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.


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: 1ˢᵉⁿᵉ (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).

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.

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 legavit Collegio Regina Henricus | Airay eisdem Collegij nuper | Præpositus An° 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 haec verba conficiunt) colligere licet | PRESENTEM CRONICAM CONPILAVIT FRATER RANULPHVS CES|TRENSIS 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.
M. R. James, List of manuscripts formerly owned by Dr. John Dee (Oxford, 1921), p. 28 no. 121.
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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Status: Draft