun. But, as the Head Chef will remind us, the Kitchen is still a vertical and horizontal quarter mile from the High Table, and the logistical challenge is not eliminated by the use of heated trolleys and an electric lift. So, the process of feeding members and guests has evolved and modernised. The ingredients have changed too: no longer the high-protein meat diet of mediaeval times, when, presumably, even ovo-lacto-vegetarians were thin on the ground. No swans, no pickerells, ling, or whole sheep, and no turtles in Mercury, though that early story may be substantiated by the presence to this day of two large turtle shells beside Wolsey’s arms on the Kitchen wall.

Thomas Rowlandson, Dr Syntax entertained at college (London, early 19th century), in A. Hamilton Gibbs, Rowlandson’s Oxford (1911). Rowlandson’s cartoon of the members of Christ Church dining with some riotousness on the landing before the Hall was one of the illustrations in William Combe’s Dr Syntax in search of the picturesque. The staircase up to Hall was altered in the nineteenth century, and the landing on which the gentleman are evidently enjoying plenty of good food, wine, and company, no longer exist. The present arrangement allows a better appreciation of the beautiful mid-17th century fan vaulting.

The original spit and gridiron are there too, and kept in good shape for visitors to inspect. These were last used in 1950, when meat rationing in Britain came to an end and the butchers of Oxford celebrated this liberation with a great baron of beef on the spit.

Nor do we purchase kilders of beer any more. But there is a cellar full of fine en primeur claret, and a hogshead of house malt whisky maturing quietly on the island of Islay, ready for release to the membership in a handful of years’ time.

The Chef’s order book lists exotica such as orange tilapia, John Dory, Cornish lobster, Loch Fyne salmon, wild boar and Highland beef as well as contemporary food staples such as frozen chips and vegetables by the ton.

Convenience foods have their place alongside fresh fruit and vegetables from the Nine Elms and Rungis markets. Meanwhile the Hall Manager prepares exotic table decorations, such as kumquat trees and chocolate boats to embellish a Restoration Banquet, Trafalgar Dinner or Summer Gaudy.

Judith Curthoys
Christ Church
Time Capsule under Restoration
The Allestree Library

This is a separate library bequeathed by Richard Allestree in 1681 for the use of the Regius Professor of Divinity and his successors. As it stands, the collection would have provided a base for their teaching and research. In this case however, there was more at stake, so it looks like teaching was not the only motive. According to John Fell’s introductory remarks to Allestree’s *Forty Sermons* the books could also be ‘useful tools for the defence of that cause’ their owner ‘had during his life so vigorously asserted’1. In other words, they were perfect weapons for future Regius Professors of Divinity to use in defence of the Church of England. Allestree was not alone in this belief. Many Restoration divines regarded the re-establishment of libraries as an important part of the revival of cathedral life after 1660.2

Richard Allestree (1619-1681) was a royalist high churchman. At Christ Church he was a favourite of Dean Samuel Fell, John Fell’s father. He fought for Charles I in the Civil War. During the Interregnum he was one of the leaders of clandestine Anglican worship in Oxford.

In 1663 he was appointed Regius Professor of Divinity by Charles II. Allestree’s love affair with libraries is not something exclusively connected with the collection at Christ Church. He had been closely involved with the running of several other libraries such as Eton College Library and Coventry School Library (intended to serve as a general library for the use of the town). As Regius Professor of Divinity, Allestree was *ex officio* a curator of the Bodleian. Tellingly, the Bodleian’s accounts show that Allestree was playing an active part in the running of the establishment.

The Room

The library housed in a small room adjacent to the Old Library at Christ Church, and over the south walk of the cloister, is accessed by a spiral staircase in the Wolsey Tower.

The Allestree Library, looking west. 17th-century leather bindings lining up the south wall.

The south wall, facing the cathedral, is lined with 17th century bookcases. They have a series of holes in the woodwork adjacent to each shelf. One of these holes still contains a small iron hook, which probably held a pelmet meant to protect the books from dust.3

The room appears to have been built in 1612, sixty nine years before the Allestree Library was founded. According to the Disbursement Book, a storey was added to the south side of the cloister by Thomas Wetherall, the college mason.4

The stone floor here is rather unique and particularly exciting in terms of secrets it may yet reveal. It is paved with medieval encaustic tiles, very likely re-used from the surrounding buildings of the old St Frideswide’s Priory. Interestingly, on the other side, to the south of the cloister, in the former monastic refectory, was once the Old Library (founded in 1562).

One is bound to wonder whether the room which now houses the Allestree Library might have been intended to contain books from the very start and whether there was once direct access between the

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1 *Forty Sermons whereof Twenty One are now First Publish’d, the Greatest Part Preach’d before the King and on Solemn Occasions* (Oxford, 1684), fol. c1r.  
The assumption may be strengthened by the fact that Christ Church appointed its first Library Keeper, John Smith, in 1612, precisely the year when this somewhat enigmatic room was built. It may take a while until we can fill in some of the gaps in the story, but one thing is certain: the restoration and archaeological works which started in May 2011 are bound to uncover unknown aspects related to the history of the book at Christ Church.

The Collection

The books (mostly in contemporary Oxford leather bindings) are now kept in two Spartan rooms (the Allestree Library and the ante-room, probably the Professor of Divinity’s study) where the sun rarely shines (a good thing in this particular situation, as direct light can be very damaging). The beautiful Jacobean fireplaces (in dire need of restoration!) have not been lit for a long time, but this too is fortunate as the cool air has helped the bindings retain their 17th century freshness.

This is an impressive collection of books printed before 1700, a lot of which are extremely precious, some unique. As only a minute number of volumes have been catalogued and made available online, we don’t yet know how many titles this collection contains. We estimate that there are around 3000.

To put this in context, by way of comparison, let us just say that John Evelyn had 4588 books, John Locke, 3197 and Isaac Newton 1763. Add to this the fact that, unlike Evelyn’s or Locke’s, the Allestree Library still exists. It is one of the most vibrant time capsules anyone could experience, intact, separate from all the other collections and still in the room where it was founded.

Although the Allestree Library as a whole has a bias towards theology, it also contains books on many other subjects (classics, science, medicine, mathematics and patristics).

Among the documents this library houses is a trust deed signed by Allestree himself in January 1681, a few days before his death.

There is also a thirteenth-century manuscript of the sermons of St. Bernard. The other rarities include the first edition of Philip Barrough’s _Methode of Physicke_ (1583), early Latin Bibles printed in England, the 1669 edition of Milton’s _Paradise Lost_, Froissart’s _Les Chroniques_ (1505) and many early editions of Robert Boyle’s works. As a curiosity perhaps, Allestree’s collection also includes a rare early printed cookery book, _The Ladies Companion, or a Table furnished with sundry sorts of pies and tarts_ (1654).

The room also houses 138 books formerly owned by Henry Hammond (1605-1660) and the parochial library of Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire, deposited for safekeeping. This was originally left by John Okes (d. 1710), a St. Edmund Hall man, to Wotton.

There are about 300 volumes, chiefly 17th-century theology, with a bias towards Oriental studies. Many of the books bear the names of members of the Cholmondely family, who held the patronage of Okes’ living at Whitegate, Cheshire.

A card catalogue was compiled (in the 1940s) by W.G. Hiscock, and the cards are now kept in the East Library. Sadly however, this catalogue followed the pattern of the old ledger. This means that while it is more accurate in its brief description of the volumes, it does not go so far as to include the names of the printers, which would have been very useful.

Only a very small number of the volumes in the Allestree Library have detailed antiquarian records browsable via the Oxford University union catalogue.

Hence, apart from the restoration of the 17th-century rooms, the work to stabilize the environmental conditions and the attention we must pay to the collection from a conservation point of view, the Allestree Library needs a detailed and widely

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6 The library and manuscripts of John Evelyn were until recently held at Christ Church on deposit from the Evelyn trustees. Sadly, they are no longer kept here. The printed books were sold by the trustees and dispersed in auction sales at Christies in 1977 and 1978. The majority of the manuscripts were sold by the trustees to the British Library in 1995, and the remainder, relating to the Wotton estate, are held at the Surrey History Centre.
accessible catalogue. As the collection contains thousands of titles, the job is likely to take more than a year.

Finalizing the antiquarian cataloguing of Christ Church’s huge early printed books collections is a priority. After the Bodleian, this is probably the finest in Oxford, and among the largest in England.

We have been very fortunate, as the project is well under way and, in the past seven years, has benefited from extremely generous funding. We are all immensely grateful to our benefactor, whose continuous support has enabled us to give so much to the world.

Tens of new records become available online every day (they are also reported to international organizations, such as the English Short Title Catalog-ESTC). As a consequence, scholars worldwide can greatly benefit from the publication and dissemination of these unique resources.

By bequeathing his library to the Regius Professors of Divinity in perpetuity, Richard Allestree clearly assumed that the books would be extremely useful to his successors. It is our chance now to make his wish come true by making this collection accessible to the world. More on this project in the following issue.

Cristina Neagu
Christ Church

MEDIEVAL TILES IN THE ALLESTREE LIBRARY

Christ Church is a place of nooks and crannies, mysterious spaces and hidden surprises. That, at least, is how it is often presented to tourists. All this being said, it sometimes still comes as a shock, when the reality turns out to be very much in line with that image.

Take, for example, the Allestree Library – this small but priceless collection was bequeathed by the Regius Professor of Divinity in 1681.

The books in the Library are an obvious and precious feature, but the room also contains one of Christ Church’s real hidden treasures. The floor, seen above, is covered with mostly medieval floor tiles.

The central strip – under the free-standing bookshelves here – has large tiles that may be roughly contemporary with Allestree’s bequest.

All the other tiles, however, must have come from St Frideswide’s Priory – now the Cathedral. Some may have been from floors in the church itself, but it seems most likely that the tiles had originally been laid in the walkways around the cloister. Thus they did not have to be moved far to their current location. We don’t yet know when this happened, but it is likely to have been after Wolsey’s closure of the

Notes at the back of the 1617 edition of Hugo Grotius’ *Defensio Fidei Catholicae de Satisfactione Christi* (Allestree O.8.6). A letter written in the same hand was found inside the volume. Several books in the Allestree library are heavily annotated, Early notes such as these, scribbled (in this case by a 17th century hand) on the blank pages at the end of a volume, or written in the margins of manuscripts or printed books are of considerable value. They reflect the thoughts of past users giving us an unparalleled insight into a world long gone.

The Allestree Library looking east.

The floor of Allestree Library.

Christina Neagu
Christ Church
Priory in 1525 to create his Cardinal College. The removal and re-laying of the tiles in this room may have happened soon after the closure, or it may be contemporary with the Library in 1681. The tiles would have been very valuable then, because they would have helped to make the room fire-proof (or at least resistant).

The tiles represent something of a pattern-book of medieval taste. There are several distinct types and sizes of tiles present, with the decorated examples largely consisting of 13th-century ‘stabbed Wessex’ types or ones from the 14th-century kilns that operated around Penn (Buckinghamshire). The former are slightly larger than the latter, but both feature exquisite designs. Many of these are from repeating patterns where four tiles would be needed to complete the ‘set’, but they have been laid at random on the floor – but with examples from one set often close together. The tiles are in variable condition, with some being worn with age. This may be due to their original use, given that the Allestree library seems to have always had very light footfall. Remarkably, though, a good number of tiles are in very good condition and retain their original coloured glazes.

An example of Stabbed Wessex tiles on the north side of the room. At least three different designs can be seen here alone – but no two have been laid properly together.

We are now looking to conserve and record both the tiled floor and the library. The floor needs to be drawn and photographed in detail, because at the moment we have no permanent record of it. The tiles would benefit from a light clean as well, but they do not need to be covered up. The environment in the room is to be improved for the sake of the books, and this will also help with the conservation of the pavement. The rarity of such an extensive survival of medieval tiles in one place means that they are extremely important, at a national level. This of course means that they must be protected for the future, and access to the Library and its floor must therefore continue to be restricted. Fortunately the detailed archaeological recording will enable us to provide ‘virtual’ access to the floor instead, perhaps via a combination of the virtual tours already available on Christ Church’s website, and the Ashmolean Museum’s TileWeb website.

An example of a medieval tile with intricate design on the floor of the Allestree Library.

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View of the cloisters from the Allestree Library.

Naturally all of this will take time – and money. We are currently putting together a costed programme of work, and hope that we will be able to go ahead with this soon. Any donations towards the project would be most welcome.

Graham Keevill

Graham Keevill is an archaeologist, having graduated in the subject from Leicester University in 1980. He has been in professional practice ever since, and formed his own consultancy service in 1999. In 1990 he directed the excavation of a previously unknown Roman villa at Redlands Farm. He is the Cathedral Archaeological Consultant to the Deans and Chapters of Blackburn. He also carries out a lot of work for Historic Royal Palaces, for whom he has provided archaeological advice at the Tower of London since 1993. Graham has written seven substantial books describing the fruits of his research and excavations, especially in the areas of medieval palaces and monastic archaeology.

Update about the Restoration

Work on the Allestree Library is well on the way to completion. The dehumidification unit is now installed. The trace heating system (preventing freezing in the gutters and downpipes outside) is up and running, as are the two panel heaters. The new bookcase is ready, stained to match the existing shelves. The fireplace has been opened up. Both the library and the ante-room have been redecorated. All the books have been thoroughly cleaned. The recording of the tiles is in full swing now. This will be followed by a full conservation report on the condition of the books. The Library wishes to thank the College and the Fitch Trustees for their generosity and care for bringing this priceless library back to life. Their efforts have made it possible for both the collections and the space they inhabit be once again in pristine condition.
Ex-libris inscriptions

One of the main jobs of a librarian – unfortunately no names have come down to us – was to inscribe the ex-libris inscriptions which most MSS. display. The entries stem from the time between the 2nd half of the 14th and the 15th century:

The ex-libris inscriptions are either written in cursive or somewhat artistic book hands. They mostly appear at the beginning and at the end of a manuscript, occasionally also somewhere in between, and rarely on the binding (the latter does not apply to the Laudiani in their current state); most of the time two inscriptions per volume, sometimes less or even more, inscribed by the same hand or different ones.

All in all, there are c.492 different versions of ex-libris inscriptions in the Laud collection, often minimally differing from each other. None of these inscriptions can be ascribed to a certain hand though, and all of them are in Latin, except for Laud Misc. 521.3

The growth of the library in the course of the years is mainly due to the monks’ own scribal activities.5 The Consuetudines of Guigo I OCarth (1083–1136) already mention that nearly every Carthusian is able to read and write and that books ought to be treated with reasonable care.6 Next to copying texts, the correction7 and adaption of texts to the use of the order played an important role.

The colophon in the example above reads ‘Explicit liber de exemplis sacre scripture compositus a fratre nicholao. de hanapis ordinis predicatorum. patriarcha Ierosolimitano. Anno domini. M o. CCCXXI. fuit scriptum istud exemplar. et corruptum [recte: correctum; a different hand (falsely) corrected ‘corruptum’ in red] crastina die circumcisionis domini.’

As is the case with MSS. Laud 390 and 183 (1),4 the most frequent ex-libris inscription is the following: ‘Iste liber est Carthusiensium prope magunciam’.

Fig. 3) MS. Laud Misc. 521, fol. 138v a 15th-cent. hand added in an empty line: ‘Diesz Buche ist der Carthuser By Mentz’.

Fig. 4) MS. Laud Misc. 574, fol. 105r.

The library grew to c.1000 MSS. in 150 years. The first few decades of the existence of the Charterhouse cannot be taken into consideration in terms of the monks’ scribing activity.6 Guigo I OCarth, Consuetudines, cap. 28 (PL 153. 693) (Schreiber 55).

There was a series of guidance books for correcting, with Oswald’s Opus pacis certainly being the most important one (Schreiber 56f.). Two copies out of at least nine surviving MSS. stem from the Mainz Charterhouse and are now in the Stadtbibliothek Mainz (Schreiber 57): Hs I 151, fols. 20r–62r (beginning missing, starts with the 1st cautela) and Hs II 276, fols. 28r–71r (complete).


4 MS. Laud Misc. 183 (1): Saints’ lives (Legenda Aurea, with interpolations) Germany, s. xiv. Parchment, c.168–70 × 125 × 60 mm, fols. 333.

3 The only dated ex-libris inscription from the Charterhouse is in MS. Cambridge, Emmanuel College II, 2.19, fol. 401v (Schreiber 51; there are two MSS. from the Mainz Charterhouse in Cambridge, see Schreiber 150).

2 Different spelling of words, for example ‘Cartusiensium’ vs. ‘Carthusiensium’ or ‘mogunciam’ vs. ‘magunciam’ is not taken into consideration here.

1 The only dated ex-libris inscription from the Charterhouse is in MS. Cambridge, Emmanuel College II, 2.19, fol. 401v (Schreiber 51; there are two MSS. from the Mainz Charterhouse in Cambridge, see Schreiber 150).

MS. Laud Misc. 521: Hugo Ripelinus, Compendium veritatis theologicae (German). Germany, 1375 (fn.). Parchment, c.197–210 × 132–40 × 40 mm, fols. 242. The Latin ex-libris inscriptions are on fols. 1r, 11r and 241v, by two different hands.

1 The only dated ex-libris inscription from the Charterhouse is in MS. Cambridge, Emmanuel College II, 2.19, fol. 401v (Schreiber 51; there are two MSS. from the Mainz Charterhouse in Cambridge, see Schreiber 150).
For these volumes or parts of a volume produced in the Mainz Charterhouse, paper was mainly used, mostly in quarto, which means that the watermark is often only in part visible. The binding of MSS. written in the Charterhouse was always, with a few exceptions, produced in loco.

In theory, every monk could have been responsible for additions made in the Charterhouse. Below see two examples of such additions:

MS. Laud Misc. 518 consists of two parts, both owned by the Charterhouse at Mainz: A (folgs. 1–4) is an index to the text in B (folgs. 5–101; a copy of Peter Comestor's Historia scholastica (sel.), 2nd half of the 13th century) and was written in the Charterhouse in the 15th century; it is a palimpsest, with the underscript not decipherable. The parchment slip (fol. 57br–v) is hooked around the paper sexternion.

Scribes

Several scribes from the Charterhouse are known to us by name. Iohannes Archfeld de Esschenewege ('Eschwege an der Werra'), who is proven to have stayed at the curia of Avignon in the middle of the 14th century, is one of them. In the Laud collection we have two examples of his work, where he signs as ‘diaconus’.

The MSS. in the Bodleian Library written in part by him are:
- MS. Laud Misc. 202: Theological composite manuscript. A–C) Germany. Parchment, folgs. 215. A) (folgs. 1–148b) s. xv; c.209–13 × 140–44 × 15 mm. B) (folgs. 149–158) Mainz Charterhouse, 1341, by Iohannes Archfeld and ‘presbyter Richwinus’; c.208–10 × 145–46 × 3 mm. C) (folgs. 159–212) s. xv; c.208–10 × 140–50 × 35 mm. A/B) Owned by the Charterhouse of St. Michael at Mainz, C) by Eberbach. There is no ex-libris inscription from the Mainz Charterhouse, but part B, which had been written by Iohannes Archfeld, suggests that at least this part was in the possession of the Charterhouse.

Iohannes Archfeld also wrote MSS. London, British Library, Arundel 379, folgs. 28r–31v (in 1349) and 414, folgs. 10 ff. (in 1345), both from the Charterhouse at Mainz, cf. Schreiber 62. In the Mainz Stadtbibliothek, there are several MSS. written by Marcellus Geist (incl. some autographs, as he was an active author himself) and Sixtus de Werdea (of Donauwörth), see Schreiber 62ff. None of these scribes could be identified in the Laud collection so far.

9 MS. Laud Misc. 492: Henricus de Frimaria, Liber de perfectione spirituali interioris hominis. Excerpts; sequences. A & B) Germany (Charterhouse at Mainz?), s. xiv (sel.); fols. 65b–64) Parchment/ paper, most likely in the Mainz Charterhouse, see left-hand side, fol. 57av) came from the Charterhouse too (only part B bears an ex-libris inscription); it is a palimpsest, with the underscript not decipherable. The parchment slip (fol. 57br–v) is hooked around the paper sexternion.

10 MS. Laud Misc. 518: Peter Comestor, Historia scholastica (sel.). A & B) Parchment, folgs. 101. A) (folgs. 1–4) Germany, Charterhouse at Mainz, s. xv; c.205 × 155 × 25 mm. B) (folgs. 5–101) Germany, s. xiii; c.205 × 150–53 × 25 mm. A & B) Owned by the Charterhouse of St. Michael at Mainz: there are two ex-libris inscriptions in part A, in the upper margin of fol. 1r and fol. 4v, and none in part B. The numerous annotations, foliations etc. throughout the volume by several 15th-cent. hands indicate however that the two parts were already combined when in the Charterhouse.

11 See Schreiber 62. The MSS. in the Bodleian Library written in part by him are:
- MS. Laud Misc. 202: Theological composite manuscript. A–C) Germany. Parchment, folgs. 215. A) (folgs. 1–148b) s. xv; c.209–13 × 140–44 × 15 mm. B) (folgs. 149–158) Mainz Charterhouse, 1341, by Iohannes Archfeld and ‘presbyter Richwinus’; c.208–10 × 145–46 × 3 mm. C) (folgs. 159–212) s. xv; c.208–10 × 140–50 × 35 mm. A/B) Owned by the Charterhouse of St. Michael at Mainz, C) by Eberbach. There is no ex-libris inscription from the Mainz Charterhouse, but part B, which had been written by Iohannes Archfeld, suggests that at least this part was in the possession of the Charterhouse.

In MS. Laud Misc. 492, part B (a sexternion made of paper, most likely in the Mainz Charterhouse, see right-hand side) was incorporated into the last quire of part A, between the penultimate and ultimate folio.

Fig. 5) MS. Laud Misc. 492, fols. 57av/ 57bv–58r.

Fig. 6) MS. Laud Misc. 518, fol. 4r.
manuscript back and ‘saved’ it, as we learn from an extensive and only partly legible ex-libris inscription in the upper centre of fol. 2r. 12

In terms of manuscript donors, Ortwin Hoppener13 from Frankfurt surely stands out: one of his donated manuscripts is now in the University Library of Basel, not less than twelve in the Stadtbibliothek Mainz and one in Oxford.14

So if it has been alleged above that the collection was selected, that it is not an accidental conglomerate gathered together pell-mell by inexpert hands, it is certainly worth having a closer look at its contents. Many manuscripts among the Laudiani contain works of the Church Fathers;15 tractatus literature is well represented too, and so are Bibles (most of which have now the shelfmark Laud Lat.)16 and commentaries to various Bible texts:17

12 MS. Laud Misc. 68: Gregory the Great, Moralia. France, s. xiv. 1. Parchment, c. 230–42 × 167–77 × 60 mm, fols. 515. The above-mentioned, hardly decipherable inscription is in the upper centre of fol. 2r, with the right-hand corner partly missing (with loss of text) (see also Schreiber 144).

Ortwin Hoppener was born around 1375. When he joined the Carthusians is not clear; he was however prior in the Mainz Charterhouse twice, from 1418 to 1422 and again until his death in 1428; in between, he was also prior in the Basel Charterhouse (1424–1425) and in Strasbourg (Schreiber 74).

13 Basel, UB, A VI 36 as well as one lost Bible (see Schreiber 90), both from the Basel Charterhouse; Mainz, Stadtbibliothek, Ms I 14, 16, 19 (not mentioned in Schreiber 74), 46, II 63, 107, 137, 142, 224, 369, 453, 585 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 173 (see n. 22).

14 Basel, UB, A VI 36 as well as one lost Bible (see Schreiber 90), both from the Basel Charterhouse; Mainz, Stadtbibliothek, Ms I 14, 16, 19 (not mentioned in Schreiber 74), 46, II 63, 107, 137, 142, 224, 369, 453, 585 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 173 (see n. 22).

15 MS. Laud Misc. 113: Augustine, De libero arbitrio. Id., Enarrationes in Psalmos (119–150) etc. A & B Western Germany, s. xi. 1. Parchment, fols. 245. A) (fols. 1–47) c. 223–30 × 175–80 × 15 mm. B) (fols. 48–245) c. 221–25 × 175–80 × 50 mm. A & B) Owned by the Charterhouse of St. Michael at Mainz. A) 1 (fols. 1–46r) Augustine, De liber arbitrio. B) 3 (fols. 48r–244v) Augustine, Enarrationes in Psalmos (119–150). Both parts were written in Western Germany, in the school of archbishop Willigis; the upper A is identical with the copy of part B in MS. Munich, BSB, Clm 3713, a fascicle which contains Augustine’s Enarrationes in Psalmos 91–118.


22 - MS. Laud Lat. 25 (see n. 16): B) (fols. 191r–318r) Zachary of Besançon, In Unum ex Quatuor sive De concordia Evangelistarum libri quatuor.

23 - MS. Laud Misc. 387: Odo Astensis, Expositio in Psalmos. Germany, s. xiv. 1. Parchment, c. 225–35 × 150 × 15 mm, fols. 70. The MS. appears to be the first part of the volume ‘A xvii C’ which originally also contained William of Saint-Thierry (= ps. Bernard of Clairvaux), Epistola ad frates de Monte Dei.

Below illustrations of a few manuscripts mentioned in the notes above:

- MS. Laud Misc. 386: Theological composite manuscript.


- MS. Laud Misc. 313: Thomas Gallus, Expositio iii. super Cantica canticorum. A–C) Parchment; fols. 38. A) (fols. 1–3) Germany?, s. xiii; c.183–87 × 140 × 1 mm. B) (fols. 4–7) Charterhouse at Mainz, s. xv; c.185 × 140 × 2 mm. C) (fols. 8–38) Germany, s. xiv; c.185–87 × 135 × 5 mm. A–C) Owned by the Charterhouse of St. Michael at Mainz. B/C) 2 (fols. 4r–38r) Thomas Gallus (Thomas Vercellensis), Expositio iii. super Cantica canticorum (the present MS. used in J. Barbet's edition of 1967, siglum 'O').

Canonical literature is represented too, even if to a more limited degree. Late medieval sermon
collections are common, often occupying complete volumes, but they do not prevail. Moreover, numerous anonymous texts can be found, some of which are not transmitted elsewhere; numerous florilegia, excerpt collections and capacious volumes of Saints' lives and legends, such as MS. Laud Misc. 352 for example.

This manuscript is as interesting for its contents as it is for its apparent connection with another monastery: part D of the manuscript originally came from the younger Charterhouse rubus beate Marie (Litomyšl Charterhouse/Kartause Mariae Dombusch (Our Lady of the Thornbush), founded in 1378 in Tržek, near Litomyšl) and was given to the Mainz Charterhouse by its first prior Johannes Lanpach. MS. Arundel

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- MS. Laud Misc. 228: Saints' lives & legends. Germany, s. xiv

The collection further comprises numerous summae and of course medieval Latin poetry, which is mainly represented by hymns and sequences as well as rhythmic verses, often added to the end of a text. Surely outstanding is the verse 107 of the British Library, also previously owned by the Charterhouse at Mainz, had been launched out in 1370 in Avignon and finished nine years later in the Litomyšl Charterhouse by the same prior, Johannes.
Authors belonging to the same religious order, who were in general very popular and often read (cf. the volumes from the Charterhouse in the Mainz Stadtbibliothek), for example Ludolf of Saxony, Jacob of Jüterbogk, Henry Egger de Kalkar etc., and of course Dionysius; but also literature specifically for the order, like statutes, privileges etc., the life of Bruno and Guigo or the works of the Carthusian mystics of the 15th century, are, with a few exceptions, not represented in the Laud collection.

Among the Laudiani are only two German manuscripts: Laud Misc. 521 which was finished in 1375 and contains Hugo Ripelinus’ Compendium veritatis theologiae (see n. 3) and Laud Misc. 479, which comprises in part A the Paradisus animae intelligentis (German homilies; partly from Meister Eckart himself, partly from the circle of preachers in Erfurt associated with him).

30 Regarding historic writings, MS. Laud Misc. 677


32 MS. Laud Lat. 25 (see n. 16), which contains on A) fols. 1va–2vb Rules of the Month.

33 For many of the oldest German libraries, the 15th century meant the loss of precious classical MSS. In Mainz, the Dombibliothek was surely more interesting for Italian humanists than any other library. It is however very unlikely that the library of the Charterhouse had copies of classical authors (see also Schreiber 95f.).


- MS. Laud Misc. 677 (see n. 31): A) 1 (fols. 1v–5v) Henry Seuse (Henricus Suso), Die 100 Betrachtungen aus dem Büchlein der ewigen Weisheit. B) 9 (fols. 242v–243r) (Continuation of item 1).


Fig. 13) MS. Laud Misc. 411, fol. 17v.

Fig. 14) MS. Laud Misc. 493, fol. 81v.
Characteristic for the *Laudiani* from the Mainz Charterhouse are bulky manuscripts of small format: either one volume containing a seemingly endless series of miscellaneous texts, such as Laud Misc. 493 for instance, which contains nearly 30 different items; but also massive composite MSS., with up to seven different fascicles, differing in age, size and content.

With such composite MSS. it is often not only difficult to say what parts exactly belonged to the Charterhouse, as they do not necessarily have to bear an *ex-libris* inscription; but also to determine when the parts had been bound together: (if older than the Charterhouse) in pre-Charterhouse times, or only in possession of the Charterhouse, as they do not necessarily have to say what parts exactly belonged to the Charterhouse, even though parts had been bound together: (if older than the Charterhouse) in pre-Charterhouse times, or only in possession of the Charterhouse, or only in England, in the course of the Laudian Binding?

MS. Laud Misc. 410 is such an example: parts B and C were certainly owned by the Charterhouse at Mainz, but what about part A? Furthermore, we have to ask what parts were bound together when.

The same phenomenon is of course true for the volumes from the Mainz Charterhouse in the British Library, and in fact to an even greater extent, as many fascicles have fewer than 50 folios.

In both the Arundel and Laud collection, one or more parts from the Charterhouse are occasionally bound together with a fascicle from the abbey of Eberbach.

In MS. Laud Misc. 530 for example, we have a single flyleaf from Eberbach.

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**Fig. 15** MS. Laud Misc. 410, fols. 18v–19r (part A).

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**Fig. 16** MS. Laud Misc. 530, fols. 223v–224r; the calendar on the left-hand side stems from Eberbach abbey.

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MS. Laud Misc. 410: Theological composite manuscript. A–C) Parchment, fols. 113, A) (fols. 1–76) Trier?, s. xii; c.248–52 × 165–70 × 15 mm. B) (fols. 77–93) Germany?, s. xii; c.242–44 × 155–65 × 5 mm. C) (fols. 94–113) Germany?, s. xv; c.244–47 × 163–67 × 5 mm. B & C) Owned by Germany, Charterhouse at Mainz. A) 1 (fols. 1v–18r) Vita sancta Eustachii et sociorum, carmen heroicum. 2 (fols. 18r–40r) Walahfridus Strabo, *carm.* iii; *Visio Wettini,* with prologus ad Grimaldum, and Old High German glosses. 3 (fols. 40v–68r) Navigatio s. Brendani Hibermici, with a few interlinear glosses in Old High German. 4 (fols. 68v–73r) Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum,* lib. v, cap. xii; *Visio Drichtelmi,* 5 (fols. 73v–76v) Visio Salvi episcopi (= Gregory of Tours, *Historiae Francorum,* lib. vii); B) 7 (fols. 78r–89v) Boto of Prüfening, *Miracula beatae virginis Mariae.* 8 (fols. 90r–93r) Theophilus legend. 9 (fols. 93r–v) *Miracle, De quodam monacho.* 10 (fols. 94r) *Miracle, De quodam infantulo.* C) 11 (fols. 95r–113v) Bertrandus de Turre (Bertrand de la Tour), *Sermones de mortuis,* imperfect.


There is certainly a correlation between these two monasteries: it is in fact very unlikely that parts of these two provenances had already been combined in one volume while in possession of the Charterhouse (or vice versa, of Eberbach abbey), as in that case, the *ex-libris* inscription from the previous owner would have either been deleted or new ones added (Schreiber 140f.). This is never the case in the volumes consisting of parts from both places, which indicates that they must have arrived approximately at the same time in England and been bound together there.

So even if we are lacking accurate details on when exactly the MSS. from the Charterhouse were separated from their library, we can somehow securely assume that it must have been at around the same time when the Eberbach MSS. went off on their journey; at an earlier date (i. e. before the time of the Swedish Intervention), seems very unlikely, since it is nowhere mentioned that at some point the Carthusians were forced or desired to clear some of their manuscripts, by selling them, for instance, on financial grounds.

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**Illuminations and Icons in the Making**
**Contemporary Artists, Timeless Techniques**

On 22 March 2011, a workshop on manuscript illumination and icon painting took place in Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. It was organised by Dr. Elena Ene D-Vasilescu (Faculty of History, University of Oxford) and Dr. Emily Pott (School of Traditional Arts, Prince’s Foundation, London).

Each of the students from the School of Traditional Arts, who are completing their postgraduate degrees through practice-based creative research, first gave a talk introducing their work in general and then demonstrated some of the traditional methods, techniques and tools they employ in their creations. In addition, they presented to the public the natural materials and minerals they use such as lapis lazuli, gold leaf, cinnabar, and so on, and explained why it is important for them to follow the ways of the Old Masters.

The workshop also offered an opportunity for participants to try their hand at manuscript illuminating and icon painting.

The young contemporary artists who came to Oxford for this workshop believe that their knowledge can be passed to others by demonstrating these techniques. Their views are in accordance to the ethos of the Prince’s School of Traditional Arts: that tradition is a process of continual renewal, that wisdom must be transferred to others in order to remain relevant, and that this process is made possible through, among other means, the practice of artistic creation. One conclusion that can be drawn from the event is that Byzantine icon painting is not a lost ancient art. There are many workshops which continue producing icons today. Also manuscript illumination, in both Christian and Islamic traditions, is something appealing to the representatives of a new generation.

Oxford Centre for Medieval History within the Faculty sponsored the event. Christ Church was supportive of this initiative, and the Cathedral itself constituted the ideal environment for such an endeavour.

The workshop was very well attended by students, especially graduates from the History of Art Department, University staff and interested people from Oxford and various other places as far away as Birmingham and Somerset. It is hoped that the experience will be repeated in the future.

The next icon painting workshop will take place in Christ Church Cathedral on 20 January 2012 bringing three more students from the Prince’s Foundation to Oxford to share their work with the public.

_Elena Ene Vasilescu_
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BREAKING THE CANON? MANUSCRIPT 28 AND THE TRADITIONS OF BYZANTINE VS WESTERN ILLUMINATION

At first sight, there is nothing unusual about this Tetraevangelion, bequeathed to the Library in 1737 by William Wake, Archbishop of Canterbury. Easy to hold (241 x 174 mm) and relatively light despite its wooden boards, the manuscript is still in its original binding. Particularities of style suggest the hand of Gregorios, a scribe active around 1370-80, associated with Hodegon monastery in Constantinople. Like most manuscripts of this kind, each Gospel begins with a richly illuminated portrait of the saint and a rectangular decoration preceding the text. This predictable, restrained and iconic approach is typical of the Byzantine school of illumination.

Although on the surface it seems an open and shut case, an attentive look at this manuscript will offer a few surprises. Firstly, examining the miniature one is bound to notice the striking contrast between the natural pose of the central character and the lifeless, contrived background. In contrast with Western manuscripts, in Byzantium elements were visually discreet. As far as the miniature is concerned, despite its programmatic bidimensionality, it was designed to represent three distinct registers.

Thus, in the foreground, the viewer is invited to gaze at a portrait, that of St Mark in this particular case. The focus is on the concentrated dignity of the human being in an act of meditation upon a text. Behind, filling the central band of the page, are a few pieces of furniture and a distinctly flat building. What this tells us is that the historical context presented little interest for the Byzantine painter. He paid virtually no attention to the facts of city life or to the rules of perspective. What interested him instead, was the reality of the skies beyond. These are given a strikingly tangible reality by means of the thick layer of gold in the background. The choice of a precious metal is neither accidental, nor purely ornamental. It is designed to address the viewer in quite a special way.

Because of its shine, gold alone among the colours was seen to have more of a palpable reality. This made it the perfect symbol of transcendental light. In other words, what filtered through this medium of choice in the Byzantine canon was cosmic space. Our senses were meant to be touched by light condensed in the glitter of this highly polished plate-metal gold. Incidentally, MS 28 was created roughly at the time when a new and highly attractive

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technique was developing. It was not until the twelfth century that book illuminators achieved the gold effect of the lead-enriched potash glass of Byzantine mosaics by application of gold-leaf. Until then, at least in medieval Western Europe, the only method to gild the pages was by means of a gold pigment of grainy character, with just a faint glitter. The discovery of gold-leafing spread like quick-fire from the east throughout Western Europe.

The impact of the Byzantine style and techniques of illumination, although important, is not extensive however. One other key element can be guessed by looking carefully at how the character of St Mark looks in the miniature on fol. 59. The dignity of the saint immersed in thoughts signals a sort of ‘arrival’, a special stability on the page. This did have an impact on western illumination. Under Byzantine influence, the human figure gradually started to cease adjusting its form to ornamental requirements. Slowly but surely its spatial existence started to become autonomous.

The impact of the western style of illumination on the Byzantine school, on the other hand, appears to be in most instances completely negligible. That is to say however, until we start looking with a more open mind.

The appearance of a hare and a panther (…the original ‘pink panther’!) embracing each other at the beginning of the Gospel of St Mark seems rather strange in the context. Byzantine art was not familiar with the arrangement of figural elements within the initial. The canon was rather strict in this respect. As we are dealing with a sacred text, subjects could not be imported from other realms and demoted to become inhabitants of initials. Yet, in this manuscript each of the four Gospels starts intriguingly with a zoomorphic initial of the same type.

While this is unusual for Byzantine codices, it is nevertheless typical of western schools of illumination, particularly during the late eighth and ninth centuries when scribes started infusing a certain degree of organic life to animal forms, thus creating a new relationship between the structure of the letter and its zoomorphic elements. Initials are key elements in understanding the interplay of script, decoration and picture. We are now accustomed to the fact that a letter is just a sign, an unambiguous element. For a medieval illuminator however things were not so clear-cut and the relationship between word and image was deeply important and revealing. So much so that the beautifully elaborate pages of many early manuscripts were intentionally designed to allow insights into the hidden meaning of a text.

There are so many intriguing manuscripts in this library, manuscripts in which a great deal more of the significance of the whole would become apparent if one knew how to read not only the textual, but also the visual dimensions of one volume or another. More on this topic is to follow.

For now let me just say that, in so far as the Byzantine collection is concerned, it is not only one of the most exciting, but also one of the least known. The information about the 86 manuscripts that make it up has to be collated from very few, incomplete and scattered resources. We are currently looking into possibilities of funding a comprehensive catalogue of the Byzantine collection, including detailed information on the author, title, date, origin, dimensions, provenance, binding, contents, script and illumination. Ideally the catalogue should be available both in book form and as an online database. More on this project in a further article.

Cristina Neagu
Christ Church

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