

Eulogium historiarum, liber V [A Eulogy of Histories, Book 5]

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment

England, likely Malmesbury, c. 1375-1400

ii (modern paper) + 63 + ii (modern paper) folios on parchment (with some holes and other imperfections), contemporary foliation in Arabic numerals, upper outer recto, [154?], 155, 157-165, 167-171, 180-189, 200-221, 223-238, modern foliation in pencil, upper outer recto, 1-63, wanting a single leaf after f. 10 and one quire after f. 15 and ending imperfectly (collation i^s ii^s [-3, a leaf is wanting between ff. 10 and 11] iii-viii^s), quires ii-viii signed v, y, z, et[?], est, animum[?], ffuit and numbered in Roman numerals in faint brown ink in outer lower margin (partially cropped), flourished horizontal catchwords center lower margin, decorated in brown or red, ruled in ink with the top three and bottom three horizontal rules full across and with five full-length vertical bounding lines, four in the outer and one in the inner margin, with additional lines ruled in the outer and lower margins, prickings three outer margins, (justification 215-218 x 125-126 mm.), written in dark brown ink in a neat English Gothic bookhand with decorative hairlines on thirty-seven to thirty-eight long lines, guide notes for rubrication partially visible in outer margins, red rubrics, capitals touched in red, numbers underlined in red, one-line paraphs in red or blue, guide letters for initials (see f. 45v where one is lacking), one-line initials alternating in red and blue, two- to six-line initials alternating in blue and red with contrasting red or blue pen decoration, often including faces in profile, two five- to six-line initials in burnished gold with purple pen decoration (ff. 1, 10), red line-fillers, red running titles, marginal corrections and annotations by the scribe, annotations often underlined or otherwise embellished in red, notably with sketches of King Edmund (f. 38v), a dog's head (f. 51), Thomas Becket's martyrdom (f. 56v), and King John's death (f. 62), as well as with leaves or crosses, pointing hands added in a later annotating hand, many marginal annotations in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century hands, some erasures on f. 56v may be deliberate on the part of a later reader (see Provenance), very slightly cropped, eighteenth-century inscriptions at the top of f. 1, some staining and discoloring of leaves, mostly without any loss of text, but with loss of legibility on the ends, most particularly ff. 1 and 63v, some rubbing elsewhere where patches of text are illegible, tear in lower margin of f. 26, losses to the lower corners of ff. 53-55, 57, tearing and loss to the outer margin of f. 63, with loss of annotation in the margin. Bound in late eighteenth-century English quarter leather over marbled pasteboards, spine with six bands, gilt-stamped with flowers and decorative patterns and with title, "ANTIQU. / BRIT. / HIST. / MSS. / COD. SEC. / XIV. / MUS. / BAPT. / BRISTOL / GIFFORD," two bookplates on front pastedown, two inscriptions on verso of second flyleaf, joints, edges, and corners worn, but otherwise in good condition. Dimensions 280-288 x 190-192 mm.

This manuscript offers an extremely rare opportunity to acquire a near contemporary copy of a fourteenth-century English chronicle, the only copy of the *Eulogium historiarum* available on the market in the last 300 years. Certainly copied shortly after the *Eulogium* was completed, this manuscript is not only one of the earliest of six surviving copies, it may well be the author's fair copy, prepared for the monks at Malmesbury or an important patron. Lively pen decorations adorn its initials, and its margins include numerous notes by fifteenth- and sixteenth-century readers.

PROVENANCE

1. Judging from evidence of script and decoration, this manuscript was produced in England in the late fourteenth century, c. 1375-1400. Given the local concerns of the *Eulogium historiarum* and this manuscript's early date, it is very likely that it was copied in or around Malmesbury, where the chronicle had been composed. The style of decoration

in this manuscript allows for this possibility (for a comparison, see London, British Library, Lansdowne MS 417, produced at Malmesbury in the late fourteenth century), though it does not cannot definitively point to a particular place of production.

One of the oldest religious houses in England with a continuous history, Malmesbury Abbey was founded c. 675 and by the twelfth century had amassed "one of the great monastic libraries of England" (Thomson, 2003, p. 98). The abbey was home to an important and influential chronicler of medieval England, William of Malmesbury (c. 1095-c. 1143), author of the *Gesta regum Anglorum* and *Gesta pontificum Anglorum*. The abbey's library would certainly have furnished a valuable source for him, as well as for subsequent writers, like the author of the *Eulogium*.

This manuscript very possibly contains a fair copy of the text produced under the direction of the author himself. The evident care taken in its execution, its early date of production, and its textual relationship to other surviving copies of the chronicle (see Text) all support this possibility. Describing the Cambridge manuscript that he argued was the author's working copy of the chronicle, Frank Scott Haydon, editor of the *Eulogium*, notes the presence of "many erasures, interlineations, and marginal and foot notes" a "want of beauty and neatness" in the script, and a total "absence of floriation in the capital letters" (1858, vol. 1, pp. v; see also 1858, vol. 1, pp. xiv-xxii and Text, below). In contrast to that manuscript, the present manuscript contains relatively few scribal emendations and has been copied in a fine and well-regulated script. It has also been decorated handsomely throughout with skillful (and somewhat whimsical) pen decorations and with two burnished gold initials. Significantly, as in two later copies of the *Eulogium*, a number of Latin grammatical errors in the Cambridge manuscript text have been corrected here; these earlier errors may have arisen in the process of the author's compilation of different sources (see Haydon, 1858, vol. 1, pp. xx, xxii-xxiv). The present manuscript is the earliest copy of a the grammatically correct version, and it may bear witness to the author's own corrections of the earlier errors – in other words, it may be the first fair copy.

2. Plentiful marginal annotations in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century hands attest to the interest with which this manuscript's text was read in the centuries after it was produced. At least one of the book's later readers appears to have made some effort to censor the text. Localized erasures on f. 56v have effaced the name of Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury (1162-1170) – "Thomas Cantuarie [Thomas of Canterbury]" – from an account of his martyrdom. The scribe accompanied this account with a marginal annotation, "Thomas archiepiscopus obiit [Archbishop Thomas died]," which has been adorned with a drawing of Becket's martyrdom, and it is possible that the rubbing of both the drawing and the annotation were also the work of the censorious reader. It is not uncommon to find depictions of Becket and textual references to him erased in manuscripts that were in England during the Protestant Reformation. The cult of St. Thomas Becket, enormously popular in medieval England, was a particular target of Henry VIII following his break with Rome, and in 1538 he and Thomas Cromwell issued a Royal Proclamation denouncing Becket as a traitor to his king and calling for the removal of his name and image from churches and books (see "Erasing Becket" in Online Resources). Efforts to remove Becket from this particular book were less than thorough,

however. Another account of the martyrdom earlier in the text has been left unscathed (f. 53), possibly because it is less clearly signposted in the margin.

3. Belonged to Henry Justice (c. 1696-1763), lord of the manor of Rufforth, in Yorkshire. Justice was a legitimate book collector, but he was also convicted in 1736 for stealing books from Trinity College, Cambridge; his initial sentence of transportation was commuted to exile on the Continent, and he died at The Hague in 1763 (see "The Trial of Henry Justice, Esq ..." Online Resources). This book was included in the 31 October 1763 sale of Justice's books, by Nicolas van Daalen (lot 1485 in *Bibliothèque universelle, choisie, ancienne et moderne contenant une très curieuse collection de livres ... recueillis a grands fraix par feu Monsieur Henri Justice de Rufforth ecuyer ...*, The Hague, 1763 [p. 204 in that catalogue]); both the lot number and the price of £2.10s, presumably the price for which Justice bought the book (a different sale price is listed in the 1763 catalogue), have been inscribed in the upper margin of f. 1.
4. Belonged to Dr. Andrew Gifford (1700-1784), Baptist minister, numismatist, and Assistant Librarian at the British Museum; his armorial bookplate on the front pastedown. In his will of 1782, Gifford bequeathed his valuable collection of printed books and manuscripts, including the present manuscript, to Bristol Baptist College.
5. Belonged to the Bristol Baptist College; their bookplate on the inside pastedown. Described by Ker as Bristol, Baptist College, MS Z.c. 20 (1977, pp. 188-189). Offered for sale with other manuscripts from the College's collection by Sotheby's in 1991; lot 65 in *Western Manuscripts and Miniatures*, London, 17 December 1991.

TEXT

ff. 1-63v, [*Incipit liber primus in ?] historijs britonu[m?]*, incipit, "DE ueteri eciam de nouo testamento modicum tetigimus ... quod ipse construxerat ad legum confirmationem"; f. 10, *Incipit liber secundus britonum*, incipit, "DUo igitur fratres Belyn et Bren ... planxit quod eum a deliciis max[im]is///".

The *Eulogium historiarum* is a chronicle of England extending from the Creation to 1366, the year in which the text, composed by a monk of Malmesbury Abbey, was probably completed. The *Eulogium* has been edited in a single modern edition by Haydon (1858-1863, 3 vols.), who identified five manuscript copies of the text: Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.7.2; London, British Library, Cotton MSS Galba E.vii and Cleopatra D.ii; Lincoln's Inn Library, Hale MS 83; and Dublin, Trinity College, MS 497. The present manuscript was not included among these five. Haydon used the earliest of these manuscripts, the fourteenth-century Cambridge manuscript, as the basis of his edition, having argued convincingly that it was the author's own working copy of the chronicle (see 1858, vol. 1, pp. xiv-xxii).

The present manuscript contains most of the *Eulogium*'s fifth and final book – the book that is specifically concerned with the history of England. Its contents correlate with the text Haydon designates as Book V, chapters 1-128 (see Haydon, ed., 1860-1863, vol. 2, pp. 202-385 and vol. 3, pp. 1-119), though the loss of a leaf and a quire in the middle of the manuscript mean that the end of chapter 14 is lacking, along with all of chapters 15 and 16, the beginning of chapter 17, the end of chapter 31, all of chapters 32-44, and most of chapter 45. In its present form, the

manuscript breaks off in the middle of chapter 128, though the presence of a catchword at the bottom of f. 63v indicates that it once contained at least one additional quire. Furthermore, the manuscript's contemporary foliation reveals that it was once part of a larger volume, most likely part of a copy of the entire *Eulogium* text; running headers throughout identifying it as "liber 5" would likewise support this possibility.

This manuscript could furnish the previously missing link between the earliest surviving copy of the *Eulogium* and two later copies. Where the text in the present manuscript diverges from that in the Cambridge manuscript that forms the basis of Haydon's edition, it consistently aligns with that of the Cotton Galba and Dublin manuscripts, which display a marked textual agreement (and, as noted above, make use of more grammatically correct Latin). This is important since the present manuscript predates both of these fifteenth-century manuscripts. (It is certainly worth further research to determine if this is a direct link in the transmission of the *Eulogium* text between the earlier Cambridge manuscript and the Cotton Galba and Dublin manuscripts). The evidence suggests that the manuscript described here is likely the only surviving fair copy prepared under the auspices of the author (or if not, shortly after his death) for presentation to his own Malmesbury community or for a patron.

Like the Cotton Galba and Dublin manuscripts, the present manuscript is equipped with a fascinating system of numerical and alphabetical references to the physical pages (or more accurately, the double-page openings) in the earlier Cambridge volume. The Cambridge manuscript was foliated anew for each book of the *Eulogium* so that each book began with f. 1. Each opening was further subdivided into four equal sections – upper and lower verso and upper and lower recto – with the letters a-d. The marginal numbers and letters in the present manuscript, written in red, indicate the opening in which the corresponding text could be found in the Cambridge manuscript, as well as the specific location of that text within the four quadrants of the opening (for further discussion of this practice, see Haydon, ed., 1858, vol. 1, p. xiv). Thus, for example, the marginal "a. 9." on f. 8 indicates that the corresponding passage appears in the Cambridge manuscript in the opening in which the recto is foliated 9 and that this particular passage appears in the upper half of f. 8v. This system was almost certainly intended for use with an index, now lacking. According to Haydon, indices are included in the Cambridge manuscript, with references to its foliation (1858, vol. 1, p. ix), and in the Cotton Galba and Dublin manuscripts (the only two other *Eulogium* manuscripts containing indices, 1858, vol. 1, p. xi). This is a very unusual example of an index to a medieval text written with references to the physical location in one particular manuscript, which was then copied again in subsequent manuscripts, all of which therefore had to include a system duplicating the physical openings of the first manuscript.

Written after the heyday of the monastic chronicle, when most surviving chronicles were apparently being composed in secular contexts, the *Eulogium historiarum* is a monastic chronicle that almost certainly originated at Malmesbury Abbey, in Wiltshire. Furnishing a universal history of the world, much of the *Eulogium* is a compilation of earlier chronicles – important sources include Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon*, another universal history, and the *Brut* chronicle, a history of England reaching back to Britain's legendary foundation by the Trojan Brutus – though the author added accounts of contemporary events from about 1354 onward. The five books of the *Eulogium* contain, respectively, a history of the world spanning from the Creation to the Ascension of Christ; a history of the apostles and of the popes up to Innocent V (*sedit* 1276);

a history of the world's empires and specifically of the emperors of western Europe up to the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (1194-1250); a geographic description of the world; and a history of England, spanning from the legendary foundation of Britain to the events of 1366.

Legends, history, and local concerns intermingle in the present manuscript's copy of the fifth book of the *Eulogium*. This copy is incomplete and breaks off at the death of St. Edmund Rich in 1240, but the remaining contents cover a rich swath of legendary history, including the story of King Lear, the prophecies of Merlin, and the life and deeds of King Arthur. They also recount Julius Caesar's invasions, the coming of the Anglo-Saxons and their rule over England, the Danish invasions and the reign of King Cnut (or Canute), and the Norman Conquest, along with the subsequent reigns of England's Norman line of kings. Interwoven into this history of England is a history of Malmesbury, often noted in marginal annotations copied by the scribe and common to multiple manuscript copies of the *Eulogium*.

Subsequent annotations added in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century hands attest to the interest with which *Eulogium* continued to be read. Many of these annotations simply make note of contents, tracking the events described in the chronicle or the appearance of particular historical or legendary figures for the first time. Thus, for example, an early fifteenth-century annotator noted "Normannia subiugatur regno anglie [Normandy is made subject to the kingdom of England]" (f. 50v) beside a brief account of Henry I's defeat in 1106 of his older brother, Robert Curthose, formerly the duke of Normandy and an unsuccessful claimant to the English throne. Similarly, a sixteenth-century annotator marked the beginning of King Lear's reign by noting his enduring onomastic legacy: "Leyr regnauit qui [Leyr]cestria condidit [Lear reigned who founded "Leartown" (Leicester)]" (f. 7v). Some notes were written by readers who didn't hesitate to express their own opinions, as in another note by the same annotator, who proclaimed the narrative of King Lear and his daughters "optima historia [an excellent history]" (f. 7v). William Shakespeare presumably shared his sentiment, as he would soon adapt the same story in his early seventeenth-century play.

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