

A Newly Discovered Fragment of William Caxton's *Ordinale*

Given the sustained attention that William Caxton's printing has received from bibliographers and book collectors from the eighteenth century onwards, the discovery of unknown fragments from the products of his presses has become a considerable rarity. The recent find of a hitherto unknown leaf from his *Ordinale seu Pica ad usum Sarum* (1476-77), also known as the *Sarum Pie*, at the University of Reading Special Collections Service is therefore noteworthy, particularly because it concerns such an early work of which no complete copies are known to survive.¹

Most of the books that Caxton printed in Westminster in 1476 and 1477, in the first two years after he had set up the first English printing house, survive in single copies and fragments.² The addition of a new fragment to the corpus of Caxton's surviving early works thus notably increases the available evidence that documents the workings of Caxton's Westminster shop in its early years.

Bibliographical description

The only other two surviving *Ordinale* fragments were famously discovered by William Blades in the binding of a copy of Caxton's edition of Chaucer's translation of Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae* at the Grammar School at St Albans in 1858.³ Both are now held at the British Library.⁴ They each consist of two outer sheets of eight-leaf quires. Each of the pages is

¹ *Printing in England in the Fifteenth Century: E. Gordon. Duff's Bibliography with Supplementary Descriptions, Chronologies, and a Census of Copies*, ed. by Lotte Hellinga (London: The Bibliographical Society, 2009), 336 [Hereafter Duff].

² Of the seventeen books that Duff lists as having been printed by Caxton in Westminster in c. 1476-77, eleven survive in single copies, and two, one of which is the *Ordinale*, survive in fragments only.

³ For an account of the discovery, see William Blades, *The Life and Typography of William Caxton, England's First Printer*, 2 vols (London: Joseph Lily, 1861-63), II (1863), p. 70.

⁴ For a detailed description see *Catalogue of Books Printed in the XVth Century Now in the British Library. BMC Part XI England*, ed. by Lotte Hellinga ('t Goy-Houten: Hes & de Graaf, 2007), p. 106 [Hereafter *BMC XI*].

rubricated. The bibliographical features of the newly discovered leaf are consistent with these fragments. The Reading leaf, which is cropped on all sides, measures 176 x 136 mm, with the type area measuring 147 x 95 mm. Because there is no watermark, it cannot be determined whether the paper stock is the same that was used for one of the BL fragments, which was also used for Caxton's first edition of the *Canterbury Tales*.⁵ There are twenty-two lines with uneven line endings on each page, and there are no running headings, signatures, foliation or catchwords. Like the fragments at the BL, the Reading leaf is printed entirely in type 3, which Caxton purchased not long after having published his earliest works in Westminster.⁶

The style of the rubricated paraps is different to that on the BL fragments, which indicates that the leaf originates from a different copy or set of waste leaves. Based on her study of the rubrication in Caxton's early books, Tokunaga has suggested that Caxton's books were rubricated 'soon after printing [...] in or around the printing house'.⁷ The style of rubrication is different from the styles of Caxton's recurring rubricators that Tokunaga has distinguished. However, this need not indicate that the Reading leaf was not rubricated in or near the printing house. The evidence is too limited, both in terms of the number of copies printed during the early years of Caxton's Westminster shop that survive and in terms of the rubrication on the Reading leaf, which consists exclusively of paraps, to offer any conclusive answers.

A noticeable feature of the Reading leaf that is absent from the BL fragments is the use of the *virgula* to indicate medial pauses on the verso side of the leaf. On the recto side of the leaf and on each of the BL pages, the *punctus* is used exclusively to indicate medial pauses, whereas on the verso side of the Reading leaf, the *virgula* is used to indicate medial pauses in seven out of nine instances. In addition, although the page is not fully justified, a clear attempt at more even line endings is made here. Two potential explanations for this difference may be

⁵ *BMC XI*, p. 106.

⁶ Lotte Hellinga, *Caxton in Focus: The Beginning of Printing in England* (London: British Library, 1982).

⁷ Satoko Tokunaga, 'Rubrication in Caxton's early English books, c. 1476-1478', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 15.1 (2012), 59-78 (p. 70).

offered. Caxton is known to have employed at least two compositors from at least 1477 onwards.⁸ In his study of the first edition of *The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers* (1477), which is based on the incorrect assumption that the work was printed on a two-pull press, Donaghey has nevertheless made a plausible observation on the preferences of the two compositors whose hands he distinguishes in the work.⁹ The work of one of the compositors is characterised by a rough justification of lines and a preference for the *punctus* over the *virgula* to indicate medial pauses between phrases, whereas the other compositor achieved a more even justification and preferred the *virgula* over the *punctus*. The preferences of the latter are consistent with the typesetting of the verso of the Reading leaf. However, if more than one compositor was involved in typesetting a work for a one-pull press, copy was often distributed in sections so that the text could be printed concurrently.¹⁰ It is therefore unlikely that two compositors would have worked on different sides of the same leaf. An alternative explanation for the use of the *virgula* could be a shortage of type, a common issue in the early years of Caxton's shop.¹¹ Due to the limited amount of evidence that a single leaf can provide, no firm conclusions can be drawn either way.

Before moving on to discuss the place the newly discovered leaf would have occupied in the bibliographical structure of the complete work it is necessary to briefly explain the content and purpose of ordinals. They provided practical guidelines for clergy and laity on how to deal with conflicts between movable feasts, such as Easter, Whitsun and Trinity, and immovable feasts, such as saints' days.¹² They did so by giving instructions for church services in each of

⁸ *BMC XI*, p. 24.

⁹ Brian Donaghey, 'Caxton's Printing of Chaucer's *Boece*', in *Chaucer in perspective: Middle English essays in honour of Norman Blake*, ed. by Geoffrey Lester (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 73-99 (p. 89). Caxton had almost certainly not acquired a two-pull press yet at this point; see Lotte Hellinga, *Texts in Transit: Manuscript to Proof and Print in the Fifteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 8-32.

¹⁰ Hellinga, *Texts in Transit*, pp. 52-53.

¹¹ *BMC XI*, p. 31.

¹² Blades, II, p. 102.

the possible thirty-five permutations of the liturgical year, dependent on which of the days between 22 March and 25 April Easter fell on. The Use of Sarum, which originated from the local use of the Roman Rite at the Cathedral and diocese of Salisbury as established in the late eleventh and the twelfth centuries, gradually became the dominant variant, and it was adopted in most of England over the following centuries.¹³ Due to the piecemeal incorporation of changes in the liturgy in Salisbury, several local variations existed, and in the mid-fourteenth century a revised version commonly referred to as the New Ordinal was introduced with the aim to standardise liturgical practice, although variations continued to exist.

For his *Ordinale*, Caxton printed a mid-fifteenth century revision by a John Raynton, undertaken at the instance of Thomas Gascoigne, which aimed to correct false rubrics that had crept into circulating manuscripts.¹⁴ In the famous advertisement for his edition, Caxton describes the work as a pie 'of two and thre comemorations'.¹⁵ This type of ordinal could be used both by churches dedicated to St Mary, which only had to factor in the prescribed weekly commemorations of Thomas Becket and St Mary (i.e. two commemorations), as well as churches dedicated to other saints, which had to factor in weekly commemorations to the dedicatee saint as well as those to Becket and St Mary (i.e. three commemorations).¹⁶ The text survives in a single known copy in BL Add. MS 25456, which Caxton's edition follows closely.

The predictable structure of an ordinal and the surviving copy of Raynton's manuscript enable us to pinpoint the location this leaf would have assumed in a complete copy. A complete ordinal contains 35 + 7 parts: thirty-five parts for the dates on which Easter can fall, on which a large part of the remaining services depend, and seven additional parts dedicated to services

¹³ Richard Pfaff, *The Liturgy in Medieval England: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 412-44.

¹⁴ Christopher Wordsworth, *The Tracts of Clement Maydeston with the Remains of Caxton's Ordinale* (London: Harrison and sons, 1894), pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.

¹⁵ Duff 80.

¹⁶ George Painter, *William Caxton: a quincentenary biography of England's first printer* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1976,) p. 99, and Pfaff, p. 547.

that do not depend on Easter but only on the day of the week in which the calendar year starts.¹⁷ An ordinal is divided into seven sections, one for each of the days of the week on which a calendar year can start, indicated by a so-called Sunday letter from, in reversed order, A (Sunday) to G (Monday). Each of these seven sections contains six parts, one for each of the five weeks (Primum-Quintum) in which Easter Sunday can fall, followed by the relevant additional part with the offices that do not depend on Easter (Sextum). Thus, the complete ordinal would have started with A1 (a calendar year that starts on a Sunday in which Easter falls in the first week after 22 March) and ended with 6G (the additional section detailing fixed offices in calendar years starting on a Monday). The BL fragments contain, respectively, part of 4D, parts of 6D and 1E, parts of 3F and 4F, and parts of 5F and 6F.¹⁸ The newly discovered fragment contains part of 3D, i.e. the section that applies to years starting on a Wednesday in which Easter falls in the third week. It covers the period of eleven weeks between the second Sunday after the Octave of Easter (26 April) until the fifth Sunday after Trinity Sunday (5 July). This section would have immediately preceded 4D, the middle part of which is contained in the first of the BL fragments. The quantity of the missing text in the manuscript between the end of Reading fragment and the start of the first BL fragment would occupy two printed pages, i.e. one leaf. Considering the fact that the BL fragments consist of the outer sheets of two quires of eight leaves, we can conclude that the Reading fragment was the seventh leaf of the quire immediately preceding the one represented by the first BL fragment.

Provenance

The new witness to Caxton's edition of the *Ordinale* was discovered at the Special Collections Service at the University of Reading in 2016, as part of a project that aimed to identify and catalogue fragments from early printed books in the John and Griselda Lewis Collection, which

¹⁷ Wordsworth, pp. 93-96.

¹⁸ Wordsworth, pp. 93-96.

was purchased by the University with Heritage Lottery Funding in 1997. This collection of some 20,000 items illustrating the history of printing and graphic design was built up by Griselda Lewis (1917-2014), a writer and book designer, and her husband John Lewis (1912-1996), a typographer and graphic designer who pioneered the study of printed ephemera with Michael Twyman and Maurice Rickards.¹⁹ Although the collection is heavily biased towards material from the 18th-20th centuries, it includes sixteen single leaves and bifolia from incunabula, amongst which the Caxton leaf was found.

The history of the leaf prior to when it entered the Lewis collection cannot be established with any certainty. Unfortunately, there are no records that document the provenance of the items in the collection. Because the Lewis's did not focus their collecting efforts on material from this period, it is likely that these fragments were acquired as a set rather than collected individually. Indeed, in the foreword to *Printed ephemera*, Lewis mentions an album of early printed leaves, title pages and printers' devices that he purchased from an antiquarian bookseller in Ipswich in c. 1950, which according to Lewis had been compiled in 'ca. 1820' by 'Dr Lodge, librarian to Cambridge University Library'.²⁰ It is tempting to assume that this is the album that contained the Caxton leaf. Lewis speculates that in his capacity as University Librarian, 'Dr Lodge's opportunities for collecting pages from damaged books and packings from broken bindings were extensive', suggesting that Lodge (d. 1850) amassed his collection by removing printed fragments from the bindings of early printed books in the Cambridge University Library collections.²¹ Whether this was indeed the case cannot be ascertained.

¹⁹ John Lewis' most influential publications are *Printed Ephemera: the Changing Uses of Type and Letterforms in English and American Printing* (Ipswich: W.S.Cowell, 1962) and *Collecting Printed Ephemera: a Background to Social Habits and Social History, to Eating and Drinking, to Travel and Heritage, and Just for Fun* (London: Studio Vista, 1976).

²⁰ *Printed Ephemera*, p. 9.

²¹ *Printed Ephemera*, p. 9.

In any case, Lodge was not appointed as the Librarian at Cambridge University Library until 1822, and he held the position until 1845.²² Expenditure on bookbinding did increase under his tenure, and the fact that one of the key strands of his expansion programme for the library collections was to develop the incunabula and early printed book collections certainly implies a strong interest in printing from this period on his part.²³ If the leaf did indeed originate from a rebound volume in the collections at Cambridge University Library, it was in any case not used as a pastedown in a book printed or sold by Caxton, unlike the *Ordinale* leaves at the BL: out of the 75 octavo-sized incunabula in the CUL collections that were printed before Caxton's death in c.1492, not a single one that was acquired before or during Lodge's tenure as the Librarian was rebound in the nineteenth century.²⁴ Records of what volumes were rebound survive in the Vice-Chancellor's Vouchers, but none of the identifiable octavo-sized volumes that were printed in the 15th and 16th centuries match the dimensions of the folded leaf.²⁵ However, the possibility that the leaf originated from another volume in Cambridge University Library cannot be ruled out, as extensive research remains inconclusive. Although John II Bowtell, the binder whom the library employed to rebind its early printed books, often included the title and the date of pre-19th century volumes in his bills, there is no way of establishing whether he did so consistently, and his bills contain many references to unidentifiable volumes such as '4 8vos'.

Be that as it may, dark offsets from leather towards the edges of the top half of the leaf indicate that it was used to reinforce a book binding in any case, like the BL *Ordinale* leaves. The fold in the middle of the leaf and the offsets from leather flaps around the edges of the top half suggest that it was used folded as a pastedown in an octavo-sized volume. The fact that the

²² David McKitterick, *Cambridge University Library: a History: the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

²³ McKitterick, p. 457.

²⁴ For a complete list of fragments found in book printed or sold by Caxton, see Paul Needham, *The Printer and the Pardoner: an Unrecorded Indulgence Printed by William Caxton for the Hospital of St. Mary Rounceval, Charing Cross* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1986), p. 51.

²⁵ Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, VCV 10-76.

fragment survived only through being recycled as binder's waste is unsurprising. Relatively cheap books for practical use like the *Ordinale* were unlikely to enter institutional libraries, which Needham pointed out is the most significant factor in the survival of incunabula.²⁶ In addition, frequent revisions and clarifications of the Sarum Ordinal meant that Caxton's version quickly became outdated, particularly after Clement Maidstone's revision became widespread after Caxton published the first printed edition in c. 1484.²⁷ Even if Caxton's *Ordinale* survived beyond this point, it would have become both obsolete and illegal in the post-Reformation England of the sixteenth century, when ordinals were explicitly banned in the parliamentary act 'for the abolishing and putting away of divers Books and Images' of 1549.²⁸ All that can be established with certainty is that the leaf was recycled as binder's waste, possibly within seventy-five years after being printed, and that it was removed from the binding at some point prior to when it entered the Lewises' collection in the mid-20th-century.

Transcription

The Reading fragment corresponds to leaves 50r, l. 22-51r, l. 4 in BL Add. MS 25456. Like the BL fragments, the Reading leaf follow this text closely with minor deviations and omissions, suggesting that Caxton used a different copy of the same text. The following semi-diplomatic transcription of the text retains the punctuation, lineation and capitalisation of Caxton's edition. In the interest of readability, all abbreviations and contractions have been expanded and italicised, and raised letters have been lowered. Virgules have been rendered as slashes (/).

The graphs for terminal -us (*ꝛ*), -que (*ꝥ*), -rum (*Ꝟ*) and sed (*Ꝫ*) have been silently replaced

²⁶ Paul Needham, 'The Late Use of Incunables and the Paths of Book Survival Needham', *Wolfenbütteler Notizen zur Buchgeschichte*, 29 (2004), 35-60 (pp. 39-40).

²⁷ Wordsworth, pp. xxi-xxii; Duff 290.

²⁸ Public Act, 3 & 4 Edward VI, c. 10, published in full in Archibald John Stephens, *The Statutes Relating to the Ecclesiastical and Eleemosynary Institutions of England, Wales, Ireland, India and the Colonies*, 2 vols (London: John W. Parker, 1845), I, pp. 329-30.

by 'us', 'que', 'rum' and 'sed'.²⁹ Variants from BL Add. MS 25456, referred to as BL, are given in the footnotes.

Feria iij et iiij. de *comemoracionibus*. Si fuerint³⁰ iij *comemoraciones*. in *vj feria*. fiat *vna comemoracio*. ¶ *Dominica* ij. de *seruicio dominicali*. *Feria* ij et iiij de *feria responsoria* de ij et iiij *ferijs*. *Feria* v. et *sabbato* de *comemoracionibus*. Si fuerint³¹ iij *comemoraciones*. in iiij *feria* fiat *vna comemoracio* et tunc in ij *feria dicantur responsoria* de iiij³² *feria*. ¶ *Dominica* iij. de *Cruce*. et *solennis memoria* de *martiribus*. et de *dominica*³³ nulla fiat *memoria* de *resurreccione*. *Feria* ij et *vj* de *feria responsoria* de ij et iij *ferijs*. *Feria* iij et *sabbato*. de *comemoracionibus* Si fuerint³⁴ iij *comemoraciones*. in *vj feria* fiat *vna comemoracio*. *Feria* v. de *sancto Johanne Beuerlaco*.³⁵ ¶ *Dominica* iiij. de *seruicio dominicali*. *memoria* de *martiribus*. et de *resurreccione*.³⁶ *Feria* iij. de *sancta maria* *Feria* ij et iiij de *feria*³⁷ *responsoria* de ij et iiij *feria*. Si fuerint³⁸ iij *comemoraciones*. in ij *feria*. *dicantur responsoria* de iij *feria*. ¶ *Dominica* *infra octa Ascencionis*. de

²⁹ The graphs are reproduced from Blades, II, plate XVI.

³⁰ Si fuerint] *Ubi fiunt* BL Add. MS 25456 [Hereafter BL].

³¹ Si fuerint] *Ubi fiunt* BL

³² iiij] iii BL

³³ & *processio* BL

³⁴ Si fuerint] *Ubi fiunt* BL

³⁵ *episcopo* & [con]fessore et *cetera* BL

³⁶ In *laudibus omnes antiphone dicuntur* BL

³⁷ de *feria*] *om.* BL

³⁸ Si fuerint] *Ubi fiunt* BL

seruicio *dominicali*. et³⁹ *memoria* de *Ascensione*. Feria vj. de *sancta maria*.⁴⁰ ¶ In die *pentecostes*. et *per ebdomadam totum* fiat de festo. et *nichil* de *sancto* Aldelmo. et *festum sancti* Augustini. differatur usque ad iij⁴¹ *feriam* post *festum sancte trinitatis*. ¶ In die *sancte trinitatis* totum fiat de festo. et *nichil* de *sancta* Petronilla. Feria iij. de *sancto* Augustino. et *memoria* sub *silencio*. de *martiribus* et de *trinitate* Feria iiij. et *sabbato* de *comemoracionibus* Si fuerint⁴² iij. *comemoraciones* in ij. *feria*. fiat vna *comemoracio* et *memoria* de festo. ¶ *Dominica prima* post *festum sancte Trinitatis* Inchoetur *historia Deus omnium/ et medie lecciones*. de *corpore xpi*⁴³ Feria iiij. et *sabbato*. de *comemoracionibus* Si fuerint⁴⁴ iij. *comemoraciones* in ij. *feria* fiat vna *comemoracio*. et *memoria* de *sanctis/ Feria v.* de *seruicio octauarum*. et *festum sancti Barnabe* differatur in *crastinum* et *nichil* de *festis sanctorum in memoriam*.⁴⁵ ¶ *Dominica* ij. de *seruicio dominicali* et *medie lecciones*. de *sancto basilio/ Feria iiij.* et *sabbato*. de *comemoracionibus* Si fuerint⁴⁶ iij. *comemoraciones* in vj. *feria*. fiat vna *comemoracio* et *memoria* de *martiribus* ¶ *Dominica* iiij. *tota cantetur historia/ Feria v.* et *sabbato*. de co

³⁹ et] *om. BL*

⁴⁰ de *sancta maria]* de fiat *comemoracio beate marie BL*

⁴¹ iij] *terciam BL*

⁴² Si fuerint] *Ubi fiunt BL*

⁴³ In *laudibus omnes antiphone dicuntur BL*

⁴⁴ Si fuerint] *Ubi fiunt BL*

⁴⁵ *nichil* de *festis sanctorum in memoriam]* fiant *medie lecciones* de *martiribus BL*

⁴⁶ Si fuerint] *Ubi fiunt BL*

*memoracionibus ¶ Dominica iiiij. de seruicio dominicali et medie⁴⁷ lecciones
de sancto Leone. ije vespere. erunt de apostolis/ et memoria
sub silencio de dominica sed nulla memoria de sancto Johanne
Feria v. et vj. de comemoracionibus Si fuerint⁴⁸ iij.
comemoraciones/ in iiiij. feria. fiat vna comemoracio et memoria
de sancto Johanne et de Apostolis ¶ Dominica quinta
de seruicio dominicali/ et medie lecciones. de Apostolis.*

⁴⁷ The 'm' graph in *medie* is composed of an 'i' and an 'n'. With thanks to Dr William van der Wurff for this observation.

⁴⁸ *Si fuerint] Ubi fiunt* BL

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