

## Cambridge University Library MS Dd.8.2 and the Disappearing Fragment

*Julian Luxford*

### Introduction

This essay examines a physically complete manuscript which absorbed an older fragment in the process of its creation.<sup>1</sup> The manuscript, now Cambridge University Library, MS Dd.8.2, was begun in or around 1493 for use at the priory of Kington St Michael, a small nunnery in Wiltshire which was in financial terms among England's poorest religious houses at the time.<sup>2</sup> While the manuscript is not easily classified, the main reason for making it was a desire to provide the priory with a new obit-book: this occupies 13 leaves (fols 8v-20v) out of a total of 39. Before the calendar of obits there is a group of Latin and Middle English texts written out during the same period, while immediately after is an 18-leaf section, in two gatherings, made around 1310. This contains the text of the office of the dead and hours of the Virgin (of Sarum use), and is illuminated with miniatures, borders, and other decoration

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\* I am grateful to James Freeman for checking an important detail in the manuscript for me when I could not do so personally, to Tessa Webber for advice about the fourteenth-century hand in Dd.8.2, and to Tony Edwards for fruitful comments on a first draft of this essay. Any error is mine alone.

<sup>1</sup> The general catalogue entries are Henry R. Luard, *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, 6 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1856-67), 1:334-336, and a draft description by M. R. James, available via an online search under James's name and the manuscript number. The date 1493 comes from an inscription on fol. 9r. The date 1499 is mentioned on fol. 6v, and entries on fol. 7v, and in the obit-calendar, are later than this: these points are noted in context below. Compare Pamela R. Robinson, *Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts, c. 737-1600, in Cambridge Libraries*, 2 vols (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1988), no. 11 (estimating 1492-1506).

<sup>2</sup> In the early 1490s the priory had ten nuns. When dissolved in 1536 its annual net income was approximately £25: David Knowles, and R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales*, 2nd ed. (Harlow: Longman, 1971), 254, 260.

to an extremely high standard. The leaves of this earlier section are somewhat smaller than the fifteenth-century ones (roughly 350 x 230 mm as against 400 x 270 mm). At the end there is a further fifteenth-century leaf (fol. 39). All the leaves are of parchment and the whole is enclosed in a modern cardboard cover (*fig. 1*).

The arrangement of the two sections is evidently original, fols 2 and 39 belonging to a single sheet which acted as a wrap-around cover for the rest of the volume.<sup>3</sup> Both of these leaves have coats of arms and inscriptions relating to the production of the manuscript on their inner sides. Cataloguers of the fourteenth-century section have thus recognized Kington priory as its earliest known provenance.<sup>4</sup> Admittedly, one cannot be utterly certain of this, for there is no separate mark of ownership on fols 21-39, and no subsequent owner is recorded until the early eighteenth century. However, the original integrity of the manuscript is taken for granted here, because there is nothing to contradict it and no likelihood of a post-medieval confection of such parts and ordering. Three points may be added in support of this assumption, first, that the earlier section is textually and iconographically appropriate to the obit-calendar, second, that it is apparently referred to in a memorandum on fol. 11v (this is discussed below), and third, that the name of St Thomas of Canterbury, prominent in both parts of the manuscript, has not been crossed out in either of them (fols 15r, 20v, 32r).<sup>5</sup> This third point is significant because St Thomas's name was very commonly damaged in English manuscripts after Henry VIII ordered it to be "erased and put out of all books" in November

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<sup>3</sup> See the description by James cited in note 1.

<sup>4</sup> Lucy Freeman Sandler, *Gothic Manuscripts 1285-1385*, 2 vols (London: Harvey Miller, 1986), 2:35; Paul Binski, and Patrick Zutshi, *Western Illuminated Manuscripts: A Catalogue of the Collection in Cambridge University Library* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 128.

<sup>5</sup> The entries for St Thomas's feasts in the obit-calendar are in red, while a *memoria* of him in the hours after Lauds occupies almost half a column.

1538.<sup>6</sup> It is somewhat easier to accept that one volume containing the name escaped this damage than that two separate volumes brought together after 1538 did so.

On this understanding, a substantial fragment of a book of hours was given a fresh purpose in relation to a set of texts of distinctively local relevance almost two centuries after it was made. At this point, it lost its contingent status and fused with a larger whole. The specific goal of this essay is to try to understand this larger whole as a product of collaboration between a layman and a prioress of Kington in the years between 1492 and 1506 (the dates are explained in due course). Quite a lot of evidence for this can be gleaned from the manuscript's contents, some of which has been mentioned in previous scholarship. In particular, a record of the manuscript's donation to the priory by one John Baker has been noticed in relation to the fifteenth-century section. To date, however, nobody who has discussed Dd.8.2 has recognized who Baker actually was and hence how his status might contribute to understanding the manuscript as a whole. This is no criticism, of course, for past work has focussed on aspects of content in one or other of the manuscript's parts. Thus, art historians have concerned themselves exclusively with the illumination in the earlier section, while antiquaries and historians have concentrated on the fifteenth-century texts.<sup>7</sup> The Middle

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<sup>6</sup> See e.g. Eamon Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and their Prayers 1240-1570* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 150-152 (quotation at 151).

<sup>7</sup> The main sources to note, in order of publication-date, are John E. Jackson, "Kington St. Michael," *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*, 4 (1858): 36-128, at 60-67; Sandler, *Gothic Manuscripts*, no. 29; David N. Bell, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1995), 144-145; Julian M. Luxford, *The Art and Architecture of English Benedictine Monasteries, 1300-1540: A Patronage History* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2005), 5, 133, 192-193; Binski and Zutshi, *Western Illuminated Manuscripts*, no. 136; Nigel J. Morgan, "English Books of Hours c. 1240-c. 1480," in Sandra Hindman and James H. Marrow, eds, *Books of Hours Reconsidered* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2013), 65-95, at 67, 77, 80; Veronica O'Mara, "Nuns and Writing in Late Medieval England: The Quest Continues," in Virginia Blanton and Patricia Stoop, eds, *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Kansas City Dialogue* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 123-147, at 142-144. Antiquaries including William Dugdale and Thomas Tanner also noticed the manuscript, and it is cited without significant discussion in several other publications.

English material on fols 4v-6r has also been independently catalogued.<sup>8</sup> The approach taken here, which is motivated by curiosity about the unusual marriage of the two sections, is thus a fresh one.

## Contents

A description of the Kington manuscript is the clearest way to begin the investigation. For the sake of clarity, this is best given by distinguishing between the two sections, starting with the earlier one. In this, the office of the dead (fols 21r-27r) precedes the hours of the Virgin (fols 27v-38v). It opens with a large (13 lines high), historiated initial S, with a funeral procession in the lower compartment – four men bearing a shrouded coffin followed by a priest with an open book – and above, in the upper compartment, a dove-shaped soul borne up to heaven by angels in a white cloth (*figs. 2, 3*). The page also has a decorative border on three sides, plus other decorative elements, including bas-de-page imagery. The opening sequence, beginning “Subvenite sancti dei,” has music on a four-line stave. Here and throughout, the script is a uniform *textura prescissa*, painstakingly decorated with hairline “spurs” (Malcolm Parkes’s term for such features) that descend from the feet of practically every letter.<sup>9</sup> The hours are more copiously illuminated, each one having a historiated initial, border, and ancillary decoration including marginal figures, animals and hybrids. Nigel Morgan has indicated the relationship of the initials to the iconography of English books of hours in general.<sup>10</sup> Here it

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<sup>8</sup> Margaret Connolly, *Index of Middle English Prose, Handlist XIX: Manuscripts in the University Library, Cambridge (Dd-Oo)* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), 38-39; Julia Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards, *A New Index of Middle English Verse* (London: British Library, 2005), nos 241, 981, 1790.5, 3231; see also Henry A. Person, ed., *Cambridge Middle English Lyrics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1953), 2-3, 59.

<sup>9</sup> Malcolm B. Parkes, *Their Hands Before Our Eyes: A Closer Look at Scribes* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 104. I owe this reference to Tessa Webber.

<sup>10</sup> Morgan, “English Books of Hours,” 67, 77, 80.

is enough to note the subjects and sizes: the Annunciation at Matins (fol. 27v, 12 lines high); the Nativity at Lauds (fol. 29v, 5 lines); Christ before Pilate at Prime (fol. 33r, 9 lines: as are the rest); the Flagellation at Terce (fol. 34v); Christ carrying the Cross at Sext (fol. 35r); the Crucifixion at None (fol. 36r); the Deposition from the Cross at Vespers (fol. 37r); the Entombment at Compline (fol. 37v).

It is worth emphasizing the quality and ambition of the illumination, which ranks with the most skilful and aesthetically refined English work of the later Middle Ages. There is no armorial decoration included in it, and nothing else to indicate original patronage, although the manuscript must have resulted from a commission.<sup>11</sup> As usual in prayerbooks of such quality, there are no later marginal additions, and none of the images has been damaged by fingering or other contact. The good condition of the first and last pages shows that they cannot have been exposed for any length of time before the fragment was combined with its fifteenth-century counterpart. This means that something – guard-leaves, perhaps, or an independent wrapper or envelope – is likely to have been removed when Dd.8.2 was made.<sup>12</sup> The alternative, that an exquisite, textually current prayerbook was broken up at this time for reuse, seems unlikely.

The fifteenth-century material is bracketed by the coats of arms and inscriptions on fols 2v (*fig. 4*) and 39r (*fig. 1*).<sup>13</sup> In each case there are two large and heraldically similar

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<sup>11</sup> In terms of where it was made, the nearest one can get is the north or central Midlands, on the basis of artistic links to the Tickhill Psalter group of manuscripts: see Sandler, *Gothic Manuscripts*, nos 26, 27, 29; Lucy Freeman Sandler, “Psalter (Tickhill Psalter),” in J. J. G. Alexander, James H. Marrow and Lucy Freeman Sandler, eds, *The Splendour of the Word: Medieval and Renaissance Illuminated Manuscripts in The New York Public Library* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2005), 201-20; also Binski and Zutshi, *Western Illuminated Manuscripts*, no. 136.

<sup>12</sup> Pinholes over the initials on fols 21r and 27v indicate that these initials were once individually veiled. However, in the case of fol. 21r, the whole page is equally well preserved.

<sup>13</sup> Folio 1 is a paper leaf of uncertain age.

shields painted in the centre of the page, the same pair being shown on both pages. They indicate a silver field (with the bare parchment doing duty for silver paint) divided horizontally by a black indented band with three rampant lions above and six ermine spots below.<sup>14</sup> Inscriptions in red identify these: “A John Elys la ffiz eigne;” and “A Thomas Elys la ffiz puisne.” (“[The arms] of John Elys, the elder son;” and “of Thomas Elys, the younger son.”)<sup>15</sup> “Ihesu haue mercy on the soule of John Baker” is written above the shields. On fol. 2v this is accompanied by other inscriptions, again in red: “John Elys” and “John Baker” above “Humanum est cadere / id est peccare / set diabolicum est perseuerare / id est continuare.” (“To fall down, i.e. to sin, is human, but it is evil to persist, i.e. to continue, thus.”)<sup>16</sup> The incipits of two prayers for absolution also entered here in the same hand reinforce the penitential tone. The combination of three names and two coats of arms is potentially confusing unless one realizes that John Baker and John Elys were the same man, the son of Richard Elys, a baker of Langport in Somerset, and that Thomas Elys was John’s younger brother.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Those on the left are *Argent, a fess engrailed between in chief three lioncels sable armed and langued gules and in base six ermine spots*. The on the right are differenced by a *chief azure three lioncels or*.

<sup>15</sup> On fol. 39r the word “frere” (“brother”) is used instead of “ffitz.”

<sup>16</sup> In fact, a literal English translation obscures the rhythm (and thus mnemonic purpose) of this. Note that most abbreviated words are expanded silently in this essay.

<sup>17</sup> John Baker, *The Men of Court, 1440-1550: A Prosopography of the Inns of Court and Chancery and the Courts of Law*, 2 vols, Selden Society supplementary series, 18 (London: Selden Society, 2012), 1:255-256; also Robert W. Dunning and Thomas D. Tremlett, eds, *Bridgewater Borough Archives: V, 1468-1485*, Somerset Record Society, 70 (Frome: Butler and Tanner, 1971), nos 958, 959 (“Johanni Elys alias dicto Johanni Baker de Lamport” in the year 1479); Luxford, *Art and Architecture*, 192. For the use by one man of two surnames in relation to book-history see John B. Friedman, *Northern English Books, Owners and Makers in the Late Middle Ages* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 70-71. An identification of the name John Elys in Dd.8.2 with a London stationer is a mistake: for this see C. Paul Christianson, “Evidence for the Study of London’s Late Medieval Manuscript-Book Trade,” in Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall, eds, *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 87-108, at 101, 108, note 45. (This is worth mentioning as it has got into the literature.)

Folios 3r to 4r contain historical material in Latin, written out in the same hand and the same red and black inks as used for the inscriptions accompanying the coats of arms. Some of the contents are helpful for understanding the manuscript as a whole, and more is said about them later on. First come the six ages of the world and significant dates of Christ and the Virgin Mary, followed by a list of events in English history from AD 63 until the reign of Egbert, king of Wessex (d. 839), who (as commonly) is called the first king of England. This text soon narrows to a register of kings that gives only the lengths of their reigns and burial-places, although, as noted below, the entries for Stephen and Richard I are expanded in locally significant ways. The last king recorded is Henry VII, but merely by name, indicating that the manuscript was made before 1509. Then come texts relating to the chapterhouse, where the obit-calendar was used.<sup>18</sup> Folio 4v contains the customs for admitting men and women to the confraternity of the priory, which involved swearing upon and kissing the manuscript during a ceremony in the chapterhouse, while fol. 5r-v gives the procedure for inducting a nun into the convent, also a chapterhouse ritual. This material is in Middle English except for the formulas for recital by the priest: the scribal hand has now changed. Folio 6r has a litany and penitential verses, all in the vernacular.<sup>19</sup> These were evidently for use in the chapterhouse, too, but are personalized by a heading that reminds the reader that Katherine Moleyns was professed a nun at Shaftesbury and is now prioress at Kington. At the end are two couplets commemorating Baker and Moleyns, to be recited after the prayers.

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<sup>18</sup> Kington's chapterhouse was a rectangular room measuring about 7.6 meters wide by 5.2 meters deep. Built in the early thirteenth century, it was not vaulted and probably quite plain: see Harold Brakspear, "Excavations at Some Wiltshire Monasteries," *Archaeologia* 73 (1922-1923): 225-252, at 248 and phased plan. These facts are given merely to evoke the setting of the manuscript's use.

<sup>19</sup> The litany is an abbreviated Sarum one containing no unusual features.

Moleyns is noticed again at the head of fol. 6v, where the bishop of Salisbury's letter appointing her to the vacancy caused by resignation of the previous prioress is copied.<sup>20</sup> Then, on fols 6v-7r, comes a Latin reckoning ("Extenta") of the priory's lands, tenements, meadows, pastures, and woods, drawn up by Moleyns in Lent of 1499, appended to which is a list in English of tithes due to the convent (fol. 7v) written in a later hand. Folio 8v has "The prayers and suffrages for the living and dead to be said in the chapterhouse," all in Latin and with the headings and incipits in red.<sup>21</sup> Individuals to be prayed for daily are named, including the secular founders of the house and certain bishops of Bath and Wells. This introduces the obit-calendar, which opens with a solemn heading in Latin stating that the calendar was renewed ("renovatur") by Moleyns in Lent 1493.<sup>22</sup> The calendar itself is a Sarum one, with no non-Sarum features except the addition of St Genevieve ("Genouefe") on 3 January in an untidy hand (fol. 9r) and St Botulph ("Bothulfi") on 17 June (fol. 14v).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The letter (not the copy) is dated 9 April 1492: it was issued by Thomas Langton, bishop of Salisbury from 1485 to 1493. Jackson, "Kington St. Michael," 59-60, prints a translation of it.

<sup>21</sup> Fol. 8r is blank.

<sup>22</sup> "Kalendare dierum Obitus ffundatorum, ffratrum et sororum, ac aliorum, benefactorum, Priorisse ac Conuentus monasterij de Kyngton in Commitatu Wiltshire renovatur per Katerinam Moleyns Priorissam in quadragesimum, Anno Domini Millesimo CCCCLxxxxiiij, et anno ix Henrici septimi." ("Calendar of the obit-days of the founders, brothers, sisters and others, benefactors, of the prioress and convent of the monastery of Kington in the county of Wiltshire, renewed by Katherine Moleyns, prioress, in Lent AD 1493, the ninth year of Henry VII.")

<sup>23</sup> St Genevieve was commemorated at Shaftesbury, so the addition may possibly be linked to Moleyns. The spelling, with an "f," is a recognized one: see Nigel J. Morgan, ed., *English Monastic Litanies of the Saints after 1100*, 3 vols, Publications of the Henry Bradshaw Society, 119, 120, 123 (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2007-2018), 3:129. In light of this essay's concern with Moleyns, it is worth noting a point of interest made in a confused way by M. R. James (see note 1 above). On fol. 18r, the feast of the Translation of St Edward on 13 October is in red. This is anomalous for a Sarum feast of three lessons, and all the other feasts in red in Dd.8.2 are graded more highly. James explained the use of red by pointing to the veneration of St Edward the Martyr at Shaftesbury "whence Kath. Moleyns came." However, the feast on 13 October is that of Edward the Confessor's, not Edward the Martyr's, translation. It seems possible, and even likely, that the scribe was operating on Moleyns's instructions, but picked the wrong feast: the Martyr's translation, identically worded ("Translacio sancti Edwardi regis"), is on fol. 14v (20 June), but not in red. The scribe who drew up the calendar made a palpable mistake on fol. 17v by writing the wrong saint's name (Remigius) for 17 September. Interestingly, instead of erasing his mistake, the



Altogether, there are entries on 149 days of the year, including 236 names: the entries are in several hands and in Latin or English, depending, apparently, on scribal preference (*fig. 5*).<sup>24</sup> There are also three memoranda, one recording the dedication of the priory church's high altar to the Virgin Mary in March 1435 (fol. 11r), the other two about John Baker's dealings with the convent (fol. 11v), and mentioned again below.

### **The Manuscript as a Product of Collaboration**

In terms of production, the most interesting aspects of content are those which relate to Moleyns and Baker. Itemizing these gives a sharper sense of these individuals' personal stake in the manuscript, although it should be held in mind that the figure of the prioress may be hard to separate from that of the convent she represented. As noted above, Moleyns is commemorated at the end of the verses on fol. 6r, where she is effectively partnered with Baker: "John Baker of Briggewater / Criste helpe the nowe and euer Amen. / And dame Kateryne Moleyns also / To the blysshe of heuen þat she may go Amen." Next comes the bishop of Salisbury's letter on fol. 6v, establishing her mandate and identifying her as a nun who professed at Shaftesbury: this is followed by the overview of the priory's estate, where Moleyns's responsibility as compiler ("de nouo factum per Katerinam Moleyns") is specified in a bold heading. The inscription at the beginning of the obit-calendar is an even franker declaration of her agency, as it is written out in a large hand in *textura script*. More subtle, perhaps, is the inclusion of the abbess of Shaftesbury among those still living to be prayed for in the chapterhouse (fol. 8v): this was surely added at Moleyns's direction, as the priory had

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right name (Lambert) was written onto a separate piece of parchment and stitched (rather crudely) on top, indicating that the scribe was squeamish about erasing a saint's name (*fig. 5*).<sup>24</sup> Printed in modern English, often abbreviated, by Jackson, "Kington St. Michael," 61-67. One of the entries is a collective mind for the bishops of Salisbury (8 January). Several erased entries (on fols 9v, 11v, 12v, 14r) are not counted here.

no enduring obligation to Shaftesbury by virtue of patronage, as it did to Canterbury, Winchester, Salisbury, and Glastonbury, whose prelates are also named here. Shaftesbury is mentioned in the annals on fol. 3v, too, probably for the same reason.

Of John Baker, there is plenty to add to the coats of arms already noticed. His name or cognomen (i.e. John Elys) appears twenty-one times on twelve different pages of the manuscript.<sup>25</sup> Both are written in red ink at the feet of fols 3r and 8v. On fol. 4v, after it has been noted that newly inducted brothers and sisters will dine together with the convent, one finds “And Criste blesse them Amen quod John Baker.” At the base of the same page is the plea “Ihesu haue mercy on the soule of John Baker,” also found with the coats of arms, and further repeated on fols 9r, 11v, 18v, 19r, and 20v. On fol. 9r, above the solemn heading, “Kington in Com. Wiltes. / Baker of Briggewater” is inscribed, once more in red. Then there is the prayer on fol. 6r, noted above, in which he is partnered with the prioress. More Baker references come up in the obit-calendar, including a collective commemoration on 27 June (fol. 14v) which names the following: Richard Elys Baker and his wife Joan (John’s parents); Thomas Baker and Joan his wife (John’s younger brother, alias Thomas Elys, and his wife); John Baker and Joan, Margaret and Joan, his wives (showing he was thrice married); and one William Baker, “late parson of Petworth in Sussex.” Presumably, this was the date on which the *pater familias* had died.<sup>26</sup> There is no individual entry for John on another date.

The memoranda on fol. 11v are particularly informative about Baker’s relationship to both the manuscript and the priory, and have been noted several times in the past for this

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<sup>25</sup> To summarize: it is John Elys five times (fols 2v twice, 3r, 8v, 39r) and John Baker sixteen times (fols 2v twice, 3r, 4v twice, 6r, 8v, 9r twice, 11v twice, 14v, 16v, 19r, 20v, 39r).

<sup>26</sup> William was evidently a relative. Other Baker entries in the calendar are: 24 August, Joan, John’s wife (probably the first Joan: fol. 16v); 7 September, John’s mother (fol. 17r); 2 November, Margaret, John’s second wife (fol. 19r); 19 November, Joan, John’s sister-in-law (fol. 19v).

reason.<sup>27</sup> They are written in a single hand, one in Latin, the other in English. The first, located next to the calendar entry for 25 March, is a record of John and Joan Baker's admission to the confraternity of the priory. "Johannes Baker de Briggewater et Johanna vxor eius admissi sunt in fratrem et sororem huius domus in die annunciacionis beate Marie anno domini Mccccclxxxvij et anno regni Regis Henrici vij xiiij." ("John Baker of Bridgewater and Joan his wife were admitted to this house as brother and sister in the feast of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary in the year of our Lord 1498 and the thirteenth year of the reign of King Henry VII.") The second is written at the bottom of the page and is worth giving in full:<sup>28</sup>

In the days of Dam Kateryne Moleyns prioeres here, John Baker yaue to thus hovse of Mynchyn Kyngton a bone of seint Christopher closed yn cloth of golde a noble relyke; Thus boke for to be there mortilage; A book of seyntis lyves yn Englysshe;<sup>29</sup> a spruse tabell and a cobberd þat be yn there parler; The mendyng and renewyng of a oolde masboke of theres; A ffetherbedde, a bolster, a pylowe and ij feire coverlettes; The halfe of the money þat was payed for the image of seint Savyor stondyng upon the awter yn there quere, and for the images of seint Mighel and seint Kateryne yn seint James chapell;<sup>30</sup> Also the avter cloth of the salutacion of oure Lady beyng yn seint James chapell; And iij yerdis of canvass annexed thereto to lye upon the avter; A tester and a seler þat hangeth over my ladyes bedde;<sup>31</sup> A Greyhale;<sup>32</sup> A ffaire

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<sup>27</sup> See Jackson, "Kington St. Michael," 62-63, note 3; Brakspear, "Excavations at Some Wiltshire Monasteries," 245; Luxford, *Art and Architecture*, 5 and plate 2; O'Mara, "Nuns and Writing," 142-143.

<sup>28</sup> I have inserted the semicolons.

<sup>29</sup> Not an uncommon gift to nuns: see Bell, *What Nuns Read*, 122, 143 (two examples), 148, 155, 225.

<sup>30</sup> "seint Savyor" refers to Christ; "image" almost certainly refers to a sculpture.

<sup>31</sup> This evidently means the prioress's bed. If so then the pronoun 'my' refers to the scribe, whoever he or she was.

<sup>32</sup> I.e. a gradual.

matinsboke with dirige and many goode prayers; A dozen of rovne pevter dysshes with heires.”<sup>33</sup>

Several facts and inferences about the date and coherence of the manuscript arise from this information. First, it shows that Baker gave the manuscript sometime between 1492 to 1506, these being the “days” of Katherine Moleyns’s rule.<sup>34</sup> One also learns that he intended it for the express purpose to which it was put, “mortilage” being a synonym for obit-book. This makes it seem likely that he knew the prioress wanted a book for her renewed obit-calendar and was responding to a request for one. A significant reason for thinking this is that other things mentioned in the list also suggest discussion between Baker and the convent (via Moleyns) about the priory’s material needs, namely, the repair of a missal, payment for half of a new set of images for the nuns’ church, and donation of textiles for the prioress’s bed.

If the 1493 date for the renewal of the obit-calendar given on fol. 9r refers to the copy in Dd.8.2, which seems a reasonable assumption, then the book had been at the priory for five or six years by the time Baker was made a brother. The fact that the material on fols 6v-7r was written in or after 1499 may mean that the manuscript was left unbound for some time after it was given. But it seems likely to have contained the same number of leaves when it arrived at Kington as it currently has. Excluding the wrap-around fols 2 and 39, the fifteenth-century section is made up of three gatherings of six leaves each, the second and third of which are taken up by the obit-calendar. As noted, the leaves of the first gathering (fols 3-8) are largely occupied either with text in the hand of the inscriptions on fols 2v and 39r, which were almost certainly written when the manuscript was donated, or by material relating to rituals performed in the chapterhouse.

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<sup>33</sup> I.e. pewter dishes with ‘ears’ (?handles).

<sup>34</sup> David Smith, ed., *The Heads of Religious Houses, England and Wales: III, 1377-1540* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 660.

This judgement about the manuscript's structural coherence extends to the fourteenth-century section, which seems to be independently listed in the memorandum as the "matinsboke." There are three reasons for thinking this item likely to refer to the older part of Dd.8.2, as opposed to a separate primer. First, the description of it, naming the office of the dead before the "prayers," corresponds to the ordering of texts as it stands in the manuscript, which is not the normal ordering in a book of hours.<sup>35</sup> Second, the description accounts for all three textual elements: the office ("dirige"), the hours ("matins") and the *memoriae* on fols 31v-33r ("prayers"), each of the latter opening with the rubric "oracio." Third, this section of the book is appropriately called "fair." If this identification is accepted, then the decision to bind it with the larger booklet intended for the obit-calendar and other material may have rested with either Baker or Moleyns. Possible alternatives are that the fourteenth-century section is included silently in the second item on the list, or else was already at Kington when Baker bestowed his gifts, in which case the decision to include it was probably taken by the prioress. At any rate, a book beginning with the office of the dead made a rational counterpart to an obit-book due to its moral and memorial associations. The large image of a funeral procession on fol. 21r is perfectly sympathetic to the commemorative notices it follows (*figs. 2 and 3*).

Such speculation about individual responsibility for bringing the two parts together hardly disguises the fact that the manuscript was effectively produced through a process of collaboration that involved both mutual and independent interests. As such it was unusual:

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<sup>35</sup> For anyone unfamiliar with the textual structure of books of hours, a convenient illustration of this point may be had from Sandler, *Gothic Manuscripts*. This lists only two cases in which the office of the dead precedes the hours and *memoriae* (nos 11b, 15): in the second of these, the leaves are "badly out of order" (2:25). Twenty-one manuscripts with the texts in the normal order are listed (nos 5, 31, 37, 47, 53, 67, 77, 88, 89, 98, 111, 116, 118, 135, 138, 140, 142, 145, 146, 149, 154). To these, Kathleen L Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts 1390-1490*, 2 vols (London: Harvey Miller, 1996), adds twenty-three (nos 7, 29, 33, 37, 47-49, 52, 54, 55, 56, 72, 80, 81, 88, 92, 100, 108, 109, 113, 123, 126, 128) but no counterexample.

the surviving evidence suggests that the donors of books to English religious houses usually had nothing directly to do with their gifts after the event.<sup>36</sup> This may have been the case with the gradual and collection of saints' lives in English that Baker provided. But the obit-book offered him better scope to embed himself in the rememorative conscience of the nuns and their priests than almost anything else he might have given, due to the context, frequency, and duration of its use. The inscriptions relating to him, which are in at least three hands, were evidently added at different times between 1492 and his death (which occurred sometime between 1506 and 1508).<sup>37</sup> The book served Katherine Moleyns in much the same way, enabling her to advertise her role as an effective leader who had reorganized the priory's spiritual and temporal affairs. Here, in the testimony to what she did, and on whose authority, is a lasting reflection of her energies and good faith, and *ipso facto* the integrity of the convent she represented. Seen like this, the manuscript has characteristics that would be expected of a prioress's account-book or register.

In material terms, attracting or cultivating John Baker's patronage may have been Moleyns's greatest achievement. The means by which she was introduced to him are unknown, but some broadly suggestive facts have survived. On the surface of things, it is not obvious why a man based in Bridgewater and Langport in Somerset, each about 60 miles south-west of Kington, would show such enthusiasm for a small, rural nunnery. Nothing in the obit-calendar suggests Baker was following an ancestral precedent, and there was a world of commemorative options available to him between the two places. However, Baker, a lawyer who moved between the West Country and London, was under-sheriff of Wiltshire in

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<sup>36</sup> Of course, a large number of the books in question were bequeathed. For examples of prayerbooks given and bequeathed to English nunneries, see Bell, *What Nuns Read*, 106, 120-123, 126-127, 131, 133, 135-137, 139-143, 147-148, 150-154, 156-157, 161-163, 165-167, 199-200, 210, 212-215. Like Dd.8.2, fols 21-38, many of these were illuminated.

<sup>37</sup> Baker, *Men of Court, 1440-1550*, 1:256, dates Baker's death to "1506/08." No will has been found for Baker.

1487, which could have brought Kington to his notice. He also had links to Glastonbury, where he is recorded as bailiff of the abbey's liberty from 1482: the same abbey owned the manor of Kington and was regarded by the nuns as a spiritual protector.<sup>38</sup> Baker may also have had some broader association with Katherine Moleyns's family, for in September 1493, a John Baker was among several witnesses to the will of one Margery Moleyns of Bruton (Somerset), a town about 35 miles south of Kington.<sup>39</sup> In whatever way the connection arose, Baker's gift of a book intended to receive texts that bore Moleyns's name, plus other gifts that symbolized the restored status of the priory, imply her skill at exploiting a rare opportunity. As indicated above, it seems clear that Baker was responding to Moleyns's request for things that were lacking when she became prioress, rather than simply supplying what he did without consultation.

As well as providing evidence for pragmatic collaboration between Moleyns and Baker, the manuscript suggests a subtler correspondence of their interests and knowledge. This relates to their links to Glastonbury and involves both the annals on fols 3r-4r and the illumination of the hours of the Virgin. To begin with, it seems clear enough that the annals were copied from Kington materials, rather than being present in the manuscript when Baker provided it.<sup>40</sup> The reasons for this are, first, that the priory is named in them, and, secondly, that they imply an interest in Glastonbury abbey which is more likely to reflect the convent's allegiances and the piecemeal nature of its records than guesses on Baker's part about what might interest the nuns. Glastonbury owned land in Kington from the tenth century until its

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<sup>38</sup> Glastonbury is about 40 miles south-west of Kington. For Baker's employment, which included serving as Member of Parliament for Bridgewater in 1491/2, see Baker, *Men of Court, 1440-1550*, 1:255-256. Baker is called "Gentilman" and "de Lamport" as well as bailiff in the bill of privilege copied in Kew, The National Archives, E13/167, membrane 68d. This document can be accessed via <<http://aalt.law.uh.edu/>>.

<sup>39</sup> Kew, The National Archives, PROB 11/10/145.

<sup>40</sup> At first glance it might seem otherwise, because, as noted, they are written in the same hand and inks as the inscriptions around the coats of arms. But the arms could easily have arrived at the priory without inscriptions, or for that matter been painted at Kington.

dissolution in 1539, for most of which period its abbot was chief proprietor and thus lord of the manor. His holdings there in the early sixteenth century amounted to 2723 acres, plus a ‘fayre’ manor house. This made him landlord-in-chief of the priory, which seems to have inspired loyalty on the nuns’ part, possibly because both houses were Benedictine.<sup>41</sup> The nuns’ interest in Glastonbury was evidently strong at the end of the fifteenth century, and was directly implicated in Moleyns’s appointment. The previous prioress was dismissed in 1491 for commissioning a forged letter, purporting to be from Pope Innocent VIII, by which the abbot was made Visitor of the priory instead of the bishop of Salisbury, who was the legal Visitor. The ruse was detected, the prioress demoted, and Moleyns supplied to the vacancy.<sup>42</sup> This may, of course, have as much to do with dislike of the bishop and his officials as affection for the abbot: one cannot tell. But the annals are an independent witness to the convent’s interests, in terms of both content and the fact that, with a few generic exceptions like the coming of the Vikings and the Norman Conquest, nothing else is recorded in them except the names, dates and burial-places of kings.

The first annal, for AD 63, is about Joseph of Arimathea and his followers, “who bore Jesus down from the cross” (“qui tulerunt Ihesum a cruce”). On their arrival in Britain, “which is now called England,” they founded an oratory dedicated to the Virgin in the Isle of Avalon, “now called Glastonbury.” Arviragus, then king of Britain, permitted this out of respect and love for Christ, though he remained a pagan. The chapel was built fifteen years after the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. The next annal is for AD 166, where the conversion of King Lucius to Christianity by Phagan and Deruvian is recorded. These saints, called “monachi et cardinales,” are said to have repaired the oratory at Glastonbury (fol. 3r). Later

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<sup>41</sup> Aelred Watkin, ed., *The Great Chartulary of Glastonbury*, 3 vols, Somerset Record Society, 59, 63, 64 (Frome: Butler and Tanner, 1947-1956), 3:650-659; Jackson, “Kington St. Michael,” 37-42; Peter Clery, *The Wealth and Estates of Glastonbury Abbey at the Dissolution in 1539* (Sutton Bridge: Curlew Publishers, 2003), 32-33.

<sup>42</sup> Jackson, “Kington St. Michael,” 56-59.



on, in King Stephen's time (1135-54), it is noted how Henry of Blois was made abbot, and that, after reigning there for a period, he became bishop of Winchester as well, whence he governed manfully for forty-three years, doing the abbey much good (fol. 3v). Then, after the notice of Richard I, the Savaric controversy – perhaps the most humiliating episode in Glastonbury's history – is sketched out. Savaric, bishop of Bath, obtained the abbacy and ruled for twenty-six years, demoting Glastonbury to the status of a priory.<sup>43</sup> In 1219, sometime after his death and during the episcopacy of Jocelin, his successor, the pope restored the abbey to its pristine state, revoking everything prejudicial to it and restoring its right to elect its own abbots. The monks' choice fell on William Chapeleyn (i.e. William of St Vigor), who became first abbot after the monastery's reformation (fol. 4r).

Tucked into this account is a notice about a benefit conferred by Savaric on Kington priory, although for some reason much of it has been erased.<sup>44</sup> "Kynngton" is written in red in the margin next to this. What was erased may be recorded in the obit-book under 9 January, where Savaric is remembered for having confirmed an earlier grant to the priory of the advowson of a parish church (Twerton, near Bath): he is also named on fol. 8v among the dead benefactors to be prayed for in chapter throughout the year. The attitude to Savaric reflected in the manuscript is thus Kington's rather than Glastonbury's, although most of the information in the annals probably comes from the abbey's partisan domestic chronicle, which was much copied and widely distributed.<sup>45</sup> A final point of local relevance to note is

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<sup>43</sup> In fact, Savaric only ruled the abbey for twelve years (1193-1205).

<sup>44</sup> "Et idem Savaricus medio tempore [...] sanctis monialibus de Kynngton in Com. Wiltes [...] et successoribus suis imperpetuum." ("Meanwhile, the same Savaric [...] to the nuns of Kington in the county of Wiltshire and to their successors forever.")

<sup>45</sup> See James P. Carley, ed., and David Townsend, trans., *The Chronicle of Glastonbury Abbey: An Edition, Translation and Study of John of Glastonbury's Cronica sive Antiquitates Glastoniensis Ecclesie* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1985), xi-xx (copying and distribution), 2-3, 38-39, 56-59 (Joseph of Arimathea; Lucius; Phagan and Deruvian as "monks and cardinals"); 164-167 (Henry of Blois); 184-207 (Savaric controversy; the abbey's restoration etc.); also James P. Carley, *Glastonbury Abbey: The Holy House at the*

that the entry for King Alfred (d. 899) has an added but contemporary memorandum stating that he founded an abbey at Shaftesbury in Dorset for nuns and another at Athelney in Somerset for monks (fol. 3v). As other kings in the list are not credited with their religious foundations, this appears, as already suggested, to reflect Katherine Moleyns's personal loyalties.

It is worth emphasizing that historical material of this sort was not required in an obit-book, and that its presence thus reflects a decision about what would convey the values of the house. These annals are not simply a "filler" text inserted for lack of something better. Rather, they were included in a special book that expressed conventual *esprit de corps* because their contents were thought suitable to its purposes and functions. In light of their local inflection, the decision to include them was probably taken by the prioress, who may have been influenced by the arrangement of an earlier manuscript which this one replaced. But they also reflect John Baker's interests: they are in a book that embodied his spiritual ambitions, his arms and supplications are juxtaposed with the annals' opening page, and his name and cognomen are written in red on that page. What is more, he must have known the things about Glastonbury recorded on fol. 3r by virtue of his employment as bailiff of the abbey's liberty. The jurisdiction he oversaw was an area of land stretching east and west from Glastonbury – the Twelve Hides – supposedly given by Arviragus to Joseph of Arimathea and his disciples.<sup>46</sup> Joseph's foundation of the abbey was vigorously promoted at Glastonbury in the late fifteenth century as the basis of a growing cult.<sup>47</sup> There is even a contemporary

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*Head of the Moors Adventurous* (Glastonbury: Gothic Image Publications, 1996), 65, 69-70 (copying and distribution of chronicle).

<sup>46</sup> This was widely recognized, to the extent that it was advanced as part of a claim about the precedence of the English Church at the Council of Constance in 1417: Valerie M. Lagorio, "The Evolving Legend of St Joseph of Glastonbury," *Speculum* 46 (1971), 209-231, at 221-222, 225.

<sup>47</sup> Walter W. Skeat, ed., *Joseph of Arimathea: otherwise called The Romance of the Seint Graal, or Holy Grail*, Early English Text Society, o. s. 44 (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1871); Lagorio, "The Evolving Legend of St Joseph," 229-230; Carley, *Glastonbury*

image of him carrying the phials of holy blood he was believed to have brought to Glastonbury in a window of the parish church at Langport, Baker's native town.<sup>48</sup> While Baker's personal knowledge may not have determined inclusion of the Glastonbury material in Dd.8.2, recognition at Kington of his involvement with the abbey probably made its inclusion seem the more fitting to Moleyns.

Two of the miniatures in the hours represent Joseph of Arimathea (fols 37r, 37v). In the first, for Vespers, he is shown lifting Christ's body down from the cross, as he is reported to have done in the annals (*fig. 6*). In the second, for Compline, he anoints Christ's body as it lies in the tomb with liquid poured from a phial: he is helped by St Peter, who supports the body under the arms, and by Nicodemus, who anoints the feet (*fig. 7*). There is a bearded figure in the margin near this second miniature, holding up a golden phial which highlights Joseph's defining attribute. While the presence of these images may be considered no more than coincidental in relation to the annals, their reception is a different matter. It is practically certain that the nuns, and whoever else had access to the manuscript, dipped into its older leaves and savoured what they found. The art here was of a sort designed to draw viewers in, mesmerize them, and induce reflection on the even greater beauty of what it showed: in all likelihood its quality was unsurpassed in the history of Kington priory. Any user of the book from Moleyns and Baker onwards might have recognized the correspondence between what was written in the annals and what they saw in the pictures. If so, then they were also in a position to see how the convent stood in relation to sacred history, by virtue not only of its religion, but also its links with Glastonbury.

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*Abbey*, 69-70, 86-94; Nicholas Vincent, *The Holy Blood: King Henry III and the Westminster Blood Relic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 90-91, 151-153.

<sup>48</sup> Image in Carley, *Glastonbury Abbey*, 86.

## Conclusion

The differences in appearance, date, and content between the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century sections of the Kington obit-book undoubtedly contribute to the complexity of understanding it in historical terms. It would always be possible to avoid this complexity, together with a certain amount of speculation, simply by regarding it as two things in one cover, as has tended to happen to date. But this would mean passing up opportunities to investigate matters of interest about the patronage and production of the manuscript, and by extension the study of fragments in general. As I have tried to show, the obit-book offers unusual and historically significant evidence for the strategic cooperation of a literate layman and a Benedictine prioress in a partnership of mutual dependence informed by shared cultural sympathies. In fact, it is hard to come up with a comparable illustration of the operation of patronage in relation to a late medieval English book. It is only by trying to get to grips with the ambitions of John Baker, Katherine Moleyns and her convent that one really sees the fourteenth-century fragment disappear into the whole.<sup>49</sup> For then the interplay of commemorative, devotional and even historical themes emerges to smother any impression of conflict stemming from merely physical differences.

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<sup>49</sup> In support of this one might also posit an interrelationship between the penitential prayers on fol. 6r and the texts and images of fols 21r-38v.