

Evidence for the History of the Auchinleck Manuscript

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The Auchinleck manuscript (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates' MS 19. 2. 1) is the largest and most important of the surviving early collections of Middle English texts, produced probably in the 1330s or 1340s in London.¹ Its subsequent history before the middle of the eighteenth century has remained wholly undocumented. But there is a body of evidence, previously unexamined, that offers some insight into its history between its original completion and its presentation to the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh in 1744.

As it is preserved now in the National Library of Scotland the Auchinleck manuscript comprises 331 leaves.² It is clear that it originally contained an indeterminable number of additional leaves before the present start of the manuscript, which begins partway through the item that has the contemporary number 'vi'. There are also substantial internal losses after the present Quire 38, and also after Quire 48, although the extent of the losses in both these cases cannot be precisely established.³

¹ The literature on the Auchinleck manuscript is extensive; see the very recent overview in Susanna Fein, ed., *The Auchinleck Manuscript: New Perspectives* (Cambridge, 2016).

² The foliation goes up to '334'; but three stubs are numbered as part of the consecutive foliation, 35, 37, 48, while other stubs are differently specified; see below for fuller details. The manuscript is quired in eights apart from Quire 38 which has ten leaves.

³ Quire 39 and an indeterminate number of following quires have been lost, as have Quires 49–51 and possibly others; see the record of quires in D. Pearsall and I. C. Cunningham, *The Auchinleck Manuscript: National Library of Scotland, Advocates' MS 19. 2. 1* (London, 1977), p. [xiii].

There are additional losses that can be more precisely identified. All of Quires 15 and 40 have been removed (some parts of Quire 40 survive elsewhere: see below).⁴ There are identifiable losses from within the surviving quires. Thus, a number of bifolia have been removed: one from Quire 47 (leaves 3.6), two each from Quire 3 (leaves 3.6, 4.5), Quire 41 (leaves 3.6, 4.5), and three from Quire 48 (leaves 2.7, 3.6, 4.5), a total of sixteen leaves. In addition, a number of single leaves have been excised. These fall into two categories. For fourteen of these stubs remain: for fols 6a, 24a, 35, 37, 48, 61a, [72a], 84a, [107a], 118a/2, 120a, 256a, 262a, 299a.⁵ A number of other single leaves have been removed without stubs being left: the first four of Quire 1, the final leaf of Quire 25, leaf 6 of Quire 27, the first leaf of Quire 36, leaf 7 from Quire 41 and the final leaf from Quire 52, a further nine leaves. The leaves in all of these categories, including all of Quires 15 and 40 amount in total to identifiable losses of 57 leaves.⁶

Some of the bifolia that have been removed from the manuscript survive elsewhere:

Edinburgh University Library MS 218: this comprises two bifolia: fols 4.5 from Quire 3 (parts of *Adam and Eve*) and fols 2.7, from Quire 48 (parts of *Richard Coeur de Lyon*).⁷

⁴ These matters are set out clearly in diagrammatic form in Pearsall and Cunningham, *The Auchinleck Manuscript*, pp. [xii–xiii].

⁵ As will be apparent the system for noting these stubs is not consistent.

⁶ The online facsimile of Auchinleck hosted by the National Library of Scotland (<http://auchinleck.nls.uk>), does not note all of the missing bifolia nor all the missing single leaves that are not stubs; this platform also does not reproduce the collation diagram provided by Pearsall and Cunningham, meaning that for a variety of reasons it is harder to obtain a sense of the manuscript's physical construction from the online facsimile.

⁷ See C. R. Borland, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Mediaeval Manuscripts in Edinburgh University Library* (Edinburgh, 1916), p. 319.

St Andrews University Library, msPR2065.R4 (ms1034), one complete bifolium of *Richard Coeur de Lyon* from Quire 48 (4.5);⁸ and msPR2065.A15 (ms1400 and ms1401), two parts of the same bifolium from *King Alexander* from Quire 40 (4.5).⁹

University of London, Senate House Library MS 593: a substantial portion of a bifolium of *King Alexander* (3.6) from Quire 40.¹⁰

These bifolia contribute most clearly to an understanding of the history of Auchinleck after its completion.¹¹ Their existence as separate bifolia is only explicable if, at some point in its history, the manuscript had been disbound. It seems likely (but not absolutely certain) that all the single leaves that lack stubs were also cut out at a point when the manuscript was disbound: if the manuscript was disbound it would be possible to simply cut along the gutter and leave no trace of a stub.

Conversely, the existence of stubs for a number of single leaves that have been excised suggests that such leaves may have been cut out at a point when Auchinleck was bound. The proposition is not wholly secure, but cutting single leaves from a bound manuscript would inevitably leave stubs of some kind. The fourteen stubs in Auchinleck vary considerably in width: the narrowest, fols 24a, 107a, and 299a, are cut so closely that they contain no traces of text, whereas the

⁸ Printed by G. V. Smithers, 'Two Newly-Discovered Fragments from the Auchinleck MS.', *Medium Aevum*, 18 (1949), 1–11.

⁹ Printed by G. V. Smithers, ed., *Kyng Alisaunder*, EETS os 227 (London, 1952), pp. 364–81 and 386–89.

¹⁰ Printed by G. V. Smithers, 'Another Fragment of the Auchinleck MS', in *Medieval Literature and Civilization: Studies in Memory of G. N. Garmonsway*, ed. by D. A. Pearsall and R. A. Waldron (London, 1969), pp. 192–210.

¹¹ The five dispersed bifolia are virtually reunited with the main codex by the inclusion of images at the appropriate points in Pearsall and Cunningham, *The Auchinleck Manuscript*, and in the online facsimile.

widest, fol. 37, preserves almost a full column of writing. There are variations too in the manner of cutting: the narrow stubs fols 24a and 299a were cut leaving a relatively straight edge, and some wider stubs such as fols 37 and 48 also have edges produced by a single cut of this kind. Others such as fol. 35 have edges that are more undulating, whilst others such as fol. 118a are uneven and jagged, and fols 120a and 256 appear to have been both cut and torn. These irregularities in the size of the stubs and the lack of clean cutting lines seem to suggest that such excisions may have been awkward given the size and weight of the bound manuscript.

This manner of excision at times caused damage to adjacent leaves, as was sustained by fol. 24 when fol. 24a was removed. The long vertical repair to fol. 24, visible on the verso side close to the central gutter, shows that the excision of fol. 24a was made from its verso side, with the volume lying open at fols 24a–25r. Evidently the cutter pressed too hard, inadvertently penetrating fol. 24 as well, though not actually cutting all the way through the parchment of that leaf. There would have been no need to rest fol. 24a against its neighbour if the volume had been in a disbound state. At the end of this same gathering fol. 30 has suffered similar collateral damage due to the removal of the miniature from fol. 31v: two strips of repair paper laid at right angles on fol. 30r map onto the dimensions of the excised miniature on fol. 31v, again showing the direction from which the cut must have been made. Since fol. 30 is the last leaf in quire 5 and fol. 31 the first in quire 6, this instance shows even more clearly that at the time this excision was made the manuscript must have been bound. In the latter case the motivation for cutting was clearly the desire to remove the miniature which prefaced item 7, *The Desputisoun bitven þe Bodi and þe Soule*, on fol. 31v.

Similar removals may be observed elsewhere in the manuscript which has visible evidence of the loss of thirteen miniatures.¹² A few of these were neatly removed by tracing a knife around their perimeters.¹³ Most of the others are more irregularly excised, usually cutting in from the edge of the leaf.¹⁴ It is quite probable that the desire to obtain miniatures may have prompted the excision of some of the whole leaves as well. Most of the remaining stubs belong to leaves on which new items begin, precisely the context where miniatures might have been placed.¹⁵ In a few instances an approximation of the likely length of the now imperfect texts, based on the existence of other copies, allows a rough calculation as to whether there would have been room to accommodate an illustration as well as the missing lines. However, in the case of the nine single leaves that were removed without leaving traces of stubs it is much harder to detect evidence of the same motivation; several of these leaves occur mid-text, or at the ends of texts where it is not clear what material may have followed, and in some instances, such as the initial four leaves now lost from Quire 1, there is no indication at all of the nature of the missing content. A similarly mixed picture emerges from a consideration of the missing bifolia. Some of these offer the contexts where miniatures might be expected: the bifolium lost from Quire 3 includes the beginning of *Adam and Eve*; that lost from Quire 47 includes the

¹² Six miniatures survive: on fols 7ra, 72r, 167rb, 176ra (the only historiated initial, with a border), 256vb (heavily defaced), and 326ra, and there is one instance of an elaborately decorated initial (7 lines) on fol. 304r.

¹³ As on fols 65vb, 268ra, 280rb, 317va.

¹⁴ As on fols 16rb, 21ra, 31vb, 78rb, 201rb, 259ra, 261ra, 279va, and 281ra. In the case of the miniature excised on fol. 201rb the cutting was so crude that part of the upper right quadrant still remains.

¹⁵ The only stubs on which this would not have been the case are fols 6a, 118a, and 120a.

beginning of *The Alphabetical Praise of Women*; and the two bifolia lost from Quire 41 include the wholly missing items xlvi and xlvii. Yet the three bifolia that have been recovered intact contain only text and not miniatures, demonstrating that such souvenir-hunting cannot have been the only motivation for mutilating the manuscript.

Nor is it necessary to assume that the excisions to Auchinleck were all made by the same hand; in fact, a close examination of the surviving evidence suggests that the manuscript was likely mutilated in more than one stage. It is clear that the loss of bifolia and (probably) of the leaves without stubs took place while the manuscript was disbound and that a number of other leaves were removed when it has been bound or rebound. While the sequence of these stages of mutilation cannot be established with absolute certainty surviving documentation offers some assistance.

The earliest evidence of any binding for Auchinleck comes in the report of David Laing (1793–1878), the great Scottish antiquary.¹⁶ In 1857 he describes the binding in which the manuscript came to the Advocates' Library in 1744 from Alexander Boswell:

Probably attaching much less importance to the volume than it has obtained, it was bound in the plainest manner, some of the leaves were misplaced . . .¹⁷

¹⁶ For records of earlier examinations of Auchinleck by Thomas Percy, Joseph Ritson and Walter Scott, see Arthur Johnston, *Enchanted Ground: The Study of Romance in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1964), pp. 93, 132-33, 179; Ritson's description of the manuscript is now National Library of Scotland MS Adv. 19.2.1B.

¹⁷ [David Laing, ed.] *A penni worth of Witte: Florice and Blauncheflour: and other Pieces of Ancient English Poetry, Selected from the Auchinleck Manuscript*, (Edinburgh, 1857), p. iii.

This plain binding was replaced by a morocco one, 'probably in the 1820s'.¹⁸

Laing had had extensive acquaintance with both the Advocates' Library and with the Auchinleck manuscript, some portions of which he had edited in 1837 with J. W. M. Turnbull.¹⁹ These factors give weight to his observations. He also had a more direct interest in its history since he owned the two bifolia that are now Edinburgh University Library MS 218. These he had acquired on separate occasions, the bifolium from *Richard Coeur de Lyon* 'several years before' 1837, and the bifolium from *Adam and Eve* sometime after that date, but both from the same source, 'a learned and reverend friend'.²⁰ Laing observed of Auchinleck that:

when compared with the recovered fragments, of which the parts over the boards are preserved, it must have suffered in the rebinding, by being rather unsparingly cut in the edges.²¹

Evidence of that cutting is very apparent in the partial (occasionally complete) loss of the contemporary scribal item numbers that are set centrally in the top margins of recto leaves, and also in various lacunae that affect the inscriptions and comments added by early modern users to the manuscript's outer margins. The latest such additions, which occur in different parts of the codex, are by seventeenth-century hands: the same Italic hand inscribes comments in English and Latin in the margins of both *Of Arthour and of Merlin* and the *Liber Regum Anglie* (*The Anonymous Short English Metrical Chronicle*), whilst a different

¹⁸ See Laing, p. iii and Cunningham, *Facsimile*, p. xvi, who notes that it was rebound again in 1971.

¹⁹ *Owain Miles, and other inedited Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (Edinburgh, 1837).

²⁰ Laing, p. ii.

²¹ Laing, p. iii.

seventeenth-century hand writes verses about Guy of Warwick on one leaf of *Floris and Blaucheflur*.²² All these additions have been visibly trimmed, with some loss of content, demonstrating that the manuscript retained considerably larger margins at least until the time of these seventeenth-century users.

Presumably by 'rebinding' Laing is referring to Boswell's binding of it 'in the plainest manner' after he acquired it in 1740.²³ Laing's observations suggest that his own bifolia had been removed before that plain binding took place, since they, that is, fols 4.5 from Quire 3 and fols 2.7, from Quire 48, were larger than the leaves in the bulk of the manuscript as it appears to have been in that binding. The differences in size are clear: the leaves in Auchinleck as it now survives are approximately 250 x 190mm, whereas the leaves of Laing's two bifolia in Edinburgh University Library vary between 255–60 x 200mm. The bifolia have been cut irregularly, and these measurements reflect their greatest dimensions. The cutting of the top edge of fols 4.5 from Quire 3 has left one tiny part close to the central fold line proud of the rest; this gives a full height of 260mm.²⁴ The height of the other Edinburgh bifolium, fols 2.7 from Quire 48, varies between 255–59mm. Similarly the height of the leaves of the other intact bifolium that survives from this quire (fols 4.5, now in St Andrews) is 263mm. The width of all of these detached leaves is consistently 200mm (400mm across the full width of the bifolia). It might be noted that a few prickmarks survive on

²² See, for example, fols 204–206v and 210–211, fols 306–308, and fol. 101v.

²³ The signature 'Alex^r Boswel[sic] | Auchinleck | 1740' appears on a paper flyleaf.

²⁴ Similar protuberances may be observed on two stubs in the bound manuscript, at the bottom of fol. 61a (1mm) and at the top of fol. 72a (4–5mm). This shows that at the time that they were cut out these leaves were larger, and the accidental turning in of these corners allowed their survival when the volume was trimmed down for a binding or re-binding.

the uppermost extreme outer edges of the St Andrews bifolium, providing an indication that the original size of the leaves in Auchinleck must have exceeded the dimensions of this one, if only by a small margin.²⁵

Certain reasonably clear inferences can be made about the history of the Auchinleck manuscript before Alexander Boswell presented it to the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh in 1744. Firstly, it seems that prior to its presentation the manuscript must have been in Scotland for some time, not in Lord Boswell's possession.²⁶ All the identified detached bifolia have a Scottish origin insofar as their provenance can be established. The provenance of the Senate House Library bifolium is not known, but the source was reported to be 'a Scots one of undisclosed identity'.²⁷ Laing's 'learned and reverend friend' who gave him the two Edinburgh bifolia also supplied him with the information that they had been used 'as covers of blank paper-books, which were purchased for notebooks by a Professor in the University of St Andrews before the middle of the last century'.²⁸ Laing's unnamed friend may have been John Lee, bibliophile, clergyman, and principal of Edinburgh University (1840–59). Lee was Professor of Church History at St Mary's College, St Andrews (1812–21) and briefly (1836–37)

²⁵ Cunningham notes that no prickmarks survive in the Auchinleck manuscript, p. xiv.

²⁶ Professor Priscilla Bawcutt has kindly pointed out that Boswell owned a number of Scots manuscripts. This appears to have been the only one of English origin that he had. Given the apparent focus of his collecting interests it seems possible that he found it in Scotland.

²⁷ Smithers, 'Another Fragment', p. 192. The fragment was donated by the London manuscript dealer, Miss Winifred Myers, in 1963. We are grateful for Dr Karen Attar, of Senate House Library, for her help on this point.

²⁸ i.e. before 1750, Laing, p. iii.

principal of the university there.²⁹ He regularly purchased books from Laing, but there are various references in their correspondence that denote a less commercial exchange of books and manuscripts.³⁰ Laing also did not name the professor, but the discovery of a third intact bifolium in St Andrews in 1946 by the university librarian George H. Bushnell allowed his identity to be revealed. The St Andrews bifolium, ms1034, had been used in an identical manner to the Edinburgh bifolia, as the cover of a notebook, and was in fact still in situ, allowing a connection to be drawn with the notebook's owner, Thomas Tullideph, principal of the university in the mid eighteenth century.³¹ The other section of the Auchinleck manuscript discovered in St Andrews, two parts of the same bifolium from *King Alexander*, ms1400 and ms1401, discussed further below, was found in the binding of a volume that came into the university's possession in 1620.

Secondly, all of these detached parts of Auchinleck have been cut down and used, in various ways, in the binding of other books, suggesting that the larger part of the manuscript was owned at some point before 1740 by a Scottish binder or binding shop. In the University of London bifolium 38 out of the

²⁹ Scandalously Lee failed to return books and manuscripts that belonged to the university library, see Norman H. Reid, *Ever to Excel: An Illustrated History of the University of St Andrews* (Dundee, 2011), pp. 126–27.

³⁰ Edinburgh University Library, Special Collections, La.IV.17, Letters from John Lee. For example, Lee wrote (27 January 1818): 'I send other four leaves (*which I do not wish to part with*) that you may tell me what they are. I am almost ^certain^ I have read the book to which they belong but when or where I do not know' (fol. 5351); and (24 July 1851): 'The accompanying vol. you will observe is in the same hand writing with that which you showed me yesterday' (fol. 5447); and (Wednesday 27 August [no year]): 'I send you a sight of the old MS book I mentioned' (fol. 5498).

³¹ George H. Bushnell, 'The Auchinleck Manuscript in the University Library', *College Echoes*, 60.4 (4 March 1949), 12–13.

normal 42 lines to a column survive. The outer pages are heavily stained, suggesting that they had been used in a binding. The Edinburgh detached bifolia and the intact St Andrews bifolium have been cut and shaped in the same fashion to form covers to other books of approximately 225–232 x 175–180mm, with a spine of 10–12mm in depth. The corners of the bifolia have been cut away and the edges turned in on all four sides, leaving a frame of deep fold lines along which there is some damage, and a clear difference in condition where the turn-ins were protected inside the book. In each case the side of the bifolium which formed the outer cover to the book shows much greater wear and staining; the inner side, which lay adjacent to the boards is rubbed and marked in some places with paste residue. The Edinburgh bifolia came to the library in 1878 as part of Laing's bequest. Laing had had them bound together and the front cover of his nineteenth-century binding is still kept with the fragments; it is not known what books these bifolia had covered. By contrast, the St Andrews bifolium was found still functioning as a cover to an originally blank paper notebook that its owner, Thomas Tullideph, had filled with notes on how citations from the Old Testament were used by the writers of the New Testament.³² The notebook was rebound in 1953 by Cockerell and Son, whose report, attached to the inside back cover, notes: 'Binding no covering material: pulp board very soft: sewn on three thin white thongs: paper of manuscript in good condition . . .'. There was no cover on the volume when Cockerell received it because Bushnell had had it removed: when his own assistant could not detach the bifolium from the notebook he sent

³² University of St Andrews, Special Collections, msBS2387.T8D34, Thomas Tullideph, 'Enquiry concerning the intention of the Evangelists and the writer of the book of Acts of the Apostles in quoting passages from the Old Testament'.

the volume down to the Bodleian Library where Neil Ker's 'Mr Wilmot' detached it.³³ However, an impression of what Tullideph's notebook looked like when its wrapper was still in place may be gained from another volume of his that has a similar covering. This second notebook, in which he compiled his 'Oration', is covered with a vellum bifolium taken from a fifteenth-century Italian manuscript.³⁴

Tullideph's use of these notebooks may be located very precisely to his tenure as Professor of Biblical Criticism at St Mary's College in St Andrews between 1734–39. Both volumes are written by his own hand and the 'Oration' is dated 25 November 1734. The notebooks are of similar dimensions and are made up from the same paperstocks bearing identical watermarks; both show traces of red fore-edging. Tullideph seems to have been in the habit of writing numbers on the spines of his notebooks in a reddish/brownish ink: the number '1' on the vellum covering of the 'Oration' is clearly visible, whereas that (possibly a '4') on the detached bifolium cover of the other notebook can now only be made out under ultra-violet light. Traces of similar numbers are situated close to the central fold lines of the two Edinburgh bifolia: a number '1' is discernible close to the top of the bifolium from *Adam and Eve*, and on the bifolium from *Richard Coeur de Lyon* a number that is perhaps an inverted '1' or '2' (the shape resembles a large 'c' with a flat top), lies near to the bottom of the

³³ Letter from George H. Bushnell to Neil R. Ker, 10 January 1949, and Ker's reply, 30 January 1949, University of St Andrews, Special Collections.

³⁴ University of St Andrews, Special Collections, msLF1119.A3T8 (ms1149), 'Oration of Thomas Tullideph, professor of biblical criticism at St Mary's College, University of St Andrews, with notes on the same'. The vellum covering has script by a North Italian hand; the text is a dialogue between Scaevola and Paulus.

centre fold.³⁵ This is further evidence that Laing's bifolia also originated from notebooks owned by Thomas Tullideph.

It is possible that Tullideph was in the habit of covering his own blank notebooks in this way, but far more likely that he bought them with ready-made vellum covers.³⁶ The use of manuscript waste for this purpose had a long history.³⁷ Parchment was a relatively expensive product that was worth recycling, and it was particularly suitable as a covering material for simple bindings, especially at the lower end of the market where it was used on blank books, account books, and school and university textbooks. Although the common use of manuscript waste in England was coming to an end by the middle of the seventeenth century, elsewhere in Europe the practice persisted for longer, as may well have been the case in Scotland where the later date of the Scottish Reformation and the slower establishment of printed book production may have led individuals and institutions to be slower in discarding old manuscripts. In England the obvious places to find binders using leaves of medieval manuscripts were the university towns of Oxford and Cambridge because of the large collections of manuscripts being deaccessioned from college libraries. There is no indication that similar purging took place at St Andrews,

³⁵ An indication that when this bifolium was used as a notebook cover it was oriented upside down; cf. the inverted placement of the vellum that still covers Tullideph's 'Oration' notebook (ms1149). We thank Mrs Rachel Hart for drawing our attention to the numbers on the St Andrews notebooks.

³⁶ Another volume that he used as a commonplace book in the period 1717–25 also has vellum covers, in this instance made from plain vellum, University of St Andrews, Special Collections, msLF1109.T8C6.

³⁷ See Nicholas Pickwoad, 'The Use of Fragments of Medieval Manuscripts in the Construction and Covering of Bindings on Printed Books', in *Interpreting and Collecting Fragments of Medieval Books*, ed. by Linda L. Brownrigg and Margaret M. Smith (Los Altos Hills, 2000), pp. 1–20.

and despite the discovery of another part of the Auchinleck manuscript in the university library there it seems unlikely that the shop of the 'ignorant binder' conjectured by Laing was located anywhere other than Edinburgh.³⁸ In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries St Andrews was too small, and the university too impoverished, for the local economy to support the enterprises of binding and printing. Further, Tullideph had been a student at Edinburgh University and had worked in the city for a time, and in 1719–20 his brother David was apprenticed to the Edinburgh bookseller James McQueen.³⁹

In any case the other fragment of the Auchinleck manuscript discovered in St Andrews clearly had a rather different history. The remnant consists of two narrow pieces cut from the same bifolium, fols 4.5 from Quire 40: ms1400, cut from across the top of the bifolium, measures 63 x 296mm; ms1401, a strip cut from across the middle section of the bifolium, measures 65 x 295mm.⁴⁰ These strips are cleaner and in better condition than the intact bifolia that functioned as the outer covers of books, because they were used as spine guards, and were therefore protected by their position inside the binding of the book. One of the strips was discovered by Neil Ker on a visit to St Andrews in 1946, and the librarian George Bushnell subsequently found its 'corresponding fragment under the end paper of the back board' of the same volume.⁴¹ The book is a copy of

³⁸ Laing, p. ii.

³⁹ Scottish Book Trade Index, <http://www.nls.uk/catalogues/scottish-book-trade-index>.

⁴⁰ These dimensions reflect the greatest measurements. Each of the strips has been cut at the top corners so that the upper edge is considerably smaller (250mm) than the bottom.

⁴¹ Letter from George H. Bushnell to G. V. Smithers, 23 March 1948, University of St Andrews, Special Collections.

Horace, printed in Paris in 1543.⁴² It was given to the university in 1620 as part of a donation organized by Sir John Scot of Scotstarvit to support his newly-established chair of Humanity at St Leonard's College. Scot himself presented nine works and persuaded over fifty friends to each donate one or two books on appropriately classical subjects from their own collections.⁴³ The result was a collection of eighty volumes, to which Scot added a few more in 1646; the books presented at the later date were specially bound in a uniform style, but no such uniformity was imposed on the earlier donation where the volumes largely retain the bindings of their original private owners.

The Horace was rebound by the Dundee firm Barnes and Harris in 1953, and most of the pointers that might date and localize its binding are hidden under modern endpapers that were added at that time; the single original endpaper at the front of the book bears no watermark.⁴⁴ Fortunately the old boards and covers were preserved and incorporated into the new binding, allowing some conclusions to be drawn about the binding in which the Auchinleck manuscript fragments were used. This was a simple British binding of the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century (1580s–1610s). Some details suggest that it might have been apprentice work: the running over of the single rule tool into the margin and down onto the board edge hints at the work of a novice binding decorator. Its utter plainness makes it hard to determine whether

⁴² University of St Andrews, Special Collections, Scot PA6393.A2B43, *Q. Horatii Flacci opera cum quatuor commentariis* (Paris: Oudini Petit, 1543).

⁴³ R. V. Pringle, 'Notes on the Scot Collection in St Andrews University Library', *The Bibliothek*, 7 (1974–75), 33–54, updated July 2011 and available at: <http://www.rvpmp.talktalk.net/biog.htm#SAUL>

⁴⁴ For detailed information about the binding of this particular volume, and about contemporary bindings in general we are indebted to Daryl Green.

it is English or Scottish, as by this date both localities had binderies that were capable of producing this type of covering; the sprinkled calf used is less typical of Scottish bindings, but not completely unknown. It is quite possible that this binding was the product of the London or Oxbridge book trade in continental books where books were either imported unbound, or temporarily bound and then rebound using local labour and taste once they were received. Some other books within the 1620 Scotstarvit donation display bindings of identifiable English provenance and others have continental bindings, probably arising from individual book buying during travel abroad.⁴⁵

The copy of Horace was given not by Scotstarvit himself, but by one of his friends, John Sandilands of Eastbarns, East Lothian. Sandilands, like many of this group of donors, was an advocate, a connection that leads back again to the environs of Edinburgh.⁴⁶ If Sandilands had obtained the book in Edinburgh, this would suggest that the Auchinleck manuscript had been in Scotland for a very long period – at least from the early seventeenth century, and perhaps some years before that.⁴⁷ Laing's recovery of some of the missing parts of Auchinleck led him to conclude:

⁴⁵ Some examples with contemporary English bindings include Francesco Guicciardini's *Historia d'Italia* (Basle, 1566), bound in London, and a copy of Flavio Blondi's *Roma instaurata* (Venice, ?1510), bound in Cambridge.

⁴⁶ Sandilands was admitted to the Faculty of Advocates 6 Nov. 1613, see *The Faculty of Advocates in Scotland 1532–1943*, ed. by Francis J. Grant (Edinburgh, 1944), p. 186.

⁴⁷ In a recently published essay, 'Sir Tristrem, a Few Fragments, and the Northern Identity of the Auchinleck Manuscript', in Fein, ed., *The Auchinleck Manuscript: New Perspectives*, pp. 108–26 (esp. pp. 121–26), Ann Higgins suggests that the manuscript may have reached Edinburgh by the mid-1560s, but her argument is undermined by a number of factual inaccuracies related to both date and location, and its conclusion is not secure.

... it may be conjectured that the volume had fallen into the hands of an ignorant binder, who was in the process of cutting it up for the purposes of his trade, when so many of the illuminations were taken out, as things of no value ...⁴⁸

The manuscript would have languished in this situation for over a century before Boswell rescued it. Alternatively, if Sandilands had obtained the book from England this would suggest that the disturbances to the Auchinleck codex had taken place on more than one occasion, and in more than one location.

In summary: it is evident that the detached bifolia which have been recovered were either cut down and used as binder's waste on books of Scottish origin, or were used in the binding of a book known to have had an early history in Scotland, but that was not necessarily bound north of the border. It seems reasonable to conclude therefore that successive mutilations of the Auchinleck manuscript occurred, some of which opportunities may have arisen after a failure or repeated failures in its binding structure.

These inferences and the evidence of the detached bifolia also raise a larger question about the binding of Auchinleck. None of these bifolia which afford the possibility of examination show any evidence of early sewing holes. The London bifolium is housed in a modern binding that precludes detailed investigation, but a number of sewing holes may be observed along the central fold lines of the intact St Andrews bifolium and the two Edinburgh bifolia. There are at least twelve holes, perhaps more, on the St Andrews bifolium, though dirt and wear and tear from its long use as an outer wrapper, and probable damage

⁴⁸ Laing, p. ii.

at the time of its removal from the notebook, make it difficult to discern any regular pattern in these. There are even more holes, of different sizes and shapes, on the two Edinburgh bifolia (though not occurring in the same pattern on each). Laing had these two bifolia bound in covers that were secured by three sewing stations, but even after these are discounted the Edinburgh bifolia still show more holes than the intact St Andrews bifolium (and in any case Laing's nineteenth-century binding may have reused some existing holes). Collectively the sewing holes in these three detached bifolia must represent evidence of a binding for Auchinleck that predated the plain eighteenth-century binding described by Laing, since these three bifolia were never themselves housed in that plain binding, having already become separated from the bulk of the manuscript before 1740. It remains unclear at what point this separation may have occurred but the presence of the name 'Walter Brown' on the intact St Andrews bifolium allows a rough approximation of a *terminus post quem*. The inscription in the top margin is in a set formal style of Secretary of the sixteenth century.⁴⁹ The same name, though not written by the same hand, occurs along with others from the Browne family on f. 107^r of Auchinleck, indicating that this bifolium at least (and most likely the other two as well, given their subsequent shared history) was still together with the rest of the manuscript in that period.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ A. I. Doyle, personal communication, 18 November 2015.

⁵⁰ Although the manuscript contains many inscribed names none have been identified. It might be noted that the Browne family mentioned here cannot be connected with the William Browne who collected manuscripts of Middle English verse in the seventeenth century; see A. S. G. Edwards, 'Medieval Manuscripts Owned by William Browne of Tavistock (1590/1?-1643/5?),' in *Books and Collectors 1200-1700: Essays presented to Andrew Watson*, ed. by James P. Carley and Colin G. C. Tite (London, 1997), pp. 441-49.

Conversely the two parts of the bifolium from *King Alexander* discovered in the binding of the sixteenth-century printed book are largely unmarked by sewing holes. Admittedly these provide a very small sample, comprising only three quarters of the top half (to a depth of 128mm) of a single bifolium. Nevertheless the central fold area is well preserved and readily visible in these fragments, and it is notably free from holes. A series of paired holes, 0.5mm apart and occurring at regular intervals of 55mm, runs across the lower horizontal axis of these strips, but this system arises from their reuse in the sixteenth-century binding; by coincidence on ms1400 one set of these holes falls across the vertical centre fold of the bifolium. There is no other evidence of sewing holes down that original central fold line, though in places there is cracking and some superficial damage. Amongst the missing sections of Auchinleck that have been recovered, this bifolium from *King Alexander* is the one that seems to have been the first to become detached from the main codex. Its lack of evidence of early sewing holes suggests the intriguing possibility that Auchinleck may have remained initially unbound once it was completed. Is it possible that the manuscript remained *in quaternia* for a lengthy period after its completion? If this were so it would offer a simple explanation for the circumstances that could have created the larger losses that now exist at the beginning and elsewhere within the manuscript.

There are some factors that offer a degree of support for such a possibility. The manuscript as originally constituted would have been a very large one, substantially in excess of four hundred leaves and possibly containing close to four hundred and fifty. The cost of binding would have been considerable. And since its contents fall, at least for some sections, into definable codicological units, or booklets, it may be that the original owner's intention was

not to bind but to make its local use more widespread by leaving it in these smaller units.⁵¹ These factors are not, of course, conclusive, but they may have a degree of circumstantial weight.⁵²

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⁵¹ The booklet structure is summarized by Pearsall and Cunningham, p. ix. For discussion of some of these units see A. S. G. Edwards, 'Codicology and Translation in the Early Sections of the Auchinleck Manuscript,' in Fein, ed., *The Auchinleck Manuscript: New Perspectives*, pp. 26–35. Evidence that such booklets might have circulated in such separate smaller forms would be signs unusually heavy wear on the outer leaves. Such heavy wear is only evident on the recto of the opening leaf and on fol. 326, the start of the booklet comprising *Richard Coeur du Lyon*. The fact that significant portions have now been lost from this work and also prior to fol. 1 may provide some support for our argument.

⁵² We are particularly grateful to Kenneth Dunn, Head of Archives & Manuscript Collections, National Library of Scotland, for allowing us direct access to the Auchinleck manuscript on several occasions.