

MS. 307

Ranulf Higden, *Polychronicon*, with continuations England; s xiv ex. (1381 x 1419)

Text

1. (fols. 2v–9r) Alphabetical index from ‘Abraham 2. 10.’ to ‘Zorobabell .3. 10.’, each entry with Book and chapter numbers in Arabic numerals (cf. Dutschke, *Huntington cat.*, I, p. 176, describing HM 132, in Higden’s own hand); fol. 9v blank. [\[Image\]](#)
2. (fols. 10r–136r) Ranulf Higden, *Polychronicon*, in the ‘Intermediate’ or ‘AB’ version as defined by Taylor, *Universal chronicle*, with continuations to 1381, in eight books: ‘Post preclaros artium scriptores ...’ [\[Image\]](#) with the start of Bks. I–VII at fols. 10r, 28v, 42r, 60v, 75v, 94r, and 108r, Higden’s text ending at fol. 129r: ‘... nimis adversa propetior’ (ed. C. Babington and J. R. Lumby, *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden monachi cestrensis*, RS, 41 (9 vols.: 1865–86), vols. I–IX, p. 344); Bk. VII continues with a chronicle for 1348–77, attributed to John Malvern, monk of Worcester: ‘Gravis et magna ... octo annorum’ (fols. 129r–134v; *RS*, vol. IX, pp. 355–93), and the short Bk. VIII based on the *Vita Ricardi secundi*: ‘Ricardus de Bordeus ... senex multorum dierum’ (fols. 134v–136r) (*RS*, IX, pp. 393–406; Hog, 1846, pp. 228–243; on the continuations see Taylor, pp. 122–3; cf. MS. 304, Text item 6); fols. 136v–138v originally blank, now with a three-line inscription on 138v about Ganymede, citing Book IV c. 2. The acrostic in Book I which reveals the author’s name is spoilt by extra divisions of the text, and by occasional mistakes by the person supplying the initials: ‘Presentem cronmaicam conpilauit frater Rfnulpphus Cestrensis monaches’

Decoration

The start of each book with an eleven- to thirteen-line parted initial in red and blue, with mauve and predominantly red penwork foliate infill and flourishing, and partial borders in red and blue (fols. 10r, 28v incorporating a human face [\[Image\]](#), 60v, 75v, 94r, and 134v) [\[Image\]](#) [\[Image\]](#) [\[Image\]](#) [\[Image\]](#) [\[Image\]](#), the initials to Books III and VII excised from fols. 42r and 108r; chapters each with a two-line initial in blue with red penwork flourishing; the index also with three-line initials in blue with red penwork flourishing, A–H only (fols. 2v–5r), most of the others with sketched initials; paraphs alternately plain red or blue. [\[Image\]](#)

There is a diagram illustrating Pythagoras’ discovery of harmonics (fol. 45r) (as in *RS*, III, p. 208). [\[Image\]](#)

Physical description

Parchment, c.385 x c.255 mm; of generally good quality.

ff. i (paper) + 138 + i (paper), foliated in pencil: 1–138, perhaps c.1947 (cf. Binding), correcting a sporadic 19th-century pencil foliation; the endpapers (fols. i, 139) foliated in modern pencil.

Quires mostly of twelve leaves each: 1^{nine} (structure uncertain; fols. 1–9); 2–11¹² (fols. 10–129), 12¹⁰⁻¹ (10th leaf cancelled) (fols. 130–138); catchwords by the original scribe

occur throughout; there are at least three series of medieval leaf signatures: one consists just of a letter, without a number, in the centre of the lower margin, 'a' to 'h' in leadpoint, i/j trimmed away, 'k' and '.l.' in red ink.

Ruled in leadpoint, for two columns of 64 lines of text per page, below the top ruled line; usually only the top ruled line extends the full width of the page, each column bounded by single vertical bounding lines; the ruled space *c.*280 x *c.*170–5 mm.; prickings usually survive in the upper and lower margins, and occasionally at the fore-edge.

Written in anglicana script.

Secundo folio: 'De Arnulpho rege' (index, fol. 3r); 'ad quartu(m)' (text, fol. 11r); the latter is listed in the Canterbury catalogue (see under Provenance).

Binding

Tightly re-sewn and re-bound in 20th-century brown leather over pasteboards, the endpapers with the watermarked date '1947'; with rust marks from a chain-staple(?) at the foot of the fore-edge of the first few leaves; copper-stains towards the fore-edge of fol. 1r probably caused by clasp fittings; the spine lettered in gilt capitals 'Polychron: | Ranulphi | Higden'; inscribed in pencil 'Queens | 25437' (fol. 138v), presumably by the binder (cf. MS. 314); a few small pieces of 13th-century manuscript, presumably recovered from the previous binding, and the blue-edged paper spine-label, are preserved in an envelope stuck to fol. 139r.

Provenance

1. Written in England after 1380 (the last dated event in the text) and before abbot Hunden (see below) died; he was very possibly the first owner since he was already a monk of St. Augustine's when he was made abbot in 1405.
2. Thomas Hunden (died 1419/20), abbot of St. Augustine's, Canterbury; among numerous annotations an early hand has made references to Thanet (fol. 24v) and Canterbury (fols. 25r, 76v, 98v, and 103v).
3. Canterbury, St. Augustine's abbey, given by Hunden with nine other books, of which the present is the only one known to survive: inscribed 'Cronica Cestren' T. Hundenn Abb(at)is [followed by a short erasure, legible with a UV lamp as] de librar(io) s(an)c(t)i Aug(ustin)i Cantuar(iensis)' (fol. 2r) [[Image](#)] (cf. Ker, *MLGB*, p. 47; A. B. Emden, *Donors of books to S. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury*, Oxford Bibliographical Society, Occasional publication, 4 (Oxford, 1968), pp. 3, 4); identifiable in the late 15th-century Canterbury catalogue from the secundo folio 'Ad quartum' (James, 1903, p. 293 no. 936);
4. John Dee (1527–1608) (on whom see *DNB*) (cf. James, 1921; Watson & Roberts, 1990), who owned numerous manuscripts from St. Augustine's: inscribed 'Johannes Dee. 1561. 16 Maij | Amico suo Integerrimo | Magistro Blomefelde | dono dedit' (fol. 2r) [[Image](#)], and with one of his typical forms of marginal symbol, in the form of three dots in a triangle with a curved line below (e.g. fols. 56r, 67r, 78r, 82r).
5. William Blomefield (on whom see R. Schuler, 'William Blomfield, Elizabethan alchemist', *Ambix*, 20 (1973), pp. 75–87, citing the present manuscript at p. 80; D. C. Baker and J. L. Murphey, 'The books of Myles Blomefylde', *The Library*, 5th series,

31 (1976), pp. 377–85, cite it at p. 385, and agree that it is more likely to have belonged to William than Myles; given to him by Dee. Inscribed, perhaps by Blomefield ‘Polichronicon.’ in red crayon (fol. 2r), this was subsequently gone over with brown ink, and later corrected with black ink to ‘Polychronicon’; the same black ink was used (perhaps by Airay?) to add ‘Ranulphi Hygden Cestrensis’ above.

[\[Image\]](#)

6. Henry Airay (1560–1616) (on whom see *DNB*; *Alumni Oxonienses*; and Magrath, *Queen’s*, I, pp. 225–34 etc.), fellow (1586) and provost (1599–1616) of Queen’s College.
7. Queen’s College, bequeathed by Airay in 1616: inscribed ‘Me legauit Collegio Reginae Henricus | Airay eisudem Collegij nuper | Præpositus An^o Dni. 1616’ (fol. 2r) [\[Image\]](#); included in the list of benefactors to the Library (see Magrath, *Queen’s*, II, p. 268), and this manuscript is in Langbaine’s mid 17th-century catalogue and MS. 555; Langbaine added a note on the acrostic which identifies the author ‘Authoris nomen per _____ ex primis literis cujuscunque capitis libri primi | (quæ in unum collecta hæc verba conficiunt) colligere licet | PRESENTEM CRONICAM CONPILAVIT FRATER RANULPHVS CES|TREN SIS MONACHVS.’, and the shelfmark ‘Arch. B. 1.1.’ (fol. 2r) [\[Image\]](#), and he added a note at the end of the text concerning the absence of Thomas of Walsingham’s continuation (fol. 136r) [\[Image\]](#); with the College bookplate (fol. 1v), and inscribed with the former College shelfmarks ‘Arch. B. 1. 1.’ (fol. 1r), and ‘S. 3.’ (fol. 1r), both crossed through.

Bibliography

Bernard, *CLM*, 29 no. 925 (MS. 1)

Coxe, *Catalogus*, p. 73.

Montague Rhodes James, *The ancient libraries of Canterbury and Dover: the catalogues of the libraries of Christ Church Priory and St. Augustine’s Abbey at Canterbury and of St. Martin’s Priory at Dover* (Cambridge, 1903), p. 297 no. 936 and p. 519.

M. R. James, *List of manuscripts formerly owned by Dr. John Dee* (Oxford, 1921), p. 28 no. 121.

John Taylor, *The ‘Universal chronicle’ of Ranulph Higden* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 123 n., 106, 158, 181.

Alexander & Temple, *College libraries*, no. 357.

Julian Roberts and Andrew G. Watson, *John Dee’s library catalogue* (London, 1990), DM161 at p. 182.

B.C. Barker-Benfield, *St. Augustine’s, Canterbury*, CMBLC, forthcoming

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