

## ‘The Chaundler Manuscript’

¶ A celebrated Wiccamicall illuminated manuscript whose purpose was to praise and commemorate the Founder, Bishop William of Wykeham. It is notable for containing the first representations, topographically precise, of New College and Winchester College. The Latinity of the texts, the script and decoration are all under the influence of the new humanistic style. The volume was prepared on behalf of the author, Thomas Chaundler (c. 1417–1490), warden of New College, and presented to another Wykehamist, Thomas Beckington (d. 1465), bishop of Bath and Wells. Beckington was himself a champion of good letters and a contributor to the growth of English humanism. In his letters, Chaundler had encouraged Beckington to offer financial support to Wykeham’s twin colleges, and this volume of praises of the Founder may be regarded as a further approach in the same line. The inclusion of a copy of Wykeham’s testament, replete as it was with legacies to his two foundations, was a less subtle angle, given that Bishop Beckington’s health was already in decline.

Pastedowns come from the first pages of a set of *distinctiones* drawn from Jerome’s letters (s. xv<sup>in</sup>) (see *Binding*.)

Fol. 2r. Notes (s. xvii<sup>in</sup>) on the sums of money Wykeham left to his kin, taken from the copy of his testament at fol. 48r.

Fol. 2v. Contents-list in red ink by the main scribe, John Farley (d. 1464) (see below, *Script*). The four full-page illustrations are included in the listing (e.g. ‘Descripicio exemplaris Collegii beate Marie Winton’ in Oxonia centum quinque clericorum in eodem’); not included are the two final items, the letters of Pope Pius II (which are later additions to the manuscript, apparently by a hand other than Farley’s). A modern hand (s. xix) added an entry for the second of these letters and wrote folio numbers next to all the other entries. Beneath the table of contents, in an ornate, black bastarda, is the inscription, ‘Ex dono Reuerendi in Christo patris domini Thome de Bekyntona | Bathon’ et Wellen’ Episcopi. et labore Magistri Thome Chaundelere | huius ecclesie Cancellarij. Oretis pro animabus vtriusque.’ (s. xv<sup>3/4</sup>). The same had wrote the same lines in Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R. 14. 5.

Fols. 3r–4v. Four full-page tinted and coloured images of: Winchester College; New College; Wykeham enthroned surrounded by famous fifteenth-century Wykehamists; Wells, the cathedral and bishop’s palace. (See further below, *Decoration*.)

1 (fols. 5r–32r) (titulus) *Ad insignem dominum & Litteratissimum Presulem | dominum Thomam de Bekyntona Wellensem & Bathoniensem pon|tificem in futuras collocuciones de laudibus nobilis Antistitis | Willelmi de Wykeham ducentorum fundatoris clericorum prologus incipit feliciter || (inc. pref.) CVM dudum beatissime presul eam quam | apud oxonienses rei publice curam gessi & | Cancellariatus officium succedenti mihi nobili | ac dignissimo Presuli tradidissem . . . (7r) . . . Sed nec illi asinos nec ego illos | curo. Finit prologus in futuras collocuciones de | laudabili vita & moribus nobilis Winton’ Antistitis Willelmi de | Wykeham duorum fundatoris Collegiorum Oxonie ac prope Winton’ | ducentorum quoque clericorum in eisdem. || (7v) Collocutio prima de laudibus nobilis Antistitis domini Willelmi de | Wykeham ducentorum fundatoris clericorum. Colloquuntur phillosophi duo | Panescius qui dicitur omnia sciens et Ferrandus tardioris ac durioris intellectus. || (inc. dial.) \\Ferrandus// PERagratis montibus atque illis que luto & seno pleni | sunt vallibus ab alma & preclara Vniuersitate Oxo|niensis studii in hanc villam — altissimo & soli deo relata & contribu|ta a nobis sit. Detur que immortalī seculorum Regi omnis & | honor & uirtus & quidquid aut melius aut optimum potest | excogitari. || De moribus & vita Laudabili domini Willelmi de Wykeham | Winton’ Episcopi duorum Fundatoris Collegiorum Oxon’ ac prope Winton’ | ducentorumque clericorum in eisdem inter philosophos finiunt collocuciones feliciter.*

Thomas Chaundler (revising the work of one of his pupils, perhaps John Nabbe), *Collocutiones VII de laudibus nobilis antistitis domini Willelmi de Wykeham*: ed. S. Bridges, 'Thomas Chaundler', BLitt. diss. (University of Oxford 1949), 2. 96–202; preface and exc. from first *collucio*, ed. G. Williams, *Official Correspondence of Thomas Bekynton*, RS 56 (1872), 2. 321–6; exc. from last *collucio*, ed. M. R. James, *Chaundler MSS* (London, 1916), 54–6; with sources identified by Cole, 'Staging advice in Oxford, New College, MS 288', 254–5. The work is a dialogue designed to demonstrate that Wykeham possessed all the Aristotelian virtues. Chaundler's works, principally the *Libellus de laudibus duarum ciuitatum* in Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R. 14. 5, the sister volume, are discussed by T. Meacham, *The Performance Tradition of the Medieval English University: The Works of Thomas Chaundler* (Berlin 2020).

**2** (fols. 32r–45v) (titulus) *Ad insignem dominum & litteratissimum presulem dominum | Thomam de Bekyntona . Wellen' pontificem in futuras allocuciones | referendas eidem; Prologus incipit feliciter.* || (inc. prol.) *Quantum distat christianorum ac sacre theologie | perfeccio . . . (33r) . . . quoniam illum & gentiles | in sua laude gloriosos oppugnare vado. Finit prologus.* || (titulus) *Allocucio prima & tocius sermonis relacio ad insignem | dominum & litteratissimum presulem dominum Thomam de Bekyn|tona Wellen' pontificem ubi alcior (sic) attemptatur uia ostendendi compositos | mores ac perfeccionem domini Willelmi nobilis fundatoris.* || (inc. text) *UTINAM a me semel uisam cartulam conce|deretur intueri rursum . illam loquor quam nostri | fundatoris laudibus plenam . & christianissimus | quibusdam eius inscriptam operibus in collegii | beate Marie prope Winton' thesauro vir optime & uidi & legi — Pauci quos equus amauit iupiter . aut ardens trans|uexit ad ethera virtus. Finiunt Allocuciones.* || *Ad insignem dominum & litteratissimum Presulem | dominum Thomam de Bekyntona Wellen' & Bathoniensem | Pontificem de Laudibus & vita nobilis Antistitis Willelmi | duorum Collegiorum Oxonie ac prope Wintoniam Funda|toris ducentorum quoque in eisdem clericorum : finit opus | feliciter.*

Thomas Chaundler, *Allocutiones duae de laudabili uita eiusdem Willelmi et eiusdem Christiana perfectione*: unpr.; prol. ed. Bridges, 'Chaundler' (as above), 203–6; Sharpe, *Latin Writers*, 647. This companion piece to the foregoing is a dialogue which sets out the ways in which Wykeham possessed also all the Christian virtues.

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**3** (fols. 46r–47v) (titulus) *Cronica breuis de ortu . vita . ac gestis nobilibus Reuerendi | domini Willelmi de Wykeham olim Episcopi Winton'.* || (inc. text) *Premissa meditacione interna pensante memoria occurrit | digna recordacio Reuerendi patris & domini domini | Willelmi de Wykeham' nuper Episcopi Winton' cuius probitatis | actus & merita quedam sub hoc breui compendio . annotanda | sunt — cuius corpus iacet tumulatum in oratorio beate Marie Virginis | in nauis Ecclesie Cathedralis Winton' quod ipse superstes | ad honorem eiusdem Virginis fieri ordinauit.* || *Finit Cronica de ortu vita &c.*

An abbreviated version of Robert Heete (attrib.), *De origine, uita et gestis Willelmi Wykeham episcopi*: pr. from the copy in BL MS Cotton Titus A. XXIV by W. Wharton, *Anglia sacra*, 2 vols (London 1691), 2. 355–6, with a mistaken attribution of authorship to Thomas Chaundler, warden of New College; our copy lacks the citation of the epitaph at the end of Wharton's printing. This is the earliest known account of the life of William of Wykeham. The rubric to the full Life states that it was written (*editus*) in 1424, 'twenty years after the death of that father', and it includes a dedication to the fellows of both colleges, addressed as 'karissimi socii'. For Robert Heete, fellow of New College and Winchester, see further above under MS 192. The longer version of the Life exists in Winchester College's Liber Albus, fols. 9r–11r; and there is an imperfect copy at the front of Heete's Statute Book at Winchester, now WCM A5/131 (formerly Fellows' Library, MS 55) (c. 1424 AD). This longer version was introduced by R.

Lowth (who first attributed the work to Heete), *The Life of William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, Collected from Records, Registers, Manuscripts, and other Authentic Evidences*, 3rd edn (Oxford 1777), xiv–xvi; and printed by G. H. Moberly, *Life of William of Wykeham*, 2nd edn (Winchester & London 1893), 321–36.

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**4** (fols. 48r–52v) *Sagacissimi ac prudentissimi domini Willelmi de Wykeham | quondam domini Episcopi Winton' testamentum quod dicitur ultima uoluntas || In nomine & honore summe ac indiuidue Trinitatis | Patris & Filii & spiritus sancti. Quia omne quod | sit in tempore; in tempore corrumpetur . et quodlibet esse mortale | viuens . paulatim dilabatur & deficit . donec veniat ad ultimum | defectum qui est Mors — Dat' | apud Suthwaltham . vicesimo quarto die Mensis Iulii Anno | ab incarnatione domini secundum cursum & computacionem ecclesie | Angli[g>c]ane . Millesimo quadringentesimo tercio [erased but visible: /Indiccionem vndecima | pontificatus sanctissimi in Christo patris ac domini nostri domini Bonifacii diuina prouidentia pape noni anno quartodecimo] | presentibus discretis viris dominis Willelmo Norton' . Thoma | Laington' . Willelmo Boteler' & Ioanne Knygth' ac me | Willelmo Dorne notario publico huius testamenti scriba testibus | ad hoc vocatis specialiter et rogatis.*

The last will and testament of Bishop William of Wykeham, dated 24 July 1404: printed from the registration copy at Lambeth (not collated with this copy) by R. Lowth, *The Life of William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, Collected from Records, Registers, Manuscripts, and other Authentic Evidences* (London 1758), app. no. XVII (pp. 384–404); translated from there by N. H. Nicolas, *Testamenta Vetusta*, 2 vols (London 1826), 2. 763–76; an abstract in English by G. H. Moberly, *Life of William of Wykeham, Sometime Bishop of Winchester and Lord High Chancellor of England*, 2nd edn (Winchester & London 1893), 344–8; excerpts pr. from the registration copy by Willoughby, *Collegiate Churches*, 621–4. For further discussion, see M. E. C. Walcott, *William of Wykeham and his Colleges* (Winchester 1852), 92–6; and V. Davis, *William Wykeham* (London 2007), 164–7.

This copy of Wykeham's testament is contemporary with that in BL MS Cotton Titus A. XXIV, fols. 5r–10v. The registration copy is in the Register of Archbishop Arundel in Lambeth Palace Library, fols. 215r–218v. A copy was also enregistered in Winchester College's Liber Albus (WCM 22992), fols. 151r–154v, whence derives the copy at the back of the 16th-cent. statute book, WCM 21472, whence derives the 18th-cent. copy in WCM 21482.

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**5** (fols. 53r–55v) *De ortu . vita . & obitu [–domini] Willelmi de Wykeham quondam | Winton' Episcopi metrice || Omnia cum nequeam Willelmi scribere gesta / Panea breui calamo scribere intar (sic) ego — Oremus quod uera deus lux luceat illi / Et det ei requiem perpetuumque diem. || de ortu . uita & obitu domini Willelmi de Wykeham quondam | Winton' Episcopi fundatoris ducentorum clericorum; finiunt | metra feliciter.*

An anonymous metrical Life of William of Wykeham, based on Robert Heete's prose Life at fol. 46r: unpr.

In blank space in the remainder of the page, a secretary hand of s. xvi/xvii has copied the eight-line epitaph from Wykeham's tomb in Winchester cathedral. (The hand is coeval to, but different from, the annotations on fol. 2r.)

**6** (fols. 56r–65r) *Oracio Pii [–pape] secundi habita in Conuentu Man|tuano sexto kalendas Octobris Anno domini Millesimo | quadringentesimo quinquagesimo octauo*

*preambulum.* || Cvm bellum hodie aduersus impiam Turchorum | gentem pro dei honore ac salute reipublicę Christi|anę suasuri sumus — ut mentibus uestris inserat ille; rogamus qui cum patre & spiritu | sancto sine fine regnat XPC IHC. || *Finit oracio summi Pontificis Pii [-pape] secundi Man|tue per cum recitata in conuentu multorum principum | sexto kalendas Octobris Anno domini Millesimo quadrin|gentesimo quinquagesimo octauo de suscipiendo bello | contra Turcos. An iustum et quod inde premium* || (after eight blank lines:) *Et vale in magnam etatem ac dies letos optime & | dilectissime Presul Thoma mei memor.*

Pius II (Enea Silvio de' Piccolomini), *Oratio prima habita in conuentuo Mantuano* (ep. 397): ed. *Opera* (Basel 1551), 905.

7 (fols. 65v–74r) *Epistola Pii [-pape] 2<sup>di</sup> vniverso orbi Christiano ad corripiendum arma contra | magnum Turchum pro defensione Religionis & fidei Christiane . cum indul|genciis maximis omnibus qui ad hoc conferunt concessis.* || (inc. text) Pius Episcopus seruus seruorum dei Vniuersis & singulis Christi fidelibus | Salutem & apostolicam benedictionem. Ezechielis prophete magni sententia est venientem gladium nisi annunciauerit speculator | animarum que perierint — Et omnis terra te adoret . & nomini tuo psallat | in secula seculorum AMEN. Dat' Rome apud sanctum | Petrum Anno Incarnacionis dominice Millesimo CCCC<sup>mo</sup> | Sexagesimo tercio Vndecimo Kl' Nouembris Pontificatus | nostri AMNO (*sic*) SEXTO.

Pius II (Enea Silvio de' Piccolomini), *Bulla cruciata contra Turcos* ('Ezechielis prophetae') (22 October 1463): pr. [Mainz 1463] (CIBN P363), &c.

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8 (fol. 73v) \\Pius [-pape] ii.// *Epistola siue breue eiusdem sanctissimi patris directus venerabili | patri Thome de Bekyntona Bathon' & Wellen' Episcopo.* || Venerabilis frater Salutem & Apostolicam benedictionem. Ex litteris Apostolicis | quas nuper — et requirit & in primis necessitas ipsa expostulat. Dat' Rome apud | sanctum Petrum sub anulo Piscatoris Die ij<sup>a</sup> Nouembris MCCCClxiiij Pontificatus | nostri Anno Sexto || G. d. Piccolomin'.

An encyclical of Pius II (Enea Silvio de' Piccolomini) on preparations for a crusade, addressed to Bishop Beckington.

*Construction:* Parchment. 75 folios (fol. 1 a flyleaf of medieval parchment, fol. 75 a medieval pastedown, lifted). There is a discreet contemporary ink pagination that might be scribal, going from 1 and petering out at 108; this is written just outside the text space where the rules intersect. The foliation in early twentieth-century Bodleian pencil is that followed here, foliating 1–75. *Dimensions:* 294 × 211 mm, written space of 189 × 120 mm. *Collation:* 1<sup>4</sup> (fol. 1, flyleaf, 2–4 cancelled) 2<sup>8</sup> (+ two after 1; fols. 1–10) 3–6<sup>8</sup> (fols. 11–43) 7<sup>10</sup> (fols. 44–53) 8<sup>2</sup> (fols. 54–55) 9<sup>8</sup> (fols. 56–63) 10<sup>6</sup> (fols. 64–69) 11<sup>8</sup> (wants 6–8; fols. 70–74) 12<sup>2</sup> (fol. 75, medieval bifolium, 2 cut away, formerly pastedown). Catchwords are given almost apologetically, in tiny, pale script at the very foot of the page. Quire signatures follow on the first recto of the new quire, by the same hand and with equal discretion, taking the form '2<sup>us</sup> q.'. Parchment is very fine and smooth, pliant with a suede-like nap, cream in colour and with little to no distinction between hair- and flesh-sides. The leaves are none the less arranged like to like, flesh-side outermost. *Layout:* Ruled in red for 34 long lines; usually a single rule going full measure although in the final quire the horizontal ruling is doubled at top and bottom. *Secundo folio:* subridet amicus.

*Script:* One main scribe, who has been identified as John Farley, fellow of New College and 'scribe' (i.e. registrar) of the university from 1458 until his death in 1464 (*DHEH* no. 36; Rundle, *Renaissance Reform*, 235). He uses here a version of humanistic *lettera antica*, one of the first men in England to do

so. It is a carefully made, very upright script, the only ligature being the humanistic ct-ligature. Of particular note are the straight, long neck and upright design of the *g*, the straight-backed *d*, straight *r*, all characteristic of his mature style. Rundle (ibid. 237) has suggested that Farley found a model for this *g* in the hand of the papal secretary and humanist Andrea Fiacchi, a copy of whose *De potestatibus Romanorum* was available to him in the university library. It is found in use in a document dated September 1462 copied by Farley into the Chancellor's Register, OUA, Hyp/A/1, fol. 196r; DHEH no. 39b). Ink is consistently black throughout. Punctuation is by *punctus elevatus* for medial pauses, medial point for major pauses, and *punctus interrogativus*. The names of the interlocutors in the *Collocutiones* are given in red ink.

Farley's hand may also be seen in the companion volume to ours, now Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R. 14. 5, at fols. 46v–49v; also in Register F, which is a university letter book (OUA, NEP/Supra/Reg F), the Register of Congregation (NEP/Supra/Reg Aa (*olim* Reg. Aa5)), and the Chancellor's Register, 1435–69 (Hyp/A/1 (*olim* Register Aaa)); also in the only original letter to survive from the fifteenth-century university, sent to the prior of Durham cathedral and preserved in that famously conservative archive, where it is now Dean and Chapter Archives, DCD 1.5.Ebor.51 (illustrated by Rundle, *Renaissance Reform*, fig. 42).

In the final section of our manuscript, fols. 65v–74r, the hand changes somewhat. While the overall aspect of the *lettera antica* remains broadly similar, there are sufficient small differences in the handling to suggest that a second scribe was responsible for this addition. Certain letters are formed very differently, notably the *g*, which has a sharper neck tending down to the left with a flatter lower curve, to contrast with Farley's graph. There are also internal reasons for preferring a second scribe (see below, *History*). The final addition, the letter on the back page, is a new scribe once again. His script has a slightly higher centre of gravity than the preceding specimen, with small differences in individual graphs. The accompanying border decoration, different in all cases, reinforces the sense that two scribes are represented here alongside Farley.

*Decoration:* The celebrated decorative scheme of this manuscript incorporates four full-page coloured and tinted drawings designed to honour Bishop Thomas Beckington, the volume's dedicatee, and Bishop William Wykeham, the founder of the colleges through which both Chaundler and Beckington had passed on their way to yet greater things. These drawings are on one bifolium inserted before the text. The artist (who was less delicate than the master of Trinity College R. 14. 5, the sister volume) used black ink to outline the drawings and a grey-brown tint for the figures and buildings. Grass is washed green and the roofs and sky have a blue tint. The result is a stylish grisaille effect. Each drawing is framed by a black line and, outside, by a white line on a rose ground, now much rubbed. The three topographical drawings use a raised viewpoint.

Fol. 3r: Winchester College, an image of which occupies the upper half of the page in the background. The artist seems to have had knowledge of the buildings: Outer Court and Chamber Court and both depicted, also Outer Gate and Middle Gate, and there is a suggestion of the cloisters behind the chapel. The round tower with spire that stands over the chapel and is shown here was replaced by the familiar Perpendicular tower in the later fifteenth century. St Catherine's Hill is indicated in a stylized way to the left of the college buildings. In the foreground a crowded scene of the foundation, one hundred in number, exactly as laid down in the statutes. The warden is in the centre with tonsured fellows and chaplains to each side and surrounded by the seventy scholars and quirksters all with shaven heads. All hands are raised together in prayerful attitude. In the background are the buildings of the College with an *manège* scene in the first quadrangle: one horse is rearing, either performing a levade or the rider is about to be thrown; another mounted rider looks on; there is no sign that they were jousting (or could ever have jousted in this tightly enclosed space), as has sometimes been suggested. In the chapel quadrangle stands a man with a long cane. His clothes are those of a layman, so he is less likely to have been the *rector chori* (an officer who customarily carried a rod) as the headmaster or usher.

Fol. 3v: New College, a view of the quadrangle looking north, the hall and chapel range forming the back of the view with the gatehouse, cloisters and belltower to the left and the hall stairs, muniment tower and library range to the right. A prominent oriel window in the angle between the gatetower range and the chapel giving on to the warden's oratory existed as late as the nineteenth century. In the lower half of the image, standing in the foreground outside the walls of the college, is an assembly of the foundation numbering 105, again as per statute. The warden stands in the centre with graduate fellows facing in left and right, as it were across the divided quire, these all wearing academic caps. Before them are the bachelors and scholars and singing-men, all tonsured, and choristers (kneeling, shaven headed). The scholars are seen from the back: they are in the centre of the image, processing through the middle of the company to where the warden stands to welcome them, as for the moment of

their admission. All hands are once again raised in prayerful attitude. Within the quadrangle behind, a richly dressed lay visitor is being shown the buildings by a gesturing doctor; two other doctors are conversing; another is climbing the hall stairs and one more is entering the chapel passage.

Fol. 4r: an assembly of great alumni, who stand around the seated figure of the Founder, William of Wykeham (d. 1404). Wykeham is seated in regal style on a dais; in his right hand he holds a model of New College represented by the chapel and bell tower; in his left hand, a smaller model of Winchester College chapel; he wears the mitre and his crozier rests against his left shoulder. The great figures around him are labelled. From left to right, they are: Thomas Beckington (d. 1465), bishop of Bath and Wells, with mitre and crozier (described as ‘*Collegio sustentator precipuus*’, he rests his left hand on Wykeham’s New College chapel); Henry Chichele (d. 1443), archbishop of Canterbury and founder of All Souls College, holding a model of his own college chapel and a crossed staff; Thomas Cranley (d. 1417), bishop of Dublin and first warden of Winchester, with crossed staff and clasped book (he was noted as a preacher and author, although nothing of his survives beyond a verse epistle to the king); William Waynflete (d. 1486), bishop of Winchester and founder of Magdalen College, Oxford, with mitre and crozier; there is no model of Magdalen College in his hand, which must have been an oversight in the design since the college was newly founded, in 1458. In the foreground in the lower half of the page are the figures of other high-ranking Wykehamists and friends, their hands all raised in prayerful attitude before the Founder: Thomas Chaundler (d. 1490), warden of Winchester and New Colleges; Andrew Holes (d. 1470), archdeacon of Wells; John Norton (d. 1462), chancellor of Durham and vicar-general of York; Hugo Sygar (d. 1489), treasurer of Wells; John Selott (d. by 1479), archdeacon of Sudbury; Richard Andrew (d. 1477), dean of York and first warden of All Souls; William Say (d. 1468), dean of St Pauls and archdeacon of Northampton. While there has been an attempt to make the faces individually distinctive, they all show a pattern similarity and it would be unwise to take them as likenesses.

Fol. 4v: an image of Wells, which, unlike the depictions of the two colleges, shows no real knowledge of the buildings. At the foot of the image is the precinct wall of the cathedral and its two gatehouses, the eastern one with a figure of St Andrew in a niche over the door. The city is represented by buildings built hard against the wall; those in the bottom left have stone foundations and jettied, half-timbered upper storeys. The cathedral is not a likeness, having neither bulk nor an attempt to represent the great westwork; but the central tower is represented in a stylized way. Prominent is a preaching cross in the yard. The bishop’s palace forms the top third of the image. It is shown as a walled palace with a drawbridge thrown over a moat, which is at least true of the complex. Inside the great hall a presentation scene is taking place, in which Thomas Chaundler kneels before Bishop Beckington offering his book (clasped, a green cover); a receiving cleric stands alongside. To the left, outside the walls, a tonsured(?) man points out the scene to a male companion. To the upper right, a spring, one of the city’s wells, gushes from the side of a hill and fills the moat.

Initials and border decoration are fine. Throughout, there are illuminated initials, all but two (see below) by the same artist, identifiable as Thomas Tresswell, who worked out of Catte Street in Oxford in the 1460s (James-Maddocks, ‘Tresswell’, 121). His work is at fols. 5r, 7v, 11v, 14r, 17r, 19r, 24r, 32r, 33r, 38v, 46r, 48r, 53r, 56r, 56v, 59v, 63v. These are three- to five-line coloured champ initials infilled with coloured leaves and petals in plum, blue and green, on a gold ground and with short spray-work, extending north and south into the inner margin containing coloured leaves, flowers and gold trefoils. Scrolling acanthus leaves in rose and green and sometimes also blue and plum are involved on fols. 11v, 25r, 32r, 33r, 56r (also with strawberry leaves and fruit). On fol. 38v is a changed style, although the same limner, a three-line gold letter on a quartered rose and blue ground with white detailing and short foliate sprays. Tresswell is the artist also of MSS 113 and, significantly, 281, which was a commission by John Farley—Farley was the owner of that manuscript and the scribe of this. It is useful to tie both manuscripts into the nexus of humanistically inclined Wykehamists gathered around Chaundler. It was Chaundler who promoted Farley to be university registrar to bring a good Latin style and a modern hand into university practice, just as in the wider world Thomas Beckington had sought to improve the professionalism of the signet office and the civil service more generally by appointing the Richard Andrew to be his successor as king’s secretary, where he was followed by Andrew Holes. Both men were interested in good letters and both are depicted standing among the Wiccamical luminaries on fol. 4r of our manuscript. (See further Willoughby, ‘John Farley’.)

For the two additions at the back of the manuscript, done by two different scribes, two limners are also found at work. The first, responsible for the initial and demi-vinets on fol. 65v, is a superior achievement, feathered sprays with leaves and flowers arranged in a tight rectilinear frame wrapping around the text block at top and bottom. Motifs are strawberry leaves and fruit, trumpet flowers and open daisies, large gold balls and gold trefoils and burrs. A third hand was responsible for the final, less delicate initial and demi-vinet sprays on fol. 74v, with more use of gold and darker lines.

*Annotations:* The manuscript is very clean of marks. On fol. 31r two nineteenth-century hands, one using pencil and one black ink, have added surnames in the margins against Wykehamists who are mentioned in the text by only their given names and ecclesiastical office. Datings by papal indiction have been erased at fols. 46r, ll. 10–11, and 52v, ll. 16–18, and the word ‘papa’ has been deleted wherever it occurs in items 6–8, an effort to make the book conformable that must have been carried out at Wells.

*Binding:* The original binding was described by John Leland, who saw this book and its sister at Wells in 1533 and described them as having silk chemises: ‘extant archetypi ipsi in Fontanetensi bibliotheca, serico uilloso uestiti, auro et minio pulcherrime picti’ (Leland, *Scriptores*, 457). The image of the book in the presentation scene on fol. 4v may only be stylized, but it happens to show paired fore-edge clasps and a green cover. The sister volume is Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R. 14. 5, and may reveal rather more in the full-page drawing on fol. 8v, in which Chaundler presents the book to Beckington: the chemise is clearly represented, although the picture is done in grisaille and does not show the colour.

The current work is of the early seventeenth century, a stamped Oxford binding of tanned and polished leather over pulpboard (Gibson Roll XX (1)). Sewn on six split bands of alum-tawed leather, raised at the spine. The spine is somewhat damaged and is rebacked at the head; the original sewing around the last band is visible at the foot. The pastedowns are first leaves from a set of *distinctiones* for the Letters of Jerome, in an Anglicana Formata of s. xv<sup>in</sup>. A contemporary marginal heading reads, ‘Tabula super epistolas Ieronimi [[ ]]a tabula est infra folio 137’. Two columns of sixty-three lines, inc. ‘Abstinencia quere infra’ on front and ‘Abstinencia’ to ‘Adulterium’ on the back, with associated *distinctiones* (Ker, *Pastedowns* 718b). The front pastedown is *in situ*, that at the rear is lifted showing it to be a bifolium of which the second leaf is a stub, turned under.

*Labels and marks:* The early-modern fore-edge tab is in the normal position but torn away. The usual marks of college ownership are not present here, even the New College Library stamp was set to one side. Perhaps the book was kept outside the library collection for some of its lifetime—perhaps in the warden’s lodgings?

*History:* One of two presentation manuscripts prepared by Thomas Chaundler (c. 1417–1490), warden of New College between 1454 and 1475, for Thomas Beckington (d. 1465), bishop of Bath and Wells. Beckington was also a Wykehamist, from whom Chaundler was hoping to elicit financial support for the College. The sister volume is now Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R. 14. 5, which contains Chaundler’s *Libellus de laudibus duarum ciuitatum*, a poetic debate in praise of Bath and Wells. (Chaundler was himself the donor to New College of MSS 34, 46, 50, 242.) John Farley (d. 1464), a humanistically inclined fellow of New College and the university registrar, copied the manuscript in his *lettera antica*. (See also above under MS 281, once owned by Farley.) It was Chaundler, as chancellor of the university, who had promoted Farley to be registrar in 1458, and was clearly an admirer of Farley’s penmanship. BL MS Cotton Titus A. XXIV shares these contents and may have been the exemplar, although it does not appear to be in Chaundler’s own hand (represented by BL MS Harley 43). The date of writing was after 30 August 1462, which is the date of Pope Pius II’s Mantuan speech which is copied at the back of the collection. This was the last item copied by Farley and the colophon contains Chaundler’s *vale*. Farley then wrote the table of contents at the front of the book. He died in the winter of 1464, which is the *terminus post quem non*. Once the volume was in Beckington’s hands, two further letters of Pius II (both dated late in 1463, neither in the original table of contents) were added by someone who had access to the bishop’s correspondence. The hand is different and the likelihood is that the scribe was working at Wells. It is striking, therefore, that he should also be practising a *lettera antica* at that early date. These lines were probably added to the volume before the bishop’s death in 1465.

Bishop Beckington presented the volume to the chapter library of his cathedral, as per the inscription on fol. 2v. An inscription by the same hand is in the sister volume, Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R. 14. 5, in the same position below the contents list. Chaundler, promoted to Wells by Beckington, held the chancellorship from 1452 until 1467. The statement at the front of the sister volume states more explicitly that the book was given (*ex dono*) by Beckington to his cathedral. Certainly, John Leland saw both books at Wells in 1533 (Willoughby & Ramsay, *Libraries of the Secular Cathedrals*, SC158. 44, 47; see also above, *Binding*). The conformable erasure of the datings by papal indiction and the erasure of the word ‘papa’ from the letters of Pius II (see *Annotations*), was therefore done at Wells.

The cathedral library was thoroughly dispersed in the later sixteenth century. There is no clue as to when this book left Wells or by what agency, but, given the Wiccamical interest of the volume, New College was clearly judged ultimately to be the appropriate home. It may be that there were only a few intervening steps between the two institutions. The book is entered in the College Benefactors' Register (p. 25) under Beckington's name and the year of 1450, clearly a retrospective invention since it had not been made by then. But since the entry is part of the first stint of writing in the register it does, at least, show that the volume was at the College by 1617, when the register was begun. The Oxford binding is of similar date. The sister volume is usually taken to have been given to Trinity College by Thomas Nevile (c. 1548–1615), dean of Canterbury and master of the college from 1593; it is reported as his in Trinity's *Memoriale* and it contains a (later) *ex-dono* label for him. But the book also occurs in a catalogue of the library of Archbishop John Whitgift (c. 1530–1604), master of Trinity College between 1567 and 1577 (Dublin, Trinity College, MS 3, p. 82: 'Chaundeleri Status humanae uitae script.'). As with the sister volume at New College, its ownership before Whitgift is mysterious.

*Bibliography:* Coxe, 102–3; Alexander & Temple, no. 581; Watson, *Dated Oxford*, no. 856.5; Scott, no. 114; *DHEH* no. 36. M. R. James, *The Chaundler MSS*, Roxburghe Club (1916); R. Weiss, *Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century*, 3rd edn (Oxford 1967), 133–6; D. G. Rundle, 'Of Republics and Tyrants: Aspects of Quattrocento Humanist Writings and Their Reception in England, c. 1400–c. 1460', unpublished DPhil diss. (University of Oxford 1997), 452–7; A. Cole, 'Staging advice in Oxford, New College, MS 288: On Thomas Chaundler and Thomas Bekynton', in *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. V. A. Gillespie & K. Ghosh (Turnhout 2011), 245–63; H. James-Maddocks, 'The peripatetic activity of Thomas Tresswell, London stationer (fl. c. 1440–1470)', in *Manuscripts in the Making. Art & Science*, ed. S. Panayotova & P. Ricciardi, 2 vols (London 2017–18), 1. 109–23; D. G. Rundle, *The Renaissance Reform of the Book and Britain: The English Quattrocento* (Cambridge 2019), 235–9; T. Meacham, *The Performance Tradition of the Medieval English University: The Works of Thomas Chaundler* (Berlin 2020); J. M. W. Willoughby, 'John Farley (d. 1464) and the finessing of MS 281', *New College Notes* 15 (2021), no. 2.