

LES ENLUMINURES

PARIS CHICAGO NEW YORK

www.lesenluminures.com

**Genealogical Roll of the Kings of Britain from Brutus to Cadwaladr, based on GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH, *Historia regum Britanniae*; genealogy of the Kings of the Heptarchy Latin, with added text in English, decorated roll on parchment
England, 1530s-1550s**

Four parchment sheets pasted together to form a roll, written on one side only barring title in humanistic script in brown ink and later cursive script in black ink at head of roll on verso, no pricking or ruling, central column made up of an informally drawn genealogical diagram with names of 114 kings, queens, and princes framed in brown and red ink with the first name 'Brutus' set in a roundel with sun-like rays with red wash, flanked on left and right by short chronicle entries in Latin, each opening with imperfect two-line initials in brown and red ink, incipit written in a humanistic script and balance of text in a small cursive gothic bookhand (Secretary), in light brown ink by one sixteenth-century hand and an English text by a different cursive hand at the end of the third parchment sheet, imperfect final parchment sheet fragmented with text loss, rough-quality parchment with visible hair, hair follicles, and scraping marks with some original holes, minor worming at roll end and uneven top and bottom edges, discoloration, staining, and some ink blots, almost all text legible but considerably worn at third seam and on final parchment sheet. Unbound, folded. Dimensions $\pm 1900 \times 190-200$ mm: first sheet $\pm 405 \times 200$ mm, second sheet $\pm 640 \times 195-200$ mm, third sheet $\pm 760 \times 190-195$ mm, fourth sheet $\pm 70-95 \times 190$ mm.

The six-foot-long roll is signed by its scribe (who may possibly be the author and first owner), who was a clerk associated with the Tudor court of King Henry VIII. Evidently unrelated to any of the genealogical rolls previously discussed in the scholarly literature, its text, format, and provenance contribute to its importance for scholarly study. It details two lineages of the kings of Britain: one from the mythical Brutus to Cadwaladr, and the second, cut short, of the Kings of the Heptarchy before the ascent of the Anglo-Saxons.

PROVENANCE

1. Written in England by Seth Traves, as indicated by the addition of his name immediately below the title, during the late reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547) or that of Edward VI (1547-1553). Seth Traves was probably the scribe who copied the manuscript, and he may also have been the author (or compiler) of the text. He could even have been its original owner. The audience for genealogical rolls was primarily political elites surrounding the monarchy, among whom the genre's popularity "reflects the deepening and widening of national consciousness among the upper classes" (de Laborderie, 2008, p. 57).

Seth Traves was a clerk affiliated with the Tudor court of Henry VIII: according to household accounts for October 1546, Traves was then made clerk of the Council of Calais (Gairdner and Brodie, 1910, p. 154, §332.5). In this role Traves was responsible for all manners of the council's written communication and may have also participated in diplomatic missions. Although he was stationed in Calais in 1546, royal clerks were usually appointed for life and could be transferred from one office to another (Pollard, 1922, pp. 349-50). It is unclear precisely when or where Traves completed this genealogy: he may

have been a royal clerk for some time prior to his Calais appointment, and probably continued to serve the court after Henry's death in 1547. A Seth Traves appears to have been victim of two assaults in 1604 in Assheton-under-Lyme and Droylesden (Tait, 1917, p. 229), but the date suggests that the victim was either a descendant of the clerk or simply shared the same name.

2. Below the genealogy in the space left beside and under Traves's genealogy is a short text in English written in a rapid cursive script by an unidentified scribe, probably also of the sixteenth, or maybe seventeenth, century.
3. Although no information about past or subsequent ownership is known, this roll appears to have reached Italy by the nineteenth century, as indicated by the title "Regnati la Bretagne da Bruto sine a Kadivalladuo coronade vel 681 con framento imperfetto" added in black ink to the top of the roll's verso, below its earlier Latin title, "Chronicon Regum Brittanie a Bruto usque ad Eduardum" in a particularly round humanistic hand (possibly also Italian).

TEXT

[Title], *Cronica regum britannie que nunc Anglia dicitur. A bruto primo. Rege ibidem regnante usque ad Edwardum post conquestum Anglie quartum. Qui quidem brutus Regnum hoc intravit tempore quo Heli sacerdos et iudex in Israel Regebat populum in iudea;*

Written in a large humanistic script and arranged in an inverted pyramid, this title claims that the genealogy of the Kings of Britain which begins with Brutus – a legendary heir of the Trojan hero Aeneas – can be traced up to Edward IV (1442-1483). That Brutus was the eponymous founder of Britain was popularized by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Historia regum Britanniae* (History of the Kings of Britain, c. 1136; see Allan, 1979, pp. 175-76).

[First text on left], incipit, "Brutus iste genere Troianus : secundum Magorum vaticinant ...";
[final text on right], incipit, "Kadwalladrus coronatus est anno domini dc lxxi ... Rex autem monitum angelica Roma adiit. Ibiq̄ue penitentia per acta ; inter sanctos memorata est";

A genealogy diagram runs down the roll's center on the first through third parchment sheets, with chronicle entries for the most prominent kings written adjacent on the left or right in short paragraphs. Beginning with Brutus, the legendary genealogy of British kings that is followed laid out according to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*. Although the title explains that Edward IV was part of this same lineage, there is no reason to believe the genealogy ever extended beyond Cadwaladr ("Kadwalladrus"); according to Geoffrey of Monmouth, Cadwaladr was the last true King of Britain, and the return of his descendants to the throne prophesied by the wizard Merlin. After Cadwaladr's death, the kingdom was divided: his heirs continued their rule in Wales while the conquering Saxons overtook the south and eventually formed the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of England.

[Added later to the left of and below end of Brutus's genealogy], incipit, "And in oure histories are manie other kinges knowen unto all nationes, and goode cristianes and feared of all princes and kinges biing stroung defenderes of the holie faith, as Moragh left upp a stroung sea armie against the wild saracenes when they intred spaine and the islandes of Baleare ... [Grundes?]"

was generall of the armie of King Moragh and having nott leasure to fight[?] then[?] hee determined to pas the [theat?] of Fadis [Jadis?] to asaulth the enemie att [?] of Portugall [illegible line] to returne home the yeare of our lord 722 [1122 or 1222?] Edward /ad 900 [or 960]";

This unidentified text tells the story of battles fought in the Balearic Islands, Spain, and Portugal on behalf of a certain King Moragh against the Saracens. It recounts the participation of an unnamed bishop who led his priests and monks in the fight and was consequently crucified. A date at the end appears to have originally read 722 but was overwritten in black ink (possibly by the hand that added the Italian title to the roll's verso) and could, perhaps, read 1122 or 1222. If it does indeed read 722, it may relate a fictionalized account of the Battle of Covadonga in the early years of the *Reconquista*; the mentioned King Moragh, however, is unknown. As for the mention of "Edward /ad 900", England's King Edward the Elder (871-924) was crowned in that year at Kingston-upon-Thames.

[Genealogy of Kings of the Heptarchy on final fragmented parchment sheet, first column], *R[eges] Kan[tua?]* / "Hengistus paganus / ... Erconbertus ///"; [second column], *Reges Australium Saxonum* / "Alle paganus / ... Ethelwald[us] ///"; [third column], *Reg[es] Orientalus Saxons* / "Erchenwinus paganus / ... Sigebert ///"; [fourth column], *Reges Westlarum* / "Cerd[ic] paganus / ... Cowolphus paganus ///"; [fifth column], *Reges Northumbrie* / "Ida paganus / ... Sanctus Oswaldus ///"; [sixth column], *Reges Merciorum* / "Cr[eo]da paganus ... Wolfere / [Athelred?] ///"; [seventh column], *Rege[s] orienta[lu]m Anglorum* / "Uffa paganus / ... Oerpwaldus paganus / Sigib///".

The last parchment sheet, ending imperfectly, includes the separate genealogies of the Heptarchy – Kent, Sussex, Essex, Wessex, Northumbria, Mercia, and East Anglia – in seven columns. Each king's name is encased in a frame of brown and red ink (as Brutus's genealogy above). Although ending abruptly and containing some illegible sections, the genealogies generally follow each kingdom's royal lineage according to Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (Ecclesiastical History of the English People, c. 731), used by Geoffrey of Monmouth as a source for his own *Historia*. The original extent of the genealogies listed here is uncertain, but each line probably ended at or before c. 886 when Alfred the Great (originally of Wessex) united the Kingdom of England. His son and successor, Edward the Elder, seems to be the Edward added at the end of the previous text.

Although the dominant form of the book by the Middle Ages was the codex, manuscripts in roll-format were also produced for official documents, literary texts, drama, teaching, and for histories and secular genealogies. These rolls were written in long columns to be read vertically, beginning at the top of the roll and ending at the bottom. While commonly associated with antiquity, roll production continued into the era of print; although anachronistic, rolls like this one recounting genealogies of the Kings of Britain were not yet obsolete in early modern England.

Genealogical rolls plotting Britain's legendary monarchy enjoyed a large audience from the late thirteenth through fifteenth centuries. According to de Laborderie, they "probably reached a wider audience than most other contemporary historical works and perhaps functioned as a sort of first standard history of England" (2010, p. 51). Their popularity reflects a broader late-

medieval interest in history supported by works including, among many others, Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*, and the translations of Geoffrey's work (as the *Brut*) into Anglo-Norman French, Middle English, and Welsh (see de Laborderie 2002, 2008, 2010). The questionable veracity of Geoffrey's work had long drawn criticism, but was vigorously defended in 1535 by John Leland, a historian close to the Tudor court (Shirley, Online Resources).

In the fifteenth century the War of the Roses gave genealogical rolls a new function beyond providing a historical framework. They were used as propaganda, especially by Yorkists, to link Edward IV (r. 1461-1470; 1471-1483) to the ancient lineage of Brutus up to Cadwaladr, thus legitimizing his tenuous claim to the throne (Allan, 1979). While this roll may have been copied from one of these Yorkist rolls (note the reference to Edward IV in its title), it is much abbreviated compared to known examples and was made long after dynastic conflicts had culminated in the victory of Henry VII (r. 1485-1509), the first Tudor king, over Richard III (r. 1483-1485). Although made during the reign of Henry VIII (r. 1509-1547) or Edward VI (r. 1547-1553), this roll may have still held political significance. Like Edward IV before them, the Tudors purported to be descendants of Cadwaladr (through the maternal side), and their claim to the throne a fulfillment of Merlin's prophesies. Henry VIII had himself received a genealogical roll from Thomas Gardiner, a monk-historian of Westminster Abbey, mapping his descent from Cadwaladr (Woolf, 1992, p. 20).

There are three primary categories of British royal genealogies: those beginning with Adam and Eve, those beginning with Brutus, and those following the kings of the Heptarchy, the seven pre-Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Britain (Lamont, 2011, pp. 245-46). This roll is notable in that it contains both Brutus and Heptarchy genealogies, although the latter is cut short by damage. While several different traditions of royal genealogical rolls have been identified (see especially de Laborderie, 2002, Allan 1979, and de la Mare 1971), this roll does not appear to belong to any of these, and it may be an original paraphrase or compilation, perhaps even by the scribe, Seth Traves himself. This fact, together with its enigmatic English text and apparent ties to the Tudor court, makes it an especially worthy subject for more detailed study.

LITERATURE

Allan, Alison. "Yorkist Propaganda: Pedigree, Prophecy and the 'British History' in the Reign of Edward IV," in *Patronage, Pedigree and Power in Later Medieval England*, ed. by C. Ross, Gloucester, 1979, pp. 171-92.

de Laborderie, Olivier. "'Ligne des reis'. Culture historique, représentation du pouvoir royal et construction de la mémoire nationale en Angleterre à travers les généalogies royales en rouleau du milieu du XIIIe siècle au début du XVe siècle," Unpublished PhD dissertation, Paris, EHESS, 2002.

de Laborderie, Olivier. "A New Pattern for English History: The First Genealogical Rolls of the Kings of England," in *Broken Lines: Genealogical Literature in Medieval Britain and France*, ed. by R. L. Radulescu and E. D. Kennedy, Turnhout, 2008, pp. 45-61.

de Laborderie, Olivier. "Solidarité lignagère, luttes familiales et légitimité du pouvoir royal dans l'Histoire des rois de Bretagne de Geoffroi de Monmouth," *La Parenté déchirée: les luttes intrafamiliales au Moyen Âge*, ed. by M. Aurell, Turnhout, 2010, pp. 295-320.

de la Mare, Albinia. *Catalogue of the Collection of Medieval Manuscripts bequeathed to the Bodleian Library, Oxford*, by James P. R. Lyell, Oxford, 1971, pp. 81-85.

Gairdner, James, and R. H. Brodie, eds. "Henry VIII: October 1546, 21-31," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII*, Vol. 21, Part 2, September 1546-January 1547 (London: 1910), p. 154, §332.5. Available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol21/no2/pp138-168>.

Lamont, Margaret. "'Genealogical' History and the English Roll," in *Medieval Manuscripts, Their Makers and Users: A Special Issue of Viator in Honor of Richard and Mary Rouse* (2011), pp. 245-61.

Pollard, A. F. "Council, Star Chamber, and Privy Council Under the Tudors. I. The Council." *English Historical Review* 37 (1922), pp. 337-60.

Tait, James, ed. *Lancashire Quarter Sessions Records*. Vol. 1, 1590-1606, London and Manchester, 1917.

Woolf, D. R. "The Power of the Past: History, Ritual and Political Authority in Tudor England," in *Political Thought and the Tudor Commonwealth: Deep Structure, Discourse, and Disguise*, P. A. Fideler ed., New York, 1992, pp. 19-50.

ONLINE RESOURCES

"Heptarchy," Wikipedia

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heptarchy>.

"List of legendary kings of Britain," Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_legendary_kings_of_Britain.

Shirley, Vicky. "The Auctoritas of Geoffrey Of Monmouth," *Cardiff Memori-Alists Blog*, 17 August 2016

<https://cardiffmemori.wordpress.com/2016/08/17/the-auctoritas-of-geoffrey-of-monmouth/>.

TM 1045