

Ranulf Higden, *Polychronicon*

Parchment (FSOS). Fols: ii + 186 + ii (numbered fols iii-iv). Front flyleaves parchment (the second the remains of a bifolium with a stub), both originally conjoint with the two pastedowns; at the rear, one modern paper, the other parchment. Overall: 345mm x 245mm. In double columns, each column 240mm x 73-75mm, with 14mm between columns, 50 lines to the column. Lines are not ruled, but there are three horizontal and nine vertical bounding lines in brownish-black ink; the lowest horizontal marks off the top of the written space, above which sits the two top horizontals, separated by c. 5mm; the purpose of these, in combination with the vertical lines for the central reservation, is to mark the position of the running headers. The outer margin of each page has three vertical lines, each set 10mm apart, with innermost 20mm from the text, creating a double set of columns, while the inner margin has two extra binding lines, set 8mm apart and 8mm from the inner border of the written space. Signs of pricking are very rare but are sometimes visible at very top or very bottom of the folio. Written in small, slightly uneven gothic textura semiquadrata. Punctuation by low point and punctus elevatus.

2° f: De britannia; ra conensis (fol. 10, for 'terra conensis')

CONTENTS

1. Fol. 1^{ra}-7^{vb}: 'Abraham 2.10 --- De occisione zacharie filij barachie 2.30.'
Alphabetical index to following work, provided by the scribe.

Fol. 8: blank

2. Fols 9^{ra}-186^{ra}: '[in upper margin:] *Prologus primus in historiam polichronicam liber 1^{us}*. [text:] Post preclaros arcium scriptores quibus circa rerum noticiam aut morum modestiam . . . [fol. 10^{vb}; underlined:] *De orbis dimensione priscianus in cosmographia Capitulum 5^m*. [text:] Ex senatus consulto censuit Iulius cesar --- [fol. 178^{ra}] deinceps tales prouisiones afferret sub pena carceris et capitis interdixit Hic finiuit Ranulphus Cestrensis opus suum. Item hoc anno Nonas Iunij natus est regi Edwardo Edmundus apud Langeleye --- quas frequenter in<h>abitauerant aut vbi proteccionis littera non prerogaret Explicit.'

RANULF HIGDEN, *Polychronicon* (Sharpe no. 1264 [453-55]), ed. Churchill Babington and Joseph R. Lumby, RS 41, 9 vols (1865-86), concluding at 8:338 (the year 1342). It is followed immediately, at fol. 178^{ra}, by the standard continuation through to 1377, produced at St Albans, *Adami Murimuthensis Chronica sui temporis*, ed. Thomas Hog (London, 1846), 174-227. The version in this manuscript, which appears elsewhere only in BL, MS Additional 12118, includes (fol. 184^{rb-va}) a passage of THOMAS WALSHINGHAM, *Chronicon Angliae*, ed. Edward M. Thompson, RS 64 (1874), 88, and concludes with criticism of Edward III. See John Taylor, *The 'Universal Chronicle' of Ranulf Higden* (Oxford, 1966), 115-19 and esp. 121-22 (further references at 157, 180).

Fol. 186^{rb&v}: originally blank.

COLLATION 1-23⁸ 24². Catchwords under the inner column at the bounding line. All leaves in the first half of each quire originally signed with a letter and roman numeral (occasionally in blue crayon), although many cut away; in this system, quires 1-24 = a-z, &.

TEXTUAL PRESENTATION AND DECORATION Headings in ink in the text hand. At the openings of books and chapters, two- and three-line blue lombards with red flourishing. Marginal notations of chapters and dates preceded by alternate red and blue paraps. Running titles with book number and indication of years and rulers in text ink, preceded by alternate red and blue paraps. In some chapters, the text is divided by alternate red and blue paraps; authorities underlined in the text ink. On fol. 61^v, Pythagorean diagrams.

BINDING Damaged white leather over bevelled wooden boards, s. xv. Sewn on seven thongs, taken straight into the board, as depicted by Pollard, fig. 5. The large stubs of two leather straps, each held by three nails, on the upper board, indentations and some metal remaining from clasp fittings at the centre of the lower board. Nail-holes from a ChCh chain staple in Watson's position 4 (see Appendix I). Two front pastedowns of old parchment, with a ChCh bookplate; back pastedown modern paper.

PROVENANCE There is a variety of expunged notes of prior ownership: at the top of fol. i, perhaps late s. xv, badly smudged; the top of fol. ii has been torn out, leaving only the descenders of an inscription; lower on that folio, two expunged ownership inscriptions (probably in the same hand), with a rose with mark between them by Samuel Burton (on whom see below), above them an identification of the author in a different hand; on fol. ii^v, another ownership inscription (s. xvi[?]), expunged; fol. 1, a further erased note at top right.

Fol. 186^v is covered with notes, s. xvi in. (many apparently liturgical instructions), with some runover into the upper and lower margins of fol. 186^{tb}. Frequently fragmentary or difficult to read because the leaf was once pasted to the following paper flyleaf, these include:

- (a) 'De <pio> kenulpho fundat wynch', the first of a series of notes on contents of the *Polychronicon*.
- (b) 'Iste liber partinet ad Willelmum queuill'.
- (c) 'Thomas < > Rychard Maluor< > Iohannes Cissetur Robertus 3anworth'.
- (d) 'In crastino beati Dunstani videlicet sabbato dicitur Hanricus? de Blunt et Margareta gren<..>ng cum homine vocatus Wylkys <.....> transi<.....> ad Haylys'.
- (e) '<fun>dacio Monasterii de Hay<..> cc xiii'.
- (f) 'Anno domini M^oDxij^o. ita con< >it <inter> fratrem \Wi< >/ Quehyll et fratrem Iohannem Cyssettur < > uel eorum litt' Iohannes Cyssettur debet fratri Willelmo Queuhyll <.....> per me Iohannem Cyssettur propria manu'.

These notes would seem to connect the manuscript with a monastic establishment in north-east Gloucestershire, probably Hailes (OCist), perhaps Winchcombe (OSB). None of the names in (f), all inferentially monks, appear among those who surrendered and were pensioned in 1539; see G. Baskerville, 'The Dispersed Religious of Gloucestershire', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 49 (1927), 63-122 at 86-87 (Winchcombe), 89-90 (Hailes); nor do any of the names above appear in the cartulary of Hailes, now Stratford-upon-Avon: Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Leigh Deposit DR 18/31/5, on which see David N. Bell, 'The Cartulary of Hailes Abbey: 1469-1539', *Cîteaux*, 60 (2009), 79-138.

Further notes indicate movement of the book from this southwestern area:

- (a) 'Iohannes collard de london ad lanam nyhyll mise<r>ius quam fuisse felicem' (fol. 186^v, s. xvi^{1?}); the motto is a derivative of BOETHIUS, *Philosophiae consolatio* 2.p 4.2, ed. Ludwig Bieler, *CC* 94 (1984), 23/4-5. John Collard is presumably either a relative of or himself the resident of the parish of St Michael Crooked Lane in Candlewick Ward who was alive in 1541 and rated at £30: *Two Tudor Subsidy Rolls For the City of London 1541 and 1582*, ed. R G Lang, London Record Society 29 (London, 1993), 45.

(b) a note on the location of Higden's tomb 'in monasterio d. werberburge', ie St Werburgh's, Chester, as shown to writer by 'Mr. Bucsey' (fol. 186th, s. xvi), discussed by E. Barker, 'The Discovery of Ralph Higden's Tomb', *Journal of the Architectural, Archaeological and Historic Society of the County and City of Chester and North Wales*, ns, 9 (1903), 115-28 (esp. 118-19); a Nicholas Bucksye was one of the first prebendaries of the cathedral into which the abbey was converted in 1541: Francis Gastrell, *Notitia Cestriensis, or Historical Notices of the Diocese of Chester: Cheshire*, Chetham Society, 8 (Manchester, 1845), 65.

(c) a note on author/contents and, in the same hand, 'Liber [expunged; ? Willielmus] Lich', s. xvi (fol. i). If indeed 'William', the one possible bishop of Lichfield within the appropriate time-span would be William Overton, bishop 1580-1609.

The book came to ChCh from Samuel Burton: 'Liber Ecclesiae Christi Oxon' ex dono Samuelis Burtoni, in artibus Magistri, et eiusdem Ecclesiae Alumni. anno D. 1595' (fol. ii^v); this small script appears to be his own, as may be the notes in a larger script at fol. ii and fol. ii^v, which are now erased and irretrievable under UV, apart from the date '1588'. A Staffordshire man (thus from Lichfield diocese), he matriculated in 1586 and received his BA in 1588 and his MA in 1591. He was from 1594 rector of Dry Marston (Gloucs.) and of Stratton-upon-Fosse from 1597. In 1607, he was appointed archdeacon of Gloucester; he died in 1634 aged about 65 (*AO*, 218). The researches of David Selwyn have identified him as an owner of printed books, sometimes, as in Dublin: Trinity College, A.1.34 (Jan Hus, *Epistolae* (Wittenberg, 1537), previously owned by Thomas Cranmer) with the motto 'Nihil homine vel inferius vel superius'; Dr Selwyn's discoveries will be available on-line on the Oxford Bibliographical Society website in his supplement to his own *The Library of Thomas Cranmer* (Oxford, 1996). The dates of Burton's career make it implausible that he came by this manuscript in Chester or that he was in the suite of Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, on his visit to that city, as was proposed by Barker, 'Discovery'; Dudley's progress to Shropshire and Cheshire took place in May and June 1584, at a time when Burton was not yet even an undergraduate: Simon Adams, *Leicester and the Court: essays on Elizabethan politics* (Manchester, 2002), 324.

Thomas James saw the manuscript at Christ Church and catalogued it in his *Ecloga* as MS 3 (52): 'Polychronica Ranulphi cognomento Higden'. There is also an extensive note on King Alfred (fol. 130, s. xvii; cf. fol. 105^v). At the front pastedown, there are the former ChCh shelfmarks, 'B.2', cancelled, relating to the 1676 Catalogue (Appendix I), and the New Library's 'F.2' (this latter also appears at the foot of fol. 1, in both cases in Smallwell's hand; see Appendix IV).

Despite the appearance of a continuous presence in the Library, it may be that for some of its time in Christ Church's ownership, it wandered. It is not mentioned in the Old Archive Catalogue (Appendix II) and its absence may be explained by a note at the verso of the final flyleaf of the Library Accounts, MS LR 16, where it is recorded (perhaps by Philip Birt, the Library Keeper 1717-20) 'Mem y^t Hon. B. Calvert borrow'd Higden's Polychron. {not returned}'. The negligent borrower was Benedict Calvert (1700-32) who matriculated in 1716 and left in 1723; on him, see Troy O. Bickham in *Oxford DNB*.

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