

THE MEDIEVAL  
MANUSCRIPTS OF TRINITY  
COLLEGE, OXFORD:  
A DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE

*by*  
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# *Polychronicon* ('Adam') (predominantly in Middle English)

England; s. XV<sup>ex</sup>–XV/XVI

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Paper: stout, but worn and weathered, especially at the outer edge and lower corner, on the first few pages. Watermarks: fol. 1, crosier (cf. Briquet 5803 of 1475); fol. 7, hillock of three mounds within a circle surmounted by a cross (cf. Briquet 11880 of 1448–52); fols. 18 and 23, 'Y' (cf. Briquet 9183 of 1472); fol. 44, armorial of three fleurs-de-lis; fols. 189 and 193, 'P' topped by quatrefoil, a line bisecting the descender (cf. Briquet 8668 of 1485). Leather tabs were once glued to many pages: two are still in place (173, 195), one survives *ex situ* (in the gutter between 151/152), and the former existence of others is attested by the narrow glue stains and localized damage in the outer margins of many leaves (e.g. 88, 95, 98, 105, 111, 119, 124, 135). At some point, the centrefolds of Qq. I and XVI and various leaves of Q. XVII were reinforced with paper slips glued into place. Fols. ii (paper) + 225 + iii (paper, foliated '226'–'228'). Continuous correct foliation in modern pencil; a prior (incorrect) pencil numbering on some leaves.

Size: 278–80 × 200 mm (with the folded-over flaps of fols. 14 and 117 extending this to 287 × 200 mm). Text-block: 191 × 120 mm (except for the verse passages, fols. 189–94, where 162 × 60–70 mm, and 195<sup>r</sup>, where 195 × 80–5 mm). Lines: 34–9 (fols. 189–94: 34–5). Pricking: awl; pricked for the horizontal rulings in both inner and outer margins. Prickings generally preserved in all four margins. Ruling: frame-ruled in lead (or, exceptionally, for part of Q. XVII, in crayon). Double outer vertical bounding line; single inner one and single horizontals at top and bottom; an extra single vertical towards edge of outer margin (defining marginal space for tituli).

Collation: I<sup>4</sup>; II–III<sup>12</sup>; IV<sup>16</sup>; V–VI<sup>12</sup>; VII<sup>16</sup>; VIII–XI<sup>12</sup>; XII<sup>16</sup>; XIII<sup>12</sup>; XIV<sup>16</sup>; XV<sup>10</sup>; XVI<sup>16</sup>; XVII<sup>13</sup> (fols. 213–25, original structure uncertain: 213–15 are (now) singletons; 216–20 are conjoint with 221–5; stubs from a written bifolium (?rejected/damaged) between 220 and 221; stubs from a written bifolium (?rejected/damaged) between 219/220 and 221/222). First leaves: I,

15, 27, 39, 55, 67, 79, 95, 107, 119, 131, 143, 159, 171, 187, 197, 213. Quires are marked with a numerical signature (first recto, centre of the lower margin: '1'–'17') and a catchword. The leaves of the first half of each quire were labelled (lower margin towards fore-edge) with quire letter and leaf number (most lost through trimming; some examples for Qq. 'b'–'d', 'f', and 'o' survive).

2<sup>o</sup> folio: þe woman in lyknesse

## BINDING

Panelled style, s. xviii, probably by Sedgley; blind-tooled mottled and plain calf, a fleuron at each corner of the inner compartment, and two decorative rolls; gold-tooled armorial book-stamp of Trinity College on both covers; MS. number in gilt on spine; 284 × 205 × 60 mm.

## CONTENTS

Fols. 1<sup>r</sup>–225<sup>v</sup>. World Chronicle. Fol. 1<sup>r</sup>. *Adam*. [A]lmighty god of his diuine power þat made alle the worlde of nougt; yt plesyd hym to make man last of all his werkys. ¶For þe first day, God made aungelis arcaungelis and heuyn. ¶On þe morwe aftyr þat is callyd monday God made þe firmament, Sonne and mone and þe Sterris bryght. ¶On þe twewysday, god made bothe See and land. ¶On þe Wednysday, god made Fishis in water to swym, and foule on londe to flee, and seyde, *cressite et multiplicamini* ... Fol. 225<sup>v</sup> ... they slow a grete serpent, and sent þe skynne þereof to rome, for a grete wounder, for þat skynne was vj score fote longe ¶¶Than þe carta-//.

Running headings: Adam (1<sup>r</sup>–9<sup>v</sup>), Paradise (10<sup>r</sup>–<sup>v</sup>), Seth (11<sup>r</sup>–<sup>v</sup>), Noe (12<sup>r</sup>–14<sup>v</sup>) ... Genesis, Abraham (73<sup>r</sup>–81<sup>r</sup>) ... Liber Regum ii<sup>do</sup>, Dauid (158<sup>r</sup>–159<sup>v</sup>) ... Asor (216<sup>v</sup>–222<sup>v</sup>), Sadoch (223<sup>r</sup>–225<sup>r</sup>), Achym (225<sup>v</sup>)—in large part the ancestry of Christ. Rubrics flag *Prima etas* on 13<sup>v</sup>, *Tertia etas* on 94<sup>v</sup>, and *Quarta etas* on 188<sup>r</sup> (none for *Secunda etas*); then the world of Silver (199<sup>v</sup>), and of Brass (220<sup>v</sup>).



Overview of Europe on fols. 37<sup>v</sup>–61<sup>v</sup>, with Rome and its buildings from 40<sup>v</sup>, Britain from 51<sup>r</sup> ('Brytayne is a provynce of Europa, and is in a corner of þe worlde, and stondeþ in þe Northwest parte of þe worlde. This Brytayne is accounted a noble londe ...'), England on 52<sup>r</sup>–55<sup>r</sup> ('Then Engest with þe Saxons conquerd this londe, and callyd yt Englonde aftyr his name Engest. Or ellis it is callyd Anglia aftyr a queen þat was a noble dukes doughter of þe Saxons'; its marvels include Stonehenge (53<sup>r</sup>), its highlighted saints Etheldreda, Edmund, Elphege, Edgar, Cuthbert, and Edward), Scotland on 55<sup>r</sup>–56<sup>v</sup> ('þe countrey whiche now is named Scotland is an oute stretchyng of þe northe party of Brytayne'), and Ireland on 56<sup>v</sup>–61<sup>r</sup> ('[H]ybernia þat is Irlond, and was of olde tyme incorporate in to þe lordship of Brytayne'). Genealogy of Christ at the end of the Third Age (187<sup>v</sup>–188<sup>r</sup>). Under Ptolomy Philadelphus (223<sup>v</sup>–225<sup>r</sup>; who 'men seyth ... had seventy thousand books in his lybrary') appear accounts not only of the Septuagint (223<sup>v</sup>) and Origen (224<sup>v</sup>) who 'made a translation with signes þat be cleped astaryches and obelus', but also of the Vulgate (224<sup>r</sup>, Jerome's 'translacion is trewest'; and again 224<sup>v</sup>, 'this translacion is holden nyghe in euery place'). Text breaks off incomplete (225<sup>v</sup>) in the section 'Here begenneth the batayll of Hanybal of Cartago ayenst the Romayns'.

Compiled from divers sources including: John Trevisa's translation of Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon* (extracts from 2. 218–4. 52) ?via William Caxton's edition (Westminster, 1482); *Mandeville's Travels*; Peter of Poitiers's *Compendium historiae in genealogia Christi*; Jacques Legrand, *Livres des bonnes Moeurs*; and Wynkyn de Worde's *Informacion for pylgrymes unto the holy londe* (Westminster, c.1496). Credited authorities—be they direct or (doubtless frequently) indirect—include Augustine (e.g. 36<sup>v</sup>, 65<sup>v</sup>, 73<sup>r</sup>, 224<sup>r</sup>), Bede (45<sup>v</sup>, 53<sup>v</sup>), the Bible, Cato (125<sup>v</sup>), Cicero (125<sup>r</sup>, 126<sup>r</sup>), Eutropius (47<sup>v</sup>), Gerald of Wales (e.g. 57<sup>v</sup>, 61<sup>r</sup>), Gregory the Great (e.g. 63<sup>v</sup>), Herodotus (55<sup>v</sup>), Hrabanus Maurus (39<sup>v</sup>), Isidore (40<sup>r</sup>), Josephus (96<sup>v</sup>, 221<sup>r</sup>), John Trevisa (48<sup>v</sup>, 60<sup>v</sup>), Nicholas of Lyra (13<sup>r</sup>), Orosius (36<sup>r</sup>), Ovid (47<sup>v</sup>, 143<sup>r</sup>), Peter Comestor (36<sup>r</sup>), Pompeius Trogus (36<sup>r</sup>, 61<sup>v</sup>, 79<sup>r</sup>, 225<sup>r</sup>), Quintus Curtius Rufus (77<sup>v</sup>–78<sup>r</sup>), Ranulph Higden (48<sup>v</sup>, 54<sup>r</sup>), Seneca (145<sup>r</sup>), Solinus (29<sup>r</sup>, 52<sup>r</sup>, 58<sup>v</sup>), Valerius Maximus (131<sup>r</sup>), and Varro (33<sup>v</sup>). The work includes passages/paraphrases from Chaucer's

'Parson's Tale' on 2<sup>r-v</sup>, 14<sup>v</sup>–15<sup>r</sup>, 70<sup>v</sup>, and 165<sup>r</sup>; and from his 'Tale of Melibee' on 32<sup>r-v</sup> and 131<sup>r</sup>. It has passages/paraphrases from John Gower's *Confessio amantis* on 3<sup>v</sup>, 15<sup>r</sup>, 39<sup>v</sup>, 68<sup>v</sup>–70<sup>v</sup>, 118<sup>r</sup>, and (the most substantial) 189<sup>r</sup>–195<sup>r</sup>—this on Nebuchanezzar's dream: '[T]he world stant euer upon debate / So may ther nat be sewre noon estaat / ... which noon but only god may steere.' See K. Harris, 'John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*: The Virtues of Bad Texts', in D. Pearsall (ed.), *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 27–40; and eadem, 'Unnoticed extracts from Chaucer and Hoccleve: Huntington MS. HM 144, Trinity College, Oxford MS. D 29 and *The Canterbury Tales*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 20 (1998), pp. 167–99; also D. Mosser, *A Digital Catalogue of the Pre-1500 Manuscripts and Incunables of the Canterbury Tales*, 2nd edn. (online; consulted 18 Sept. 2015), siglum To2. The scribe's changes in spelling from that of his exemplars are discussed by Wakelin, *Correction*, pp. 175–8.

#### SCRIBES AND SCRIPT

A hybrid English Literary Cursive with some Secretary forms; bold, vigorous, and spacious, tending to become more cursive as the work progresses. One scribe. Marginal cues and references generally done in a slightly more formal version of the text script. Running headings, marginal headings, and the names, headings, and rubrics within the main text are all written to a larger gauge in a version of Textualis (one red rubric in the normal text script appears on 131<sup>r</sup>). Fols. 189<sup>r</sup>–194<sup>v</sup> (the inner six bifolia of Q. XV, the greater part of the Gower extract) are written in a more compact Hybrid Secretary, but doubtless by the same scribe (who continued to supply running headings in his usual Textualis style). The start of sentences and of marginal summaries is marked by red paraps. Some deletions effected in red. Very occasional underlining in red of names and references (e.g. 27<sup>r</sup>, 30<sup>r</sup>–31<sup>r</sup>, 32<sup>r</sup>, 175<sup>v</sup>, 210<sup>v</sup>) but done consistently throughout the genealogy of Christ (187<sup>v</sup>–188<sup>r</sup>).

The scribe was seemingly the compiler (*teste* marginal and interlinear additions, notably 2<sup>r</sup>, 105<sup>r</sup>, 111<sup>r</sup>, corrections written on slips of paper pasted over original text, e.g. 21<sup>r</sup>, 30<sup>r</sup>, and various deletions, e.g. 14<sup>v</sup>–15<sup>r</sup>). The same hand appears in San Marino, Huntington Library, MS. HM 144 (collection of ME poetry and prose, several items apparently copied from Caxton

editions, including his *Polychronicon*: see Dutschke, *Guide*, i, p. 203); and in London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS. 84 (Prose Brut datable to 1477×79 with additions in or after 1482: Matheson, *Brut*, no. 178; P. R. Robinson, *Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts c. 888–1600 in London Libraries*, 2 vols. (London, 2003), i, no. 54; ii, pl. 201). Here, too, the scribe was a compiler. + Marginal annotations in an informal s. xvi cursive, by one or more hands: 15<sup>v</sup>, 116<sup>r</sup>, 130<sup>r</sup>, 145<sup>r</sup>, etc. See also Provenance.

## DECORATION

The spaces, 2–4 lines high (plus guide letters), left for initials at major subdivisions throughout were never filled. Fol. 211<sup>r</sup>. A schematic representation of Jerusalem; done on a separate sheet of parchment and pasted in. Although it corresponds to the description in the text at the bottom of fol. 210<sup>v</sup> and the top of 211<sup>r</sup> (which concludes with a specific reference to it—‘as it is notyd or drawn here folwyng’), the schema would seem to pre-date the present manuscript and may have been culled from an earlier (s. xv) book. Delineated and lettered in red, with areas coloured in green and yellow, it is a version of the schema associated with Peter of Poitiers (d. 1205): three concentric circular zones (the innermost labelled *habitatio regis et sacerdotium*, the middle one *habitatio nobilium ciuium prophetarum*, the outermost one *habitatio pauperorum*), the outer circle being penetrated by six semicircles

representing six gates (labelled *porta sterquilinii*, *porta uetus uel iudiciaria*, *porta piscium uel dauid*, *porta fontis Syloe uel aquarum*, *porta gregis uel probatice piscine uel ofel uel negotiatorum*, and *porta uallis Iosaphat uel Geon*).

## PROVENANCE

(1) S. xvi, George Brown (inscriptions, fol. 173<sup>r</sup>, ‘By me george browne of lyttell ?dunmowe preste’; fol. 224<sup>v</sup>, ‘iste lyber G\ e/orge broun’—the first a hasty cursive, now faint, the second a degenerate Textualis). (2) S. xvi, Henry Hawkin of Great Dunmow, Essex (inscription, fol. 223<sup>v</sup>, lower margin: ‘Be me hary hawkyn dwellyng in \Myche/ Dvn-mow in the cownte of Essyx / dey dunmowe magna henricus hawkyn’. S. xvi Essex provenance is further indicated by the jotting on fol. 130<sup>r</sup>: ‘That thomas ?cokkell [or colkell] of tyllyngeam [i.e. Tillingham] dothe owe unto wylyyam hale of mawldon [i.e. Maldon] in the counte of [-blot-] essex ... by the hand of thomas h-?-’. (3) John Gibbon of Bethersden, Kent (b. 1611; matriculated Trinity College 1628). (4) Trinity College in 1629 by gift of Gibbon (inscription on fol. 1<sup>r</sup>: ‘Liber Coll. Scae. et indiuiduae Trinitatis Oxon. ex dono Johannis Gibbon Generosi et convictoris in hoc ipso collegio Anno 1629<sup>o</sup>’—by the same hand as the inscription in MS. 48 (that in MS. 5. follows the same formula but is by a different hand). Bernard, p. 64, no. 1941 (as MS. 4). College shelfmarks: ?44 on fore-edge; 1<sup>r</sup>, lower margin: pencil ‘4’, ink ‘29’.

## 30

Legal collection, composite: A. Collection of Pleas; B. Defences; C. Treatise on Court Leet; D. Duties of Office; Retorna Brevium. Material in Latin, French and English

England; s. XV<sup>3/3</sup>

## GENERAL

Paper throughout. Watermark on fol. 65 (a quadrilobe florette projecting from a rectangle decorated with three circles) not matched in Briquet. A composite volume of four sections: A (the two unnumbered leaf stubs + fols. 2–51); B (fols. 52–65); C (fols. 66–83); D

(fols. 84–92). There is no certain evidence for when they were brought together. The slightly greater weathering of fols. 51<sup>v</sup>, 52<sup>r</sup>, 65<sup>v</sup>, 66<sup>r</sup>, 83<sup>v</sup>, 84<sup>r</sup> suggests that the individual sections had some, but not an extended, independent existence. Fols. i (modern paper, foliated ‘1’) + 2 unnumbered original leaf stubs + 91