

**Genealogical Chronicle of the Bible and the Kings of England to Edward IV**  
**In Latin, illustrated manuscript on parchment**  
**England, London or Westminster, after 1471, before 1483**

*One single leaf and nine double leaves on parchment, in roll-codex format, i.e. a single-sided roll of four membranes folded concertina-style to form a codex, modern foliation in pencil, top, outer corner recto, 1-10, lacking at least the second half of the first leaf, and at least two other leaves before that, judging from the missing text, ruled in ink with single bounding lines, prickings top and bottom, (written space, including the diagrams, 295 x 183 mm.; text space 203-190 x 183; format changes, f. 7, text space 280 x 180 mm.) written in an upright, well-spaced gothic book hand in two columns of text in forty-two to forty-one lines, copied transversely so the text reads top to bottom, like a roll, with lines of genealogical descent on both sides of the text and between the columns through f. 8; and from ff. 9v-10v, only between the columns; two-line blue initials with red pen work forming a box around the initials, and sometimes with short extensions, genealogical lines in red, green, and pale red/orange, names within the genealogies in red circles within circumscribed squares in red, green and orange, or in red double circles, the inner leaves are in very good condition, legible and clean with minor staining in the top and bottom, rodent damage to the top outer corner of the first surviving leaf, with some loss of text, and ff. 8v-9, darkened, and f. 10, the last leaf, worn and darkened, with some damage to the text; creased vertically, indicating it was once folded in half. Unbound, but sewn through each opening onto four double cords, which are now partially unraveled. Boxed. Dimensions 340 x 230, or if opened, 340 x 4,345 mm.*

Medieval rolls are not uncommon, but they are always of special interest. The format of this manuscript is of even more interest. It is an example of a roll-codex, copied to read like a roll, from top to bottom, but folded concertina fashion like a codex, which must be turned to read. This is a copy of an unpublished genealogical chronicle of the kings of England, now beginning imperfectly, but which originally would have included Adam to Edward IV. Texts such as these have become important sources for historians of mid-fifteenth century England, illustrating attitudes toward governance and kingship among the urban and rural gentry.

#### PROVENANCE

1. Datable from textual evidence between 1471 and 1483; many copies of this text can be dated on the basis of which of Edward IV's numerous children they include; our text includes his coronation in 1461, but none of his children; it must have been written after 1471, since the entry on Henry VI records that he was buried at Cherchessey (Chertsey), and before 1483, when Edward IV died. This manuscript belongs to a group of manuscripts copied in a very similar script, possibly all by the same scribe, who probably mainly worked in London or Westminster, but who may also have traveled about. This scribe, dubbed by Kathleen Scott, "the Considerans scribe," since he seemed to have specialized in copying this text, worked over a period of twenty years beginning in the reign of Henry VI. Scott lists twenty-one manuscripts she ascribes to this scribe, illustrated by a number of different artists and shops (see Scott, 1996, no. 116, pp. 315-317).

Many copies of this text begin with a miniature and include gold initials and gold crowns on the roundels with the name of kings. Neither of these features are true of this manuscript (admittedly, since the beginning is missing, we do not know if it was ever illustrated). Its general appearance may be a clue to an original owner who was a member of the urban or rural gentry, rather than the nobility.

The format of this manuscript is of special interest. Like Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Lyell 33, this is an example of a Roll-chronicle designed to be used as a codex (see de la Mare, 1971, p. 82; the following description of how a manuscript in this special format is made is based on her excellent explanation). It is made of four membranes, glued together, to form a long roll of approximately 4,345 mm. in length. It was ruled transversely on one side only in panels of forty-two to forty-one lines, leaving a blank space of around 45 mm. between each panel. After writing the text and drawing the lines of the genealogy, the scribe made a transverse fold across the middle of each blank space, upwards and downwards alternately, so that the roll could be closed up concertina fashion into a codex, which is read by turning the volume sideways so the fore-edge faced the reader. Our manuscript was not bound, and judging from the wear and darkening of the closing leaves probably never was, but each opening was stitched through and sewn around cords to preserve its shape. In her study of Lyell MS 33, de la Mare identified seven manuscripts with this special format (not including this manuscript); it would be of interest to know if this format was used for other texts.

2. Eighteenth-century note, mostly erased, on the reverse side of f. 10rv, indicating the contents included Solomon to the Saxon kings, perhaps evidence that the text had already lost its beginning at that point.
3. Diamond-shaped paper label, on the reverse side of f. 10rv, "63," in ink; price £2/2s/0d in pencil.
4. Belonged to the anthropologist, Professor Pablo Martinez del Rio (1892-1963), his armorial bookplate, on the reverse of f. 10v.

## TEXT

f. 1v-10, [f. 1, which would have been the inside of the folded double leaf is blank], incipit, column a "///que speciosa dicatur ab hebreis porta ionathan ab aliis turre gregis ...; Achaz filium suum per ignem beenon traiecit ...; Ezechias aperto templo ...;" incipit, column b "Manaen datis mille talentis argenti regi ...; Faceia interfectus est a pharee ...; Tempore osee regis licet dedisset licenciam iudeis ...; explicit, ... Edwardus quartus filius et heres Ricardi nuper ducis eboraci. Post decessum patris sui <fuit dux Eboraci ..?>. Et coronatus est in regum anglie apud Westmonasterion <xxviii die iunii> anno domini m cccclxi."

The text is a genealogical chronicle, which combines biblical history with the history of the Kings of England. The manuscript is now missing the opening half of the first double leaf, as well as at least one more set of double leaves, judging by the amount of missing text. It would have originally begun biblical history with the creation of Adam, and traced the history of the England from

Noah's son Japheth, through Aeneas, and his descendent Brutus, the eponymous founder of Britain, and its first king.

This text belongs to a group of genealogical chronicles which trace the descent of Edward IV back to creation, and served to give the Yorkist king an impressive pedigree that underlined the legitimacy of his claim to the English throne. Some sources refer to these chronicles as the "Considerans" group (Scott, 1996, p. 313, no. 115, and no. 116, pp. 315-17), since some copies begin with the prologue (now missing from our manuscript), "Considerans historie sacre prolixitatem necnon et difficultatem scolarium quoque circa stadium sacre lectionis ... [Peter of Poitiers] Et quia multi cronicorum ... linealiter descendendo."

These chronicles begin with text based on the *Compendium historiae in genealogia Christi* by Peter of Poitiers (c. 1130-1205), the prominent theologian, who taught in the Paris schools from c. 1167, and became Chancellor of Paris in 1193. This very popular text retold the story of the Bible as a genealogy from Adam and Eve to Christ, with short sections of accompanying text. Peter explains in the introduction that this is a summary of biblical history for beginning students; a contemporary chronicler noted that "Being mindful of poor clerics, he invented historical trees of the Old Testament which were painted on skins." Many of the surviving manuscripts of this text are in fact copied in roll-format, and were probably used in the classroom. The text also circulated widely as part of longer chronicles, as in this example. Peter's Latin text has never been edited, although the text of one Latin version from a late, interpolated manuscript was printed, together with the German translation of his text (see Vollmer). Stegmüller, *Repertorium* 6778, lists more than eighty-five manuscripts (see also Moore and Hilpert).

The Old Testament lineages from Peter of Poitiers' text, with the names inscribed in red and connected by lines to illustrate genealogical descent, are combined here with the history of the British kings, based largely on the very popular *History of the Kings of Britain* by the twelfth-century author, Geoffrey of Monmouth, who created a history of Britain before the incarnation of Christ from the legendary Brutus, the great grandson of the Trojan Aeneas, through a long list of kings including Uther Pendragon and Arthur, and concluding with the seventh-century Cadwallader, his last British king before the Saxons. In this manuscript there are two columns of text on the opening leaves, and at least seven genealogical lines (one at the far left, one between the text columns, and four at the far right on many; additional short genealogical lines are added as needed). The genealogy on the far left now begins with the British king Morwidus. This section of the text ends on f. 6v with Christ. The interwoven nature of the genealogies can be seen here, where on the far left the genealogy ends with Herodes Agrippa (i.e. Agrippa I) and Herodias, Christ is in the middle, and the genealogy on the far right lists the British kings; this is the only line that continues, with the kings Marius, Coilus, and Lucius, presented in one line of descent to Kadwalladrus (i.e. Cadwallader); on f. 8, the seven Saxon kingdoms take over, presented only as a genealogy with the names of the kings in red circles, and without text of any sort, and gradually dwindling to three lines of descent on ff. 8-9; on f. 9v, Alfred, unites the kingdom, and begins a line of descent of the Kings of England in the center column, flanked again by two columns of text, and continuing to Edward IV.

Various forms of this chronicle circulated in both Latin and English. The text was first studied by de la Mare in her description of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Lyell 33, who divided them into four groups, listing eighteen manuscripts (she also included the Chronicle by Roger Alban as a fifth group, which may be one of the sources of this chronicle). Her list was expanded by Allan, 1979, pp. 189, notes 5 and 6, and p. 190, note 15, Scott, 1996, no. 116, and Kennedy, 1989, 2676-77, and 2889-90), to include five manuscripts of the Long Latin version, five of the Long English version, three of a Short Latin version, and six of a short English version, plus several additional manuscripts, listed by Scott, of undetermined textual versions. None of these texts have been edited, and further study focusing on the different versions would surely be illuminating. This manuscript is a previously unknown copy of the "Long Latin" version.

Our text should generally be grouped with the "Long Latin" version, but cautiously. The manuscripts include British Library, Lansdowne MS 456, British Library, Harley Rolls C.9, Oxford, St. John's College, MS 23, Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibl, MS Ny Kgl 1858, and Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.4.3 (636). Compared with the text in British Library, Harley Rolls C.9, for example, the text in the manuscript described here is usually much shorter (although the opening sections of our text include more genealogies than found in the Harley manuscript). This is especially evident in the paragraphs summarizing the reigns of the later English kings, which in our manuscript are usually quite short, and list none of the children apart from the direct line of descent. The present manuscript is probably most closely related to Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.4.3 (636), which, as de la Mare notes, may be an earlier version of the text. The Cambridge copy is a "roll-codex" volume, like our manuscript, by the same scribe as Lyell MS 33, but with no illumination, and with a text that may well be very similar to our manuscript, since de la Mare notes it includes very brief accounts of later English kings, and none of their children, apart from the direct line of descent. Like our manuscript, it ends with Edward IV, and was written after the death of Henry VI in 1471. (The earliest "Long Latin" manuscript is British Library, Lansdowne MS 456, which dates before the birth of Elizabeth in 1466).

The background to the production of this text is the dynastic struggle known as the War of the Roses, and in particular, the struggle between Edward IV and Henry VI. Edward was born in 1442, the eldest son of Richard, Duke of York. After the death of his father at the battle of Wakefield in December, 1460, he became the leader of the Yorkist forces, and was crowned King in 1461. He ruled until his death in 1483, apart from the years between 1470-1 when Henry VI was temporarily reinstated.

This abrupt dynastic change, accomplished by the removal of a reigning monarch—even one as generally unpopular and incompetent as Henry VI—demanded considerable justification on the part of the new king. The production of chronicles which depicted Edward IV's genealogy as the culmination of a long descent back to Brutus, the earliest British king (and indeed, back to Adam and Eve), was a flattering testimony to the validity of his rule. Although these chronicles may not have been deliberately created by the monarch, they certainly were encouraged by him, and can be seen as part of a broader propaganda campaign vigorously pursued after 1461.

The Yorkist Chronicles, as well as other propagandist texts, would have appealed to those whose support was of greatest practical importance to Edward IV, the nobility and gentry, and the

increasingly educated commercial classes. Given the large number of copies of these texts surviving, it seems possible that they were produced in large numbers to influence the opinion of nobility, the gentry, and the wealthier merchants. This argument, now generally accepted, can be fine-tuned by studying each of the surviving examples and analyzing differences in text, decoration, etc. for clues revealing details of why and for whom they were commissioned, and the part they played in the intricate politics and developing ideologies about government in fifteenth-century England.

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

Peter of Poitiers:

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11773b.htm>

Richard III Society (Philadelphia, Free Library, Roll, with considerable background):

<http://www.r3.org/bookcase/misc/edward4roll/frame.html>

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