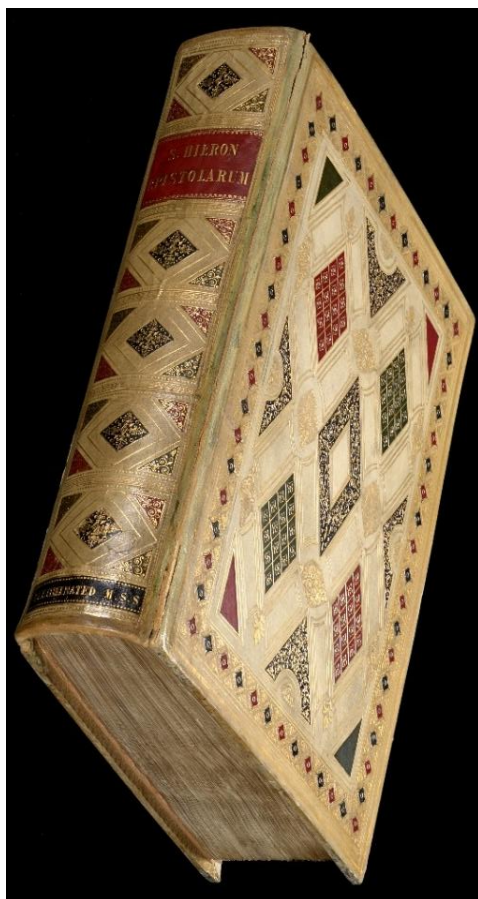


## The Restitution of St Jerome: New College Library's MS 384

What a day it was when Miles Young, warden of New College, came to my office presenting me with this returned treasure! After centuries away from college, in January 2025, a sumptuous, 15th-century illuminated manuscript copy of the Letters of St Jerome finally came back home to the library. And for this, we have to thank the immense generosity of book history scholar Nicolas Barker, sometime Head of Conservation at The British Library and an honorary fellow of New College, who has so graciously donated it to us, enabling 'a great act of restitution'.<sup>1</sup>



The New College warden (right) returning MS 384 to the librarian (left)



New College Library, Oxford, MS 384, binding

All images of New College manuscripts © Courtesy of the Warden and Scholars of New College, Oxford

Immediately striking is the manuscript's 19th-century gilt vellum binding, featuring inlaid mosaic-patterned triangles and lozenges in green and red calfskin, with a gilt-tooled border of panelled alternating green and red similarly. Even before the codex is opened, revealing magnificence, this, then, is book bling quite at odds with the considerations of Jerome of Stridon (*c.* 342–420) himself, Doctor of the Church, and Catholic patron saint of librarians, who famously translated the Bible from Hebrew into Latin, and composed weighty Scriptural commentaries. St Jerome wrote scathingly—in the year 384—of the luxuriousness of treasure bindings encasing gold-illuminated vellum Christian texts.<sup>2</sup> So, perhaps he might not have approved wholeheartedly of this eye-catchingly bound superb codex, our newly returned manuscript, which has now become our MS 384 (a number evoking the date of his critique) in New College Library's splendid numerical sequence of manuscripts.

What in the past has connected this book to this college? Canon lawyer, ecclesiastical administrator, avid book collector—and Wykehamist and a college fellow here—Andrew Holes (*d.* 1470), first bequeathed it to us. On 30 March 1973, R. W. Hunt, Keeper of Western Manuscripts at the Bodleian Library, along with the Bodleian's manuscripts curator and latterly professor of

<sup>1</sup> In his letter to New College warden Miles Young (27 January 2025), Nicolas Barker refers to the manuscript, writing that: 'New College Library would not be complete without it, and I am glad to be able to make it so', New College Archives, Oxford, NCA PA/YOU/6/5. I am most grateful to Nicolas Barker, and indebted to him for sharing with me some of his knowledge of this manuscript.

<sup>2</sup> Cited in Paul Needham, *Twelve Centuries of Bookbindings, 400–1600* (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 1979), p. 21.

palaeography at King's College London, A. C. de la Mare, confirmed Holes's ownership of it when, thanks to ultraviolet photography, they deciphered an erased inscription in the manuscript indicating that ownership.<sup>3</sup> Holes had been admitted as a New College scholar in 1412, and held a fellowship here from 1414 to 1420. He is, however, perhaps best known to New College alumni, past and present, for the depiction of him in one of the library's most celebrated manuscripts, MS 288, the so-called 'Chandler Manuscript' (1462–4). He appears therein as archdeacon of Wells, a role to which he was appointed in 1449, but above all he is portrayed here as one of our college's most prominent Wykehamists, a corona of whom is flanking the founder of New College, William of Wykeham (*d.* 1404), who is seated in the centre.



Andrew Holes [detail], and depicted bottom, second from left, facing forward, in New College Library, Oxford, MS 288, f. 4r

<sup>3</sup> A typescript copy letter from A. C. de la Mare to Nicolas Barker (2 April 1973) conveys news of this, 'a very exciting discovery': "[H]ic [est] liber [co]ll[egii] . . . m[agist]ri/ . . . Andree Holes socii". The inscription appears to have been written by the same hand as the erased one in New College 249', in Reference files of Albinia de la Mare, containing photographs and photocopies of manuscripts and related papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Folder 2, MS. 18746/212. The erasure is to be found on f. 1r of New College Library, Oxford, MS 384.

Dating to the second quarter of the 15th century, our newly returned MS 384 is a book Andrew Holes conceivably acquired from the fabled Florentine bookseller, stationer, and manuscript producer Vespasiano da Bisticci (1421–1498). Holes was a friend and close supporter of Pope Eugenius IV, and was living in Florence during the 1439–42 Council of Florence as King Henry VI's proctor to the papal curia, remaining there until 1444. So voluminous was his collection of manuscripts that, when Holes returned to England from Italy, the collection had to be shipped home for him. Holes may have requested its production from Vespasiano (who held him in high esteem) sometime after Holes first arrived in Florence in June 1432; if so, this suggests the manuscript might have been completed in the 1440s; de la Mare suggests it dates to *c.* 1430–40.<sup>4</sup> Just last year, Giovanna Murano wrote that it was 'probably copied in the second decade of the fifteenth century', but so early a date would seem to be at odds with Holes's commissioning it once he had arrived in Florence.<sup>5</sup>

A quintessential, Florentine humanist script manuscript in Latin, MS 384 was copied by a notary and scribe known to have worked for Vespasiano, Ser Niccolò Berti de' Gentiluzi of San Gimignano (*c.* 1389–1468), who also translated the same Letters of St Jerome into Italian. Lamenting how our manuscript's 'current location is unknown', Murano speculated that the elusive MS 384 might indeed have been the base manuscript for Niccolò Berti's Italian translation.<sup>6</sup> A year earlier, in a *New College Notes* article of 2023, David Rundle identified corrections in our MS 384 to be in the hand of Andrew Holes's English secretary in Italy, John Burgh—another New College man, admitted to Winchester College in 1425 and then to our college in 1430. He also identified maniculae and an annotation to be in Holes's own hand as well. He writes of our newly returned manuscript:

It presumably left the College in the sixteenth century; its history cannot be traced from then until its appearance at Auction at Christie's London, 18 December 1964 as lot 161. It was sold to Bernard Rosenthal and from him to the present owner [i.e., Nicolas Barker].<sup>7</sup>

My account will provide more information in the way of MS 384's provenance, after first noting some of the most significant visual features of this gorgeous book.

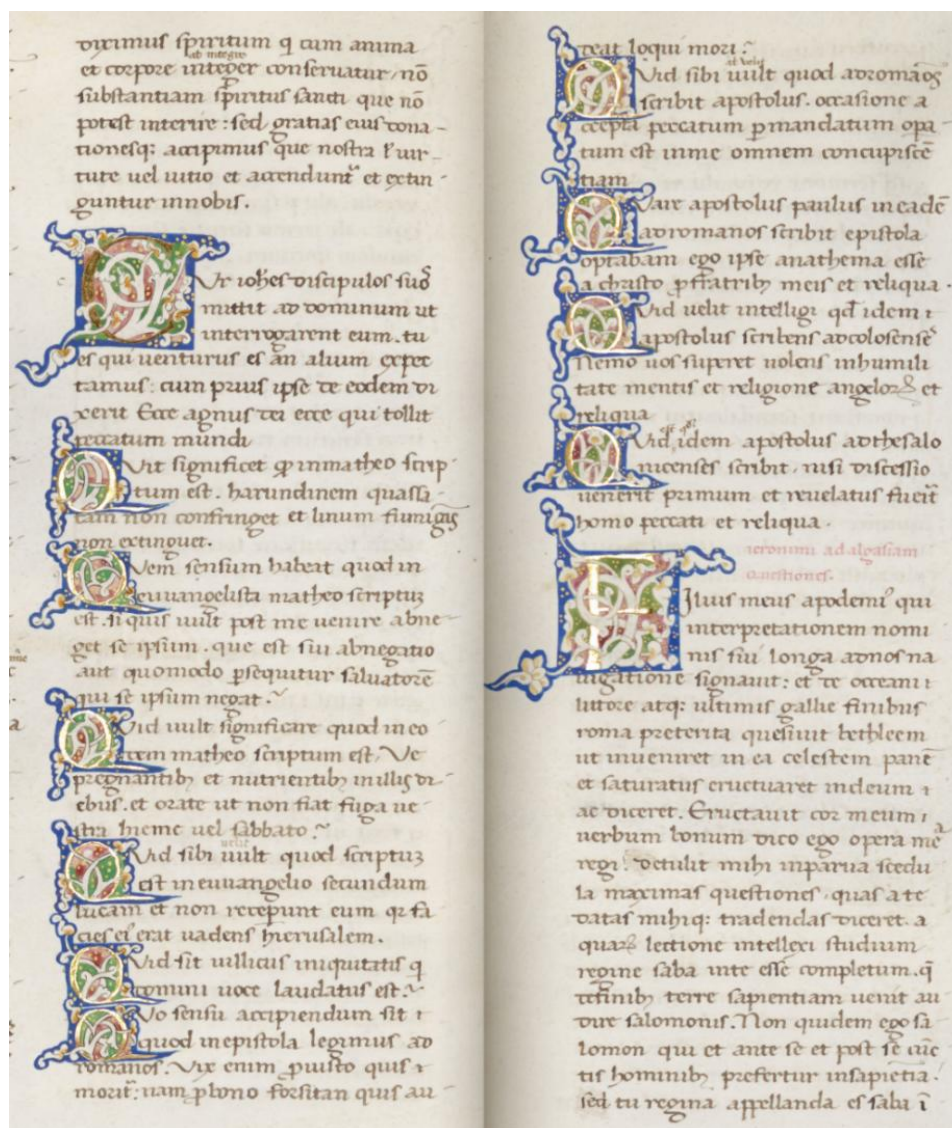
The manuscript as it survives comprises 368 leaves of vellum, including two preliminary and four final blanks, and is virtually complete. It contains letters and other works by or attributed to St Jerome, copied in a humanist cursive bookhand; headings and neat marginalia are in red. An index—'Tabula Epistolarum'—across four folios (ff. [vi]r–[vii]v) at the start of the manuscript lists 145 titles, though these appear misnumbered as 144. Unconnected to that, the final listed (and apocryphal) text, 'De lapsu Susannae', is missing from the manuscript. Text is written double-columned, with 41 lines per page, providing generous margins. The illuminated gold and coloured initials, with white interlaced vine-stem decoration (*bianchi girari*), are the work of a painter (or painters) extremely talented, and these have been beautifully executed; evidently, the materials employed were very fine. In addition to some 252 smaller initials—and one alone of the codex's openings reveals no fewer than 12 of these (ff. 228v–229r)—there are two larger ones of notably striking execution and brightness (ff. 31r, 31v).

<sup>4</sup> Also from this Folder 2 of Albinia de la Mare's reference files in the Bodleian, MS. 18746/212.

<sup>5</sup> Giovanna Murano, *Florentine Humanist Manuscripts: Revised and Enlarged List from Albinia C. de la Mare*, New Research (1985) (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2024), p. XII.

<sup>6</sup> Albinia C. de la Mare, 'Vespasiano da Bisticci as Producer of Classical Manuscripts in Fifteenth-Century Florence', in *Medieval Manuscripts of the Latin Classics: Production and Use*, ed. Claudine A. Chavannes-Mazel and Margaret M. Smith (Los Altos Hills: Anderson-Lovelace, 1996), pp. 166–207, at p. 176; Murano, *Florentine Humanist Manuscripts*, p. XII.

<sup>7</sup> David Rundle, '[Andrew Holes and John Burgh: Two Wykehamists, One Manuscript Collection](#)', *New College Notes* 19 (2023), no. 1, p. 16. On the relationship between Holes and Burgh, see also Josephine Waters Bennett, 'Andrew Holes: A Neglected Harbinger of the English Renaissance', *Speculum* 19 (1944), 314–35, at pp. 326–7.



New College Library, Oxford, MS 384, ff. 228v–229r [detail]—12 smaller initials across one opening

But most impressive of all is the manuscript's spectacular, opening blue-framed initial 'M', in quite flawless gold (f. 1r). Filled with delicate pinky-brown and green colours, it features a putto (cherub), a charmingly painted butterfly (a characteristic element of the smaller initials too), and a bright golden vase from which entangling vine stems emanate. The brightness is quite remarkable.

Who is the painter who produced such very fine illumination? While Bernard M. Rosenthal of San Francisco, the bookseller from whom Nicolas Barker purchased the manuscript in 1972, was exhibiting it in London in September 1971, de la Mare took the time to examine what is now our MS 384. As well as identifying Niccolò Berti as the scribe, she then came up with a probable attribution of the initial 'M' painting—and possibly that of the other initials—to Battista di Biagio Sanguigni (1393–1451). He was a great painter working in Florence, previously known as 'The Master of 1419, but also known as 'Battista miniatore' on account of his work specifically as a manuscript illuminator. Illuminations purportedly by Sanguigni, though, have at times in scholarly accounts been attributed—including by de la Mare herself, who revised some of her opinions, and more recently by Daniele Guernelli—to another Florentine painter, Bartolomeo d'Antonio Varnucci (1410–1479).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> de la Mare, 'Vespasiano da Bisticci', pp. 169–70, and Daniele Guernelli, 'Aggiornamenti su Bartolomeo Varnucci', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 84 (2021), 325–64, at p. 332.



New College Library, Oxford, MS 384, f. 1r [detail]—opening large, illuminated initial with putto, butterfly, and vase

It is informative at this juncture to compare illumination in MS 384 to painted decoration found in other fine Florentine humanistic manuscripts of the period. These include one other manuscript in our library, MS 249, a copy of Cicero's *Speeches* (c. 1440), understood to have been commissioned from Vespasiano da Bisticci by our aforementioned college fellow, the papal curialist Andrew Holes, while Holes was in Florence—and with its illumination done by Bartolomeo Varnucci. (Holes owned MS 249, and after his death, one of the executors of his will, the warden of Winchester College, John Baker (*d.* 1488), arranged for it to come to New College.)<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> New College, Oxford, MS 249, f. [ii]v, bears the inscription: 'Liber Collegij assignatus collegio per Magistrum Iohannem Bakar sacre theologie professorem, executorem testamenti venerabilis viri Magistri Andree Holes qui Andreas possessor et dominus libri fuit. Oretis'.



New College Library, Oxford, MS 384, f. 31v [detail]



New College Library, Oxford, MS 249, f. 39v [detail]

In the illumination of these two Florentine manuscripts that belonged to Andrew Holes, now in our library, there are elements greatly in common, indicating much similarity in the style of painting—by Sanguini (de la Mare first suggested) or Varnucci, above left, and by Varnucci, above right. Subtle differences are also apparent. Below are illuminated initials from two other Florentine manuscripts of the period: on the left, a celebrated copy (c. 1430–40) also of St Jerome's Letters once belonging to Venetian nobleman Bernard Bembo (1433–1519), known as the 'Bembo Jerome'; its illumination has been posited to be attributable to someone in Sanguini's circle, while de la Mare suggests Varnucci. And on the right, a copy (c. 1440–45) of St Basil the Great's *De divinitate Filii et Spiritus Sancti adversus Eunomium* displays illumination also attributed to Varnucci. There is no doubt that Florentine illuminators at this time were producing similar work in a common style, they would work together, and they clearly influenced each other a great deal.<sup>10</sup>



The 'Bembo Jerome' Letters, f. 6r [detail]



Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Latin 1703, f. 1r [detail]

<sup>10</sup> A. C. de la Mare suggests the scriptorium of Santa Maria degli Angeli in Florence to have been an influential centre of production for these manuscripts, 'New Research on Humanistic Scribes in Florence', in *Miniatura fiorentina del Rinascimento, 1440–1525: un primo censimento*, ed. Annarosa Garzelli (Scandici, Firenze: Giunta regionale Toscana, 1985), I, 397–8. See also J. J. G. Alexander and A. C. de la Mare, *The Italian Manuscripts in the Library of Major J. R. Abbey* (London: Faber, 1969), and de la Mare, 'Vespasiano da Bisticci'.

We can assume that, since we acquired it in the late 15th century after Holes's death, the manuscript then remained in college until sometime in the 16th or early 17th century when, the ownership inscription erasure suggests, it was intentionally purloined. We may be unable to determine who took it, and exactly when, but where did it go from there?

In addition to bearing Nicolas Barker's pictorial bookplate on the front marbled-paper flyleaf, the volume has a marbled-paper front pastedown with a green 19th-century Gloddaeth Library bookplate.<sup>11</sup> Gloddaeth (more historically accurately, Gloddaith) Hall and estate in Llandudno came into the possession of the Mostyn family of Mostyn, Holywell, which acquired that estate as a result of marriage and inheritance in the latter half of the 15th century.<sup>12</sup> Sir Thomas Mostyn (*d.* 1618) established the Gloddaeth Library, which was subsequently incorporated into the Mostyn Library, and became probably the finest manuscript collection of the time in Wales. We can be sure our MS 384 was already held in the Gloddaeth Library by at least 1690. A preliminary vellum leaf of our manuscript bears a bracketed number '5' penned in ink, and this number corresponds to item 5 of the folio manuscripts listed in the 'Catalogus librorum MSS Roger Mostyn Bt. 1692', held by the Warwickshire Record Office: item 5 is listed as 'Hieronimi Epistolae liber Antiquissimus pulcherrimus Membran'.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, in trying to determine when our MS 384 left New College, we might surmise this '5' is 'in a sixteenth- or early-seventeenth-century hand', or a later 17th-century one.<sup>14</sup> The Roger Mostyn, whose 1692 catalogue of books this is, was Colonel Sir Roger Mostyn, first baronet (1624–1690), and Sir Thomas Mostyn's great-grandson. Roger had staunchly supported Charles I during the Civil War: after the Restoration of the monarchy he was duly knighted on 5 June 1660, then received a baronetcy on 3 August as a royalist hero.<sup>15</sup> The catalogue was compiled shortly after the death of Roger's son, (another) Sir Thomas Mostyn (1651–1692), 2nd baronet, who had settled at Gloddaeth. This Sir Thomas Mostyn had married a Catholic heiress, Bridget Savage (*d.* 1692), daughter of D'Arcy Savage of Leighton, Cheshire, and dutifully provided her with a Catholic chapel at his Gloddaeth seat.<sup>16</sup> Notwithstanding that fact, his will, albeit written in the wake of the Popish Plot, reveals an abusive anti-Catholicism—oddly tempered, nevertheless, by the loving respect he bore his wife. He appoints guardians for his three sons, imploring of those guardians, 'considering ye now unsettled posture of affaires, & ye danger my children wou'd be in of falling into Popish-hands by my death', that his sons be kept

from ye company or converse of their Popish relations or such others as may seduce them to popery but particularly of that wicked & dangerous woman their Aunt Gerrard . . . doe all this wth all ye tenderness respect & civility to my wife, that they can shew her without endangering my children's religion.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>11</sup> New College Library, Oxford, MS 384, f. [i]r, and inside front board.

<sup>12</sup> On the Mostyn family, see especially Antony David Carr, 'The Mostyn Family and Estate, 1200–1642' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wales, Bangor, 1975).

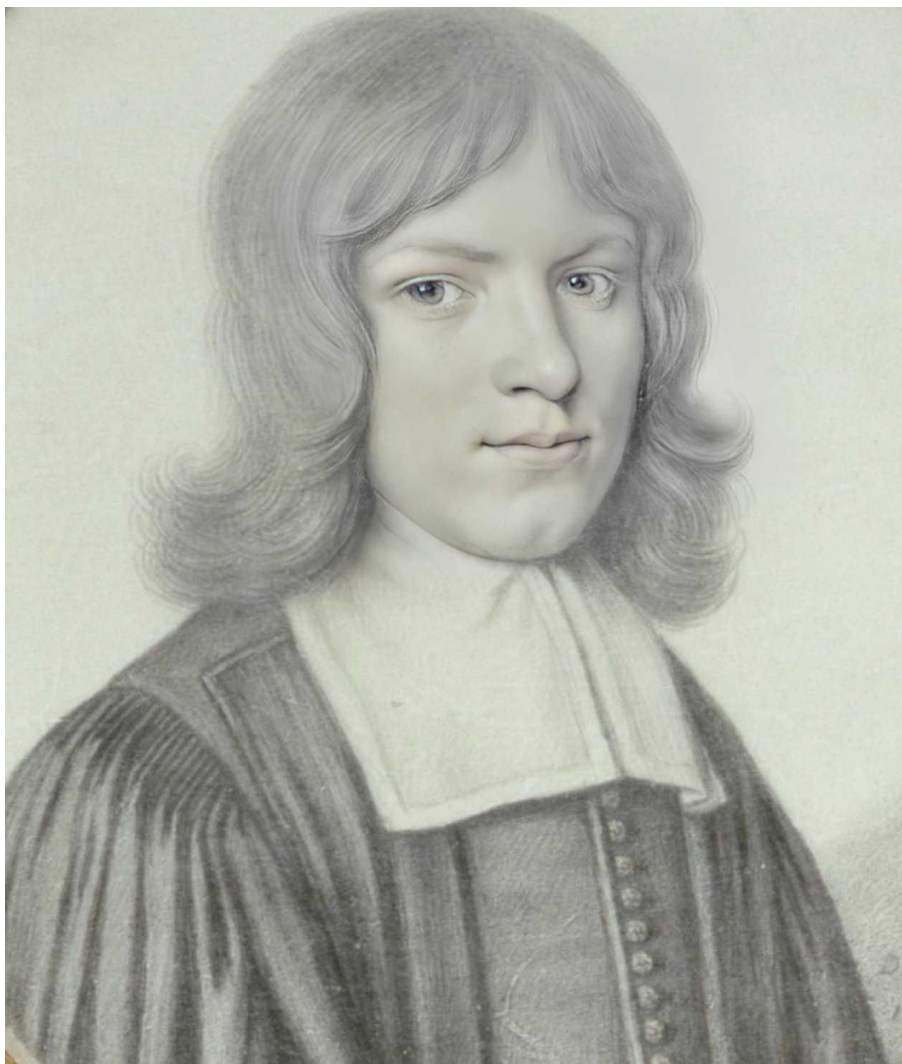
<sup>13</sup> MS 384, f. [iv]r; 'Catalogus librorum MSS Roger Mostyn Bt. 1692', Warwickshire County Record Office, CR2017/TP152/2. For access to Mostyn materials at the Record Office, I am grateful to Sharon Forman and Joanne Taylor of the Office's Public Service Team.

<sup>14</sup> J. H. P. Pafford's description of a 15th-century manuscript copy (University of London, MS 278) of Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle identifies an annotation from a hand thus dated (i.e. 16th- or early 17th-century) to match that of the comparable bracketed number '2' added to a likewise sometime Mostyn manuscript, a *c.* 1385 metrical chronicle (University of London, MS 1) by the Chandos Herald of the life of Edward, the Black Prince: see Pafford's 'University of London Library MS. 278, Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle', in *Studies Presented to Sir Hilary Jenkinson*, ed. J. Conway Davies (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 304–319, at p. 308.

<sup>15</sup> D. L. Thomas, rev. Sean Kelsey, 'Mostyn, Sir Roger, first baronet (*c.* 1624–1690)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (23 September 2004) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/19415>> (Accessed: 5 June 2025).

<sup>16</sup> Mary Chadwick and Shaun Evans, "'Ye Best Tast of Books & Learning of Any Other Country Gentn': The Library of Thomas Mostyn of Gloddaith, *c.* 1676–1692", in *Libraries, Books, and Collector of Texts, 1600–1900*, ed. Annika Bautz and James Gregory (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 87–103, at p. 88.

<sup>17</sup> Draft will of Sir Thomas Mostyn of Gloddaeth (18 March 1680), Bangor University Archives and Special Collections, Mostyn MS. 183. For access to this document, I am grateful to Elen Simpson, University Archivist at Bangor University.



Miniature (1676) of Sir Thomas Mostyn [sometime owner of MS 384] by David Loggan (1635–1692)  
Plumbago on vellum, Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales, NMW A 713 © Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales

A fascinating and learned character, it seems that this Sir Thomas Mostyn, more than any other of the Mostyns, was responsible for adding significantly to the library collection, educated as he was at Christ Church, Oxford, matriculating aged 16 on 15 May 1667.<sup>18</sup> His very active interest in acquisitions, a penchant dating from at least as early as 1676 for procuring manuscripts, his breadth of tastes that ranged beyond specifically Welsh interests to include more widely history, travel, news, poetry, popular novels, (and pornography)—as well as fine medieval manuscripts—the networks he developed to help him acquire materials, and existing assessments of the Mostyn manuscripts, all give credence to a notion that it may have been he who secured the acquisition to Gloddaeth of our copy of St Jerome's Letters. Whether he was wittingly a handler of stolen goods, that much I do not know, just as I do not know when and by whom Holes's ownership inscription had been erased; the latter may have a bearing on the former. Certainly, the 2nd baronet's early death at 41 seems, temporarily at least, to have brought to a halt an importantly developing collection of fine manuscripts at Gloddaeth.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford, 1500–1714* (Oxford: Parker & Co., 1891–2), III, 1041.

<sup>19</sup> On the eclectic nature of the 2nd baronet's book and manuscript tastes, see Sarah Ward Clavier, 'Thomas Mostyn: Collections, Historical Writing, and Welsh Identity', *Royalism, Religion and Revolution: Wales, 1640–1688* (Woodbridge:

But his grandson the 4th baronet, (yet another) Sir Thomas Mostyn (1704–1758), would also take a keen interest in literature and the library, and he was responsible for important additions as well. A later catalogue dating from 1744, in the 4th baronet's own hand, likewise lists our item '5', describing it, this time in English, as 'St Jeromes Epistles very fair & ancient on vellum'.<sup>20</sup> Some 113 manuscripts appear in total in this listing. The National Library of Wales has a very important holding of Gloddaeth and Mostyn materials, including four manuscript catalogues of both earlier *and* later date than those in the Warwickshire County Record Office. But none of these lists MS 384—such catalogues are haphazardly drawn up and incomplete—to shed any clear light on the date our manuscript might have disappeared from New College.<sup>21</sup> Thinking once again of our manuscript's impressive 19th-century binding, it is of note, however, that the 1842 catalogue of Gloddaeth books and manuscripts, held by the national library in Aberystwyth (and by far its most extensive handwritten one) was drawn up by a Welshman, originally a native of Flintshire, one Edward Parry (1798–1854). Our MS 384 bears, as well as aforementioned Gloddaeth Library and Nicolas Barker bookplates, a small orange bookseller's label for 'E. PARRY. / Bookseller & Stationer. / Bridge Street Row, / CHESTER.' (Other former Mostyn manuscripts and early printed books since sold and variously dispersed, including an early 15th-century Nicolas of Lyra manuscript these days at Yale, and two printed Reformation works of Henry VIII now in the Folger, contain similar bookseller's tickets.)<sup>22</sup> In 1835, the 'excellent collection of books and Welsh manuscripts' at Gloddaeth had been 'lately removed' to Mostyn, 'greatly enrich[ing] the valuable library previously existing there', and the 1840s saw the construction of a library room at Mostyn Hall to accommodate the newly incorporated collection.<sup>23</sup> We might surmise Parry had a hand in furnishing MS 384 with its new, ornate vellum binding. On 21 March 1842, he wrote from Chester to his friend, the poet and cleric the Revd Walter Davies (1761–1849)—known by his bardic name 'Gwallter Mechain'—updating him on his project, and Parry's excitement at this amalgamating into one of these libraries of great Welsh estates, now headed by the Mostyn family, is clear:

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Boydell Press, 2021), pp. 78–94. Though it seems very unlikely he would have seen our MS 384, Daniel Huws in his 'Sir Thomas Mostyn and the Mostyn Manuscripts', in *Books and Collectors 1200–1700: Essays Presented to Andrew Watson*, ed. James P. Carley and Colin G. C. Tite (London: The British Library, 1997), pp. 451–72, notably concludes from his research generally on the Mostyn manuscripts that: 'None of the non-Welsh medieval manuscripts appears to carry signs of Mostyn ownership earlier than the time of the second baronet', at p. 457.

<sup>20</sup> [A Catalogue of] 'Gloddaith Libri MSS in Folio', Warwickshire County Record Office, CR2017/TP152/1, [p. 1]. The Record Office's catalogue dates it only as '18th century'; Huws, 'Sir Thomas Mostyn', p. 453, provides the date of 1744.

<sup>21</sup> For access to these and other materials at the National Library of Wales, I am grateful to Senior Access Assistant, Caronwen Samuel, and her colleagues at Aberystwyth:

(1) 'A Catalogue of Books at Mostyn. 1655', National Library of Wales, NLW MS 9065E/2092, lists printed materials only, so the absence of MS 384 is to be expected.

(2) 'A Catalogue of ye Books at Mostyn', c. 1713 with a 'Catalogue of Bookes att Gloddaith 1692', NLW MS 21239B, was formerly Mostyn MS 14.

(3) A Catalogue of the Mostyn and Gloddaeth Libraries, c. 1727–45, NLW MS 21244C, contains a catalogue of the Mostyn Library (c. 1727–33) with a catalogue of the Gloddaeth Library (c. 1733–45), both written in the hand of the 4th baronet, and was formerly Mostyn MS 137. This one also does not list MS 384, though it does list (just) five manuscripts under the heading 'Libri Manuscripti, in quarto, & Octavo', on f. 237r.

(4) Although 'A Descriptive Catalogue of the Gloddaeth Library, Alphabetically arranged with Numerous Bibliographical Notes', NLW MS 21243E, and formerly Mostyn MS 99, incorporates 'A Catalogue of the Gloddaeth Manuscripts, at Mostyn. 1842', including a list of 'Latin & French Manuscripts' (ff. 82r–88r), MS 384 is not listed therein.

<sup>22</sup> New College Library, Oxford, MS 384, inside front board; Nicholas of Lyra, *Postilla in Psalmos et Prophetas* (c. 1400–1450), Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, Beinecke MS 640; King Henry VIII, *A protestation made for the most mighty and moste redoubted kynge of Englande* (Londini: In Aedibus Thomae Bertheletii Regii Impres., 1537), and *An epistle of the most myghty and redouted Prynce Henry the .viii.* (Londini: In Aedibus Thomae Bertheletii Regii Impresoris. Excus., 1538), Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC, STC 13090 and STC 13081.

<sup>23</sup> As recorded by the Revd Robert Williams in his *The History and Antiquities of the Town of Aberconway and its Neighbourhood* (Denbigh: Printed for the Author by Thomas Gee, 1835), p. 131.

I have been lately cataloguing and arranging the Old Books and Manuscripts of the “Gloddaeth Library” now at Mostyn. I wish I had been as fortunate as my predecessor Mr Broster was, in obtaining your valuable assistance . . . Mr Mostyn is going to build a new library, large enough to contain the unitated [sic] libraries of the Cors y Gedol, Plas-hên, Gloddaeth, Bodsgallen, Bodidris, Pengwern and the Mostyn Library!<sup>24</sup>

Thirty years later, the Historical Manuscripts Commission was examining all the manuscripts now at Mostyn, and our MS 384 is the 93rd of the 279 manuscripts at that time recorded as belonging to Edward Lloyd-Mostyn (1795–1884), 2nd Baron Mostyn of Mostyn Hall, and listed by Alfred J. Horwood in the Commission’s 1874 report. That 93rd corresponds to the ‘Ms No 93’ (i.e. sometime Mostyn MS 93) penned in ink on a modern paper flyleaf of our manuscript.<sup>25</sup> Sotheby’s then lists it in a catalogue for their 13 July 1920 auction of ‘very important illuminated & other manuscripts’ of Edward Llewellyn Roger Lloyd-Mostyn (1885–1965), 4th Baron Mostyn; a marked-up version of that catalogue in the National Library of Wales records that it was sold to the rare books and manuscripts dealer, Maggs Bros. for a hammer price of £76. The following year, Maggs are duly offering it for sale (mistakenly dating it to the 14th century) at a price of £165. The next public sale of MS 384 I have been able to trace is with a Christie’s auction of 18 December 1964, which dates the manuscript to *c.* 1450. Finally, the great German-born bookseller Bernard Rosenthal (1920–2017), sometime president of the Antiquarian Booksellers’ Association of America, offered it for sale from his San Francisco book dealers at a price of \$4,000 in 1972, that is, before the discovery of the erased inscription indicating Andrew Holes’s original ownership. And it was from Rosenthal whom Nicolas Barker acquired it, prior to its final peregrination, thanks to Mr Barker’s bounteousness, back to New College, Oxford.<sup>26</sup> Since then I have had this splendid manuscript, a momentous (re)acquisition for the library, digitised in its entirety, thanks to funding provided by the American Friends of New College, and I am pleased to record my gratefulness to that invaluable organisation for their financial support. More recently, I have assigned it over to conservators, for some minor remedial work on its glorious binding.

Andrew Holes, Sir Thomas Mostyn, Nicolas Barker—we may not know all those who have at one time or another been the owners of our 15th-century, illuminated Florentine manuscript copy of St Jerome’s Letters, now New College Library, MS 384. But we can, I think, confidently say that these three men have, without doubt, been its most judicious and most consequential ones over the course of this very fine manuscript’s unsettled history.

Christopher Skelton-Foord  
Librarian  
New College, Oxford

<sup>24</sup> Letter from Edward Parry to the Revd Walter Davies (21 March 1842), National Library of Wales, NLW MS 1807E, no. 1052.

<sup>25</sup> Alfred J. Horwood, ‘Notes of the Manuscripts of The Right Honourable Lord Mostyn at Mostyn Hall’, in *Fourth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts: Part I: Report and Appendix* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1874), pp. 347–63, at p. 354; New College Library, Oxford, MS 384, f. [i]v.

<sup>26</sup> Lot 51 in Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge, *Catalogue of Very Important Illuminated & other Manuscripts the Property of The Lord Mostyn, Mostyn Hall, Mostyn, Cheshire . . . which will be sold by auction by Messrs. Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge . . . on Tuesday, the 13th of July, 1920* (London: Sotheby & Co., 1920), p. 13, National Library of Wales, NLW ex 2858; item 62 in Maggs Bros., *Illuminated Manuscripts and Miniatures, European & Oriental*, catalogue no. 404 (London: Maggs Bros., 1921), p. 87, with plate XXXVIII reproducing a detail from f. 1r on p. 86; lot 161 in Christie, Manson & Woods, *Catalogue of Important Literary and Illuminated Manuscripts, Autograph Letters and Printed Books . . . which will be sold at Auction by Christie, Manson & Woods, Ltd. . . . on Friday, December 18, 1964* (London: Christie, Manson & Woods, 1964), p. 61, with a similar plate facing p. 61; item 76 in Bernard M. Rosenthal, *Sixty-Two Printed Books, c. 1468–1784: Thirty-One Manuscripts, 13th Century–c. 1650*, Catalog 23 (San Francisco: Bernard M. Rosenthal, Inc., 1972), pp. 36–7, 45, with plates on pp. 88–9.



Nicolas Barker [sometime owner of MS 384], pictured in London, 2025