# ME5005/MS5023 Visit to Aberdeen University Library 24 April 2017

## Schedule

10.30 arrive Aberdeen

10.45 Visit to Special Collections to see manuscripts

12.15 Tour of exhibition and library

13.00-13.50 break for lunch

13.50 Walk to Humanity Manse

14.00 Aberdeen Burgh Records Project (with Dr Claire Hawes)

15.00-15.30 View original burgh records (with Phil Astley)

15.45 departure

https://www.abdn.ac.uk/special-collections/index.php

**1. MS 21 Ranulph Higden, *Polychronicon*, translated into English by John Trevisa**

*Higden was a Benedictine monk at Chester (d. 1364); his Latin universal history of the world from creation to his own day was heavily focussed on Britain. By 1387 it had been translated into English by John Trevisa, chaplain to Thomas Berkeley.*

early 15thc in a modern binding

decorative borders at principal divisions (table of contents and beginnings of books); picture of Noah's Ark (f. 56v)

f. 12 has portrait of the author, Ranulph Higden, in an initial; note that initial for Book 2 has been excised.

owned in 16thc by John Hay of Yester (f. 13v) & in 17thc by Alexander Fraser of Fraserburgh (f. 171v)

[Book VI, covering reign of Alfred to the Norman Conquest, ed. by R. Waldron, Middle English Texts 35 (Heidelberg, 2004)]

**2. MS 109 Commentary on Aristotle's *Physica*** (companion to MS 110 Commentary on Aristotle's *Libros naturalium*)

*The Greek philosopher Aristotle's works were highly valued in the Middle Ages; his writings on natural science formed the basis of Western knowledge and were part of the university curriculum.*

15thc, written at Louvain 1467 by Georgius de Moravia, Scotus (signed f. 191r), probably the same as George Lichton who signed MS 110 (f. 237v)

paper; binding is near-contemporary

note drawings

Owned in 16thc by a member of St Andrews University: 'Liber magistri roberti anderson regentis collegii sancti saluatoris' (109, f. 1r); probably the man listed as Magister 1520

**3. MS 123 Miscellany**

*Miscellanies typically contain very varied contents, often mixing literary texts with others of a more practical nature; they are often compiled over long periods, by several hands, and may represent useful stores of knowledge handed down within households.*

15thc, c. 1440 England, near to Chester

mixed paper and parchment

several hands, both secretary and anglicana

Latin and English, prose and verse

Some things to look for:

ff. 10v-23v, 25, 24, 26-30v Chaucer, *Treatise on the Astrolabe*

f. 51 List of kings of England with additions by later hand

f. 58v-59v Latin verses by which to remember dates of battle of Agincourt, Hastings etc.

f. 63v-64v Table showing measures and prices for bread

f. 65 Volvelle; f. 74 diagram of zodiac; f. 85v zodiac man

ff. 88-94v and 95-116 2 sets of formulary letters

ff. 131v-132r English verses to Mary 'Menskful and my3ty in mynde, modyr of maries iij'

ff. 140v-141 Genealogical table (French) setting out descent of Herny VI from St Louis

ff. 141-143 Influences of the planets and signs of the zodiac, English

ff. 149v-152 Prognostications in English verse

ff. 153-154 Perilous days for bloodletting, English

ff. 158v-159 Table of arms of kings, English

f. 161v Charm to cure a lame horse, English & a recipe to destroy fleas

**4. MS 134 *The Myrroure of Oure Lady***

*'The Myrroure of Oure Lady' is a devotional work written for the nuns of Syon Abbey, Middlesex. The nuns were required to sing the service of the Hours of the Virgin every day, and this work translates the Latin office and explains its meaning.*

15thc late or early 16thc, England

paper of type used in Canterbury 1512-19; mixture of anglicana & secretary script; scribe: R. Tailour

19thc binding

belonged to a nun at Syon Abbey: 'Thys booke belongyth to syster Elyzabeth Monton' (f. 135v)

Vol 1 of 2 (the second is Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C. 941, same paper, hand, ink); no other MS known, but the text was printed in London in 1530 by Richard Fawkes

2 prologues on the topic of translation, then the table of contents and Part 1 (ff. 9r-51v), then Part 2

Given to Aberdeen in 19thc, see f. 1r

[prologues edited in J. Wogan-Browne et al, *the Idea of the Vernacular* (Exeter: Exeter UP, 1999), pp. 258-65; on this MS see H. Hargreaves, *Aberdeen University Review*, 42 (1968), 267-82]

**5. MS 154 Sermons**

*Collections of Latin sermons quite often contain examples of vernacular lyrics which preachers may have cited as examples of popular culture. Middle English lyrics have typically survived by being jotted down on flyleaves, as here.*

14thc; in original binding; 2 main hands

from Hinton Charterhouse, Somerset: f. 2r, foot: 'Paruus liber de sermonibus .xx. primus in H. Hentone. ordinis Cartusie'

These Latin sermons must have been part of an originally more substantial collection (foliation starts at 211, but probably originally in 2 vols).

Includes some French (tags at beginnings of sermons) and English verse:

f. 155v 4 lines: *Whan þe nyþyng is ded and lyþ by þe wowe* (4038)

f. 368v: English verses

*Weilawey what me is wo* (2 quatrains; 3902)

*Whoso him biþouete* (on death; 4129)

*Yore was a londe / Wrathe & hate an honde* (4273)

blank leaves at back with some additions; various names on f. 235 (18thc) and f. 366 (16thc)

[Middle English verses printed by H. Hargreaves, *Aberdeen University Review* 43 (1969), 151-56]

**6. MS 164 Pomponius Mela, *De Cosmographia***

*This classical Latin work on geography was composed c. AD 43, and was also known as De Situ Orbis; the age of exploration brought a renewed interest in this work which was translated into English in the 16thc.*

15thc; Italy

f. 48v name of scribe: 'Andrae Scoti de S[an]c[t]o Miniate'

17thc binding (rough sheep); margins trimmed

rear flyleaf with list of payments (15thc)

Given to university in 18thc by John Gordon of Buthlaw (1715-75); see inscriptions by him at start and on f. 17v, 34v

**7. MS 240 Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea***

*Completed in 1267, de Voragine's collection of saints' lives was one of the most widely copied and read books of the Middle Ages, either as here, in its original Latin, or in its French and English translations. The lives are arranged to follow the church year, so begin with St Andrew (Advent).*

14thc England

16thc binding

3 hands (changes at f. 194v and f. 201r)

collection of saints' lives with tables of contents at beginning and end., followed by text on 7 sacraments;

owned by Thomas Graunt, Treasurer of St Paul's Cathedral (f. 202v)

[for the English equivalent see the *Gilte Legende*, ed. by Hamer and Russell, EETS os 327, 328, 339 (Oxford UP, 2006, 2007, 2012)]

**8. MS 255 Medical textbook**

*Bernard of Gordon, d. 1314, was a professor of medicine at the University of Montpellier and Lilium medicinae ('The Lily of Medicine') was his best-known work. Latin medical works such as those in this volume had a long influence in the Middle Ages and would be read by professional physicians.*

15thc late (1462)

paper with stiff vellum binding (James describes the collation as 'not worth making')

name at top of f. 1r

*Lilium medicinae*, medical text attributed to Bernardus de Gordonio, covering fever, plague, leprosy etc, in 7 parts (f. 1r), followed by parts of *De conservatione vitae humanae*: on the pulse (f. 178), and on urine (f. 187)

Scribe's name and date on f. 202r: '... et scriptus per me Jacobum fodringam scotum primo die mens. marcii a.d. mo cccco sexages. secundo' (James describes the script as 'a very ugly current hand')

some added recipes

**9. MS 258 Medical Recipes**

*Collections of remedies, with instructions for preparation and application, were useful for home-doctoring. In the Middle Ages medical recipes and charms occurred together in remedy books, often with texts on herbs or on urine. These would be used by healers and doctors who did not have university training.*

15thc, English

paper with parchment covers; paginated not foliated

Various herbals, also recipe collection p. 167-192, with partial list of contents pp. 243-246

note charms crossed out on pp. 13, 16, 21, 22, 23, 33 etc.

final pages originally blank: now have various additions

p. 331 has a list of gifts given to Thomas Butevill in 1578 (Cambridgeshire)

**10. MS 271 Psalter and Book of Hours, Use of Sarum**

*Books of Hours were designed to allow the laity to follow the divine office at home, as an aid to devotion; they were widely owned by members of all classes in the Middle Ages, with income and aspiration dictating the richness of their format. These volumes have become collectors' items because of their visual appeal.*

15thc, French hand

19thc binding

Most pictures removed, also causing loss of text; surviving pictures on ff. 7r, 8v, 25v, 37r, 38r; some parts missing, others misbound

f. 1r faint writing in English, 16thc

f. 11r heraldic shield in border

final leaf has 16thc birth record, beneath another erased record:

'Edwardus Conwey the sonne of John Conwey knyght was borne at Arrowe the Fowertene day of August in the Fyfth yere of the reign of Quene Elyzabeth Ao dni 1563 vnder the signe of Cancer. And at his Christenyng Humfrey Asshfold of heythropp Esquier, Edward Morgan of lytell Comberton gent. were Godfather And Anne Grey of Enfyld widow was Godmother' [Worcestershire]

**11. MS 274 Book of Hours**

*As well as their original contents books of hours often have additional prayers and devotions (and sometimes other materials) in either Latin or English. These are sometimes professionally added, to customize a volume for a particular client, and sometimes added by owners themselves.*

15thc, first half; Flanders

full borders, historiated initials

f. 209v 15thc owner's name: 'helena vander schagen'

f. 206v indulgence prayers

Given to Aberdeen in 18thc, donation inscription on flyleaf

**12. MS 276 Book of Hours, Use of Sarum**

*Books of hours were typically handed down within families and often became the repository for family records of births and deaths.*

15thc, England

full-page miniatures

15thc obits in kalendar relate to Bredon and Belton families (1461-76, Ely)

Added prayers on ff. 19r, 124r, 164v, 245v (16thc)

[On the use of books of hours generally see Mary C. Erler, 'Devotional Literature' in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: Volume III, 1400-1557*, ed. L. Hellinga and J.B. Trapp (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), pp. 495-525]

**Further Research**: for more information about the individual manuscripts seen on this visit see:

M. R. James, *A Catalogue of the Medieval Manuscripts in the University Library of Aberdeen* (Cambridge: CUP, 1932) [Z6621.A3J3], for nos 1, 5-12;

Neil R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, vol. 2 (Oxford: OUP, 1977), nos. 2-4;

and the library website: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/special-collections/index.php

**Contact Details**

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Law in the Aberdeen Council Registers, 1398-1511: Concepts, Practices, Geographies

<https://aberdeenregisters.org/>

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