**Divining the Past: The Historical Notes in London, Wellcome Library MS 8004**

**Sarah L. Peverley**

**Abstract**

This paper introduces and provides an edition of the hitherto unpublished set of historical notes found in the mid-fifteenth-century compendium of Middle English texts extant in Wellcome MS 8004. It briefly considers the contents and sources of the notes (Higden’s *Polychronicon* and the *Middle English Prose Brut*), their affinity with the *Folger Brief History*, and the potential significance of their inclusion in what is predominantly a medical, astronomical and prognostic manuscript.

**Introduction**

Wellcome MS 8004 is a mid-fifteenth-century parchment compendium produced in the East of England and self-dated to 1454. Written in a professional anglicana hand, it contains a calendar, various astrological, astronomical, medical and prognostic texts – with accompanying tables and diagrams of Phlebotomy Man (fol. 18r), lunar eclipses (fol. 29r), Zodiac Man (fol. 40r) and urine flasks (fols 58v–61r) – historical notes and a pilgrimage tract.[[1]](#footnote-1) Except for the calendar and several of the tables, which are in Latin, all of the texts are in Middle English and are dialectally consistent with the East of England, particularly the Lincolnshire region.[[2]](#footnote-2) Further evidence of the manuscript’s East England origin is provided by the calendar, which contains the Feast and Translation of St Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, and the illumination, which is stylistically and decoratively identical to that produced by a group of artists responsible for at least eight other manuscripts decorated in this area.[[3]](#footnote-3)

 The scribe originally included the name, profession and location of the first owner, ‘Richard’, but this information has been erased and is only partially recoverable under ultraviolet light.[[4]](#footnote-4) In the eighteenth century the manuscript was owned by Thomas Hill (1760–1840), who may have obtained it from Thomas Park (1759–1834). It was at Clumber Park, Nottinghamshire, until 1938 and was subsequently owned by Alan Lubbock. Christies auctioned the manuscript on 29 November 1999 (Lot 9) and The Wellcome Library purchased it in June 2002 from Sam Fogg Rare Books.

 The historical notes (fols 42r–44v) are in two parts, the first being a brief epitome of universal and English history from the birth of Cain to the Battle of Agincourt (1415), with a summary of England’s demographic divisions taken from Ranulf Higden’s *Polychronicon*. Although the epitome begins with a universal focus on biblical figures and religious matters of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it moves swiftly to fourteenth- and fifteenth-century affairs, exhibiting a distinct interest in the dates, battles and casualties of the First and Second Wars of Scottish Independence and the Hundred Years War. Space is likewise given to natural phenomena, such as plagues, weather and famine. The second part of the historical notes offers a synopsis of key battles from Stanford Bridge (1066) to Verneuil (1424), repeating some of the information recorded in the epitome along with new material. Like the first part, this section is attentive to conflicts fought in the North of England or Scotland, with more than half of battles recorded occurring in those regions. Such an emphasis complements the manuscript’s probable Lincolnshire origin and may speak to the original owner’s interest in the history of the North and Anglo-Scottish affairs. Equally, the emphasis may derive from the sources informing the historical notes, elements of which have an affinity with material found in Higden’s *Polychronicon* (a Northern composition) and *The Brut* (which records the Wars of Scottish Independence in some detail).[[5]](#footnote-5)

Whether the emphasis on Northern affairs was intentional or not, the historical notes in Wellcome MS 8004 belong with the small number of brief Middle English chronicles and king lists described by Edward Donald Kennedy and Lister M. Matheson. They have the greatest correspondence with the structure and content of the *Folger Brief History* and likely share a common ancestor with this text.[[6]](#footnote-6) Kennedy’s observation that such concise histories were “probably intended to offer a rapid survey of English history and to teach the main facts to the uneducated through recitation or memorization’ (1989: 2622) holds true for the Wellcome notes, but in this particular compendium they may have had an additional function, which is best understood in the context of Wellcome MS 8004’s overarching focus on observing, calculating and understanding the seen and unseen influences at work on humanity. It is well known that medieval chroniclers viewed history as providential, revealing the will of God through the rise and fall of kings and kingdoms and the appearance of portents like comets, earthquakes and plagues. Yet the Wellcome notes bring this into sharp relief by recording important names, dates, births, deaths, natural disasters and socio-political events, and putting them in dialogue with the broader cosmological framework of the created world, as represented and interrogated by the other texts in the compendium. In this respect the notes complement the various computational tables and astronomical texts used for diagnosing and forecasting the influences of heavenly bodies, inauspicious days and weather, and provide a practical digest of historical data that can be used to test some of the prognostic methods articulated in the volume, such as *The* *Sphere of Pythagoras* (fols 18v–19r) and *The Victorious and the Vanquished* (fols 70v–72v). These two onomantic texts frequently appear in volumes like Wellcome MS 8004, instructing readers how to divine the outcome of battles, sickness, marriages and voyages through the numerical value of names.[[7]](#footnote-7) A table is used to convert individual letters into a number, which is then pitted against another number to predict an outcome. The *Victorious and the Vanquished* even assigns the success of Alexander the Great’s military campaigns to his use of the text.[[8]](#footnote-8) When viewed in conjunction with these other items, the Wellcome historical notes furnish relevant examples of past lives and events to illustrate that they are subject to the same forces and divinatory principals explored in the rest of the volume. Early readers wishing to practice their new-found divinatory skills, with a view to forecasting future events, could, in some cases, apply the prognostic methods outlined in the manuscript to the historical data to gain better insights into the affairs that had shaped their present. For example, when the information provided about the Battle of Northallerton (22 August 1138), is subjected to the process described in *The Victorious and the Vanquished*, itsuccessfullypredicts the outcome of the battle: that Thurstan, archbishop of York, ‘ourcomyne and scomfett’ [overcame and defeated] David, king of Scotland. Using the numerical equivalents for the alphabet defined by *The Victorious and the Vanquished* (fol. 71v) and converting the letters of the protagonists’ names as they are spelt in the historical notes – ‘Thurstane’ and ‘Dauid’ – gives a total of ninety-four for Thurstane and fifty-one for Dauid. When each sum is then divided by nine, as instructed by the text, the results are ten with a remainder of four for Thurstan and five with a remainder of six for David. As the rules for the prognostication explain, the remainders are pitted against each other and with ‘fowr and 6 qwo-so has 4 sall ourcome’ [four and six, whosoever has 4 shall overcome] (fol. 71r). Thurstan is therefore predicted to be the victor of the battle, confirming what the historical notes already record.[[9]](#footnote-9)

While this example serves to demonstrate how the original owner of Wellcome MS 8004 could have tested one element of the manuscript’s prognostic methods on the historical notes, it is nonetheless impossible to determine whether every aspect of the data could have been used in this way. A high degree of ambiguity is introduced into the prognostic method by the fact that it is not known how a medieval reader would have spelt a name: Would they follow the text? Would they use a different spelling? Would they switch from English to Latin or French to get the desired outcome? Equally, for all the importance attached to names, dates and locations in the notes, some of the events recorded do not furnish enough detail to work reliably with the onomantic method demonstrated. Several notes, like that for the Battle of Crécy (26 August 1346), need supplementing with information lacking in the compendium, which may or may not have been known by, or accessible to, the original owner. Moreover, to test the predictions offered by *The Sphere of Pythagoras* on the fate of a journey, historical conflict or individual, one would first need to calculate the numerical value of the weekday and lunar day the event occurred on. In some instances, enough information is provided to work this out retrospectively using the other formulae and astronomical tools provided in the manuscript, such as the Lunar Tables (fols 23v-31r), the notes on inauspicious days (65r-68v), or *Storie Lune* (84r-97r), in other instances the information is absent.

Further speculation and testing of the possible relationship between the prognostic materials and the historical notes lies beyond the scope of this little edition, but it goes out into the world with the hope that a future study of historical notes in diagnostic and prognostic compendia like Wellcome MS 8004 will better illuminate the connections medieval readers saw between texts that prompted them to look to the past and texts that helped them to look to the future. Doubtless these brief notes have a much bigger story to tell about the role historical writing played in the medieval world view and how those commissioning volumes like this one utilized the texts within them.

**Editorial Practice**

Capitalisation, word division and punctuation have been modernised. Common scribal abbreviations and suspensions have been silently expanded. The scribe occasionally adds a bar across *-ll*, which may or may not denote *-lle*; however, as there is little consistency in the use of a bar in the commonly occurring word *batell*, barred *-ll* has been treated as otiose. Initial *ff–* has been changed to *F*. Textual and explanatory notes have been provided in footnotes.

**Bibliography**

***Primary sources***

**Cambridge**

*Cambridge University Library*, Ff.1.6

**London**

*College of Arms*, Arundel 5

*British Library*

Egerton 650

Harley 1735

Lansdowne 204

Sloane 3285

*Wellcome Library*, 8004

**Washington**

*Folger Shakespeare Library*, V.a.198

*An English Chronicle 1377–1461*. Ed. William Marx. Medieval Chronicles 3. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003.

‘A Tretis Compiled out of Diverse Cronicles (1440): a Study and Edition of the Short English Prose Chronicle Extant in London, British Library, MS Additional 34,764’. Ed. Sarah L. Peverley. *The Medieval Chronicle* 12 (2019): 238-77.

[Barbour, John] *The Bruce*. Ed. Walter W. Skeat. EETS ES 21. London: 1870-77.

*The Brut of The Chronicles of England*. 2 vols. Ed. Friederick W.D. Brie. EETS OS 131, 176. London, 1906, 1909.

*Chronicon de Lanercost MCCI-MCCCXLVI*. Ed. Joseph Stevenson. Edinburgh, 1839.

*Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary, Volume 3, Judean Antiquities 1-4*. Ed. Steve Mason and Louis H Feldman. Leiden: Brill, 1999.

[*Folger Brief History*] A Latin Geography and a Middle English Epitome of World and English History.’ Ed. Lan Lipscomb. *Manuscripta* 40 (1996): 19-28.

[Hardyng, John] *John Hardyng Chronicle: Edited from British Library Lansdowne 204*. Ed. James Simpson, and Sarah L. Peverley. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2015.

[Higden, Ranulph] *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden, Monachi Cestrensis*. 9 Vols. Ed. C. Babington and J.R. Lumby. Rolls Series 41. London, 1879–1886.

*Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*. Ed. James Gairdner. Camden Society, NS 28. Westminster, 1880.

***Secondary Literature***

Burnett, Charles S. (1988). ‘The Eadwine Psalter and the Western Tradition of the Onomancy in Pseudo-Aristotle’s Secret of Secrets.’ *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 55: 143–67.

Skretowicz, Victor and Susan Rennie. *Dictionary of the Scots Language*. 2004 <<https://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/cabdan>> (accessed June 2021).

Edge, Joanne T. (2015). ‘Nomen Omen: “The Sphere of Life and Death” in England, c.1300–c.1500.’ Unpublished PhD thesis: Royal Holloway, University of London.

Kennedy, Edward Donald (1989). *Chronicles and Other Historical Writing*. Vol. 8 of *A Manual of The Writings in Middle English, 1050*–*1500*. Gen. ed. Albert E. Hartung. New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Kingsford, Charles L. (1913). *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century*. Oxford.

Loen-Marshall, Maria Helena (2005). ‘An Edition of the English Texts in British Library MS Sloane 3285: Practical Medicine, Sussex Dialect and the London Associations of a Fifteenth-Century Book’. Unpublished PhD. University of Glasgow.

Matheson. Lister M. (1998). *The Prose Brut: The Development of a Middle English Chronicle*. Tempe, AZ: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies.

McIntosh, Angus, M. L. Samuels, Michael Benskin, Margaret Laing and Keith Williamson (2013). *An Electronic Version of A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*. <http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/elalme/elalme.html> (accessed June 2021).

Stone, David (2014). ‘The Impact of drought in Early Fourteenth-Century England.’ *Economic History Review* 67:2: 435-62.

Voigts, Linda Ehrsam and Patricia Deery Kurtz (2019). *Scientiﬁc and Medical Writings in Old and Middle English: An Electronic Reference*. Ann Arbor: 2000), CD. Revised Online version at <https://cctr1.umkc.edu/cgi-bin/search> (accessed June 2021)

**Edition**

**The Historical Notes in Wellcome MS 8004**

[fol. 41r] In þe 15 ʒere of þe warld wasse Caym borne.[[10]](#footnote-10) And in þe 30 ʒer wasse Abel borne. And in þe 130 ʒer Caym slewe Abel. And in þe 930 ʒer died Adam.And in þe 230 wase Seth borne. And in þe 948 ʒer wasse Ennoke translate. And in þe 2656 wasse Noye floyd.[[11]](#footnote-11) And þe ʒer of our lord 49 wasse our lady assumpte[[12]](#footnote-12) and borne into heuynne.[[13]](#footnote-13) And in þe ʒer of our lord 69 wasse Petyr and Paul martyrd.[[14]](#footnote-14) And in þe ʒer of our lord 1210 wasse Iues expulsed and pute owt of Ingland.[[15]](#footnote-15) And þe same ʒer wase entyrdytyd Ingland and Wals and duryd 6 ʒer.[[16]](#footnote-16) And in þe ʒer 1107 wasse Saynte Thomas of Cantyrbery martyryd.[[17]](#footnote-17) And in þe ʒer 1319 wasse Sant Thomas of Lancastyr martyrd.[[18]](#footnote-18) And in þe ʒer of our lord 1346 wasse þe batyll of Crecy, and þe kynge of Fraunce wasse ouyrcomyne.[[19]](#footnote-19) And þe same [fol. 41v] ʒere wasse þe batell of Durham and þere wasse takyn þe kynge of Skottys.[[20]](#footnote-20) And in þe ʒer of our lord 1356 wasse þe battell of Payter and þer wasse takyne þe kynge of Fraunce.[[21]](#footnote-21) And in þe ʒer of our lord 1357 wasse þe batyll of Spayne and þer wasse takyne þe bastard.[[22]](#footnote-22) And þe ʒer 1315 wasse grete hungur in Ingland.[[23]](#footnote-23) And þe ʒere 1349 wasse þe first pestylaunce in Ingland.[[24]](#footnote-24) And in þe ʒer 1333 wasse þe grete tempeste in Ingland.[[25]](#footnote-25) And in þe ʒer 1361 wasse þe secund pestelaunce in Ingland. And in þe[[26]](#footnote-26) ʒere 1369 wasse þe þird pestelaunce.[[27]](#footnote-27) And in þe ʒer 1381 rose þe comyns of Kynt agayne þe grete menne and slewe þe archbysschop of Cantyrbery and þe prior of Clerkenwell and odyr moo.[[28]](#footnote-28) And in þe ʒer of our lord 1415 Kynge Henri þe 5 wanne Harflw and in þe same ʒere wasse þe batell of Agyngcourte, wher many Fraunch menne wer takyne and slayne.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Ther ar in Ingland 45ml and c parich kyrkys, and townys[[30]](#footnote-30) 52ml cc and 20, knyghtys feys 40ml cc 15, of þe qwylke relegyns menne haue 18m 40, countys 35, byschoppeprikys 17, cyttes 30.[[31]](#footnote-31)

Her may menne her of mayny gret batells.[[32]](#footnote-32) Bott þe fyrste wasse done befor þe conqueste 4 myle frome Beuyrley, þat wasse in þe ʒer of our lorde 1066, betweyne Harald of Ingland and anodyr kynge Harald, þe kynge of Danmarke, and þer wasse a grete oste of Danys kyllyd and dystrued.[[33]](#footnote-33) The batell of Alertoun wasse done in þe ʒer of our lord xi hundyrth and xviij and þen Dauid, kynge of Scottys, with þe helpe of þe [fol. 42r] archbysschoppe of Ʒorke, þat tyme called Thurstane, wasse ourcomyne and scomfett.[[34]](#footnote-34) The batell of Alnwyk wase þe ʒer of our lord ml c iijxx and xiij in þe qwilke wasse takyne Kynge William of Scottes þat gaffe for hysse raunsone Northumbirland, Westmorland, and Cumbirland, qwyke wer haldyne with Scottys and Peghtes fro þe fyrste commynge of Danysse vnto þat tyme.[[35]](#footnote-35) The batell of Lews in Southsex wasse in þe ʒer of our lord ml cc iijxx and iij þat wasse between Kynge Henri þe third and Symond Mountford, þat tyme erle of Lecytur, and oder barons with hyme and in þat batell wasse tane þe same kynge Henri and Edward hys eldyste sone and holdyne in presone.[[36]](#footnote-36) The batelle of Euesame wasse in þe ʒer of our lord ml cc iijxx and v in þe moneth of Auguste and þer wasse kyllyd þe sayd Symond with xij barons qwik had tane þe kynge before.[[37]](#footnote-37) The batyll of Fawkyrke in Scotland wasse done in þe ʒer of our lord ml cc iijxx and xviij, wher þe lederse of þe Scotys on William Waleys and odyr lordys of Scotland lefte þer oste withoutyne captayne and þerfor wasse all þe ost sone perichte.[[38]](#footnote-38) The dyscumfetur of Dunbar in Scotland was þe ʒer of our lord ml cc and x and þer wasse kyllyd x thowsand of Scottys and þe towne ʒeldyne.[[39]](#footnote-39) The dysconfitur of Styrlyne in Scottland wasse þe nexste ʒer aftyr and þer wasse our Inglysch mene dyscomfytt and many kyllyd throuʒe a trayne of þe [fol. 42v] Scottes.[[40]](#footnote-40) The batell of Banekburne in Scotteland wasse in þe ʒer of our lord mliijc. and xvij and þer our menne war kyllyd xx thowsand for þe Scottys had mad many pyttfals and grete holys in þe erth befor qwer þe batell wasse done.[[41]](#footnote-41) The dyscumfytur of Myton was þe ʒer of our lord ml iijc xix wher þe lederse of our menne wasse clerkys and þe ost cytysyns and burges þerfor wer þai sone dyscomfytt.[[42]](#footnote-42) The dyscomfitur of Byland Banke was in þe ʒer of our lord nexste folowynge[[43]](#footnote-43) aftyr þat and þer our ost wasse lefte withoutyne any cabdene[[44]](#footnote-44) or lord and þerfor it wasse sone ourecomynen.[[45]](#footnote-45) The batyll of Gladmor wasse in þe ʒer of our lord ml iijc xxxij and þer wasse mad a hyll of Scottys xx fott on hyght.[[46]](#footnote-46) The batyll of Halydoun Hyll faste besyd Berwyke wasse þe nexte ʒer aftyr and þer wasse kyllyd of Scottys x thowsand and þe towne of Barwylk ʒeldyd to our kynge.[[47]](#footnote-47) The batell of Scluse in Flandyrs betweyne our mene and Fraunche menne was þe ʒer of our lord ml iijc xlvj in þe kalend of Septembre þer þe Fraunsch men wer kyllyd and þe schyppys tane.[[48]](#footnote-48) The batell of Crecy wasse in þe ʒer of our lord ml iijc xlvj in þe moneth of Septembre and þer þe kynge of Fraunch wasse putt to flyght and þe kynge of Beme kyllyd and many odyr lordys with hyme.[[49]](#footnote-49) The batell of Doram was þe same ʒer and þer was tayne Kynge Dauid of Scottes and many erlys and barons wyth hyme and [fol. 43r] many fled away and it was done in þe kalend of Nouembre.[[50]](#footnote-50) And in þe ʒer of our lord ml iijc xlvij Kynge Edward wane þe towne of Calyse, bott fyrste he lad a sege þerto þat lastyd a ʒer and mor.[[51]](#footnote-51) The batell of Payters in Gyane was þe ʒer of our lord mlccc xlvj and þer by Edward þe oldyste sone of Kynge Edward wasse tayne Ion þat callyd hymeselfe kynge of Fraunce and with hyme many odyr lordys takyne and slane.[[52]](#footnote-52) The batell of Spayne wase þe ʒer of our lord ml ccc iijxx xxxj and þer þe bastard of Spayne wasse scomfett and fled away.[[53]](#footnote-53) And in þe ʒer of our lord[[54]](#footnote-54) ml ccc lxxxj[[55]](#footnote-55) þe commons of Kente and Esex rose agayn[[56]](#footnote-56) some lordys for þe customs and bondage þat wasse begune emonge þe sayme comons, and þenonn Iake Straw wasse þe captane, and qwene þai come to Londone onn Symon archbyschoppe of Cantyrbery and a knyʒte of þe Rodes and þe prior of Clerkynwell war takyne and onn þe Tour Hyll þe same comons smott of þer hedys, and a fair[[57]](#footnote-57) place callyd Sauoy þai brynte it all to colls. Bott att þe laste, with helpe of Lundon, þat[[58]](#footnote-58) same Iak Strawe wasse slayne and þen hys company fled away, bott many wer takyne and putt to ded.[[59]](#footnote-59) The dyscomfytur of Homyldon Hyll wasse in þe ʒer of our lord ml iiijc ij and it was done on Holy Rod day in herueste and þer þe Scottys wasse oft scomfett and many takyne: [fol. 43v] þat is to say Erle Douglasse, þe erle of Fyffe, and many odyr lordys of Scottland with hyme.[[60]](#footnote-60) The batell of Schrowsberye was in þe ʒer of[[61]](#footnote-61) our lord ml iiijc ij onn Mary Maudleyne day euynen and þer Syr Henri Percy, þe eldyste sone of þe erle of Northumbirland, was kyllyd and many a nobyll manne with hyme. And þen Syr Thomas Percy, þat tyme erle of Worseter, aftyr þe battell was done, was tayne and sone aftyr putt to ded.[[62]](#footnote-62) The batell of Agyngcourte in Fraunce was þe ʒer of our lord ml iiijc xxvij and þer our kynge, with a fewe of our Inglysche menne, kyllyd a grete oste of Fraunsche men and þat same tyme[[63]](#footnote-63) tuke þe duke of Orlyaunce, þe duk of Burgone, þe erle of Ewe, þe erle of Endew, and þe steward of Fraunce callyd Syr Bursegawd.[[64]](#footnote-64) The batell of Vernell on Perch was[[65]](#footnote-65) þe ʒer of our lord m[[66]](#footnote-66) iiijc xx and þer was a grete oste of Franschmen and iiij ml Scottys slayne, þat is to say þe erle Dowglasse, þe erle of Marre, and þe erle of Bughan wasse þer ded, and many a prowd Scott with þem, on our lady euynen assumpcioun as it fell þat ʒer, þerfore say we ‘deo gracias’.[[67]](#footnote-67)

1. For the full contents of the manuscript see Voigts and Kurtz, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The linguistic profile undertaken for this edition showed a propensity for Northern forms, especially those attested in Benskin *et al* (see 2013: Linguistic Profiles 16, 30, 69, 210, 422 and 587, all Lincolnshire). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Saint Hugh’s Feast (17 November) and Translation (6 October) appear on fols 14v, 15v. For the artists of Wellcome 8004 see Simpson and Peverley, 2015: 17-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The erasure reads: ‘Richard etaly[?] the[?] H\_\_\_\_ of þe Conte [or Cite?] of H\_\_d\_\_n’ [or Ly\_\_d\_\_n’]’ (f. 5r). The final word has a suspension symbol at the end. Christies’ sale catalogue suggests the ‘City of Lincoln’, which fits with the manuscript’s probable locale but not with the visible letters. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. I refer simply to *The Brut*, rather than to any of its specific linguistic iterations of this text, because the Wars of Independence appear in the Anglo-Norman, Middle English and Latin *Bruts*. It is likely, but by no means certain, that a Middle English version of the text furnished some of the information. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See Kennedy 1989: 2637, 2666, 2833 and 2881, and Matheson 1998: 318-22, 347-48. The *Folger Brief History* is discussed by Kennedy (1989: 2666, 2881) and edited by Lipscomb (1996). It occurs in Folger Shakespeare Library MS V.a.198, fols 5r-6r, and is self-dated to 1442. The present edition follows Kennedy’s title, *Folger Brief History* rather than Lipscomb’s longer *Middle English Epitome of World and English History*. *A Tretis Compiled out of Diverse Cronicles* (self-dated to 1440), also shares some content with the Wellcome notes and *Folger Brief History*. Of further interest is the fact that the *Tretis* was once part of a miscellany copied by scribes working in the South-East Midlands who appear to have used Northern exemplars for their texts (Peverley 2019: 247). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See Burnett (1988) and Edge, who notes examples of the *Sphere* appearing elsewhere alongside information about historic duels (2015: 131-43). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. For the traditional association of Alexander with the *Victorious and the Vanquished* see Burnett (1988: 146-50). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The letter values of Thurstane’s name are 8, 6, 5, 13, 11, 8, 3, 15, 25. Dauid’s are 14, 3, 5, 15, 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The first sentence is rubricated. The initial letter is gold on a red and blue ground with white decoration. Six daisy sprays spring from the initial. Each subsequent sentence has a small blue initial. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. With the exception of the year assigned to Enoch’s translation, the chronology provided down to the year of the deluge corresponds with the information provided in Higden’s *Polychronicon* and its English translations by John Trevisa and the anonymous author of British Library, Harley 2261 (*Polychronicon*, II, 220-21, 236-37). Genesis 5 is the ultimate source of some of the information given here, as is Josephus’s *Antiquities of the Jews*, which gives the year of Seth’s birth as 230 and calculates the year of the flood as 2656 (I, ii-iii). I have been unable to find another source dating Enoch’s translation to the year 948 after creation, but there must be one. *The Folger Brief History* in Folger MS V.a.198 lists similar details but differs in the years assigned to Adam and Noah’s flood (Lipscomb, 1996: 23). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. MS *assumpte*: *assupte* (missing the abbreviation for *m*). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *Polychronicon*,IV, 388–39. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Cambridge University Library Ff.1.6, f. 110r, also places the martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul in 69 CE. The *Polychronicon* dates the event to the last year of Nero’s reign (IV, 412–13). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Edward I expelled the Jews from England in 1290. Cf. *Folger Brief History* (24), where the year is 1289. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Pope Innocent III placed an interdict on England and Wales between 23 March 1208 and 2 July 1214. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, was martyred in 1170. The scribe (or his source) has reversed the final two digits of the year. *Folger Brief History* (24) and Cambridge University Library Ff.1.6 (fol. 110v) also provide incorrect years, 1171 and 1210 respectively. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Thomas of Lancaster (c.1278–1322) was executed on 22 March 1322. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. The Battle of Crécy (26 August 1346). *Folger Brief History* places it in 1348 (24). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. David II (1324–71), king of Scots, was captured at the Battle of Neville’s Cross (17 October 1346). Cf *Polychronicon*, VIII, 342–43 and *Folger* *Brief History* (24). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. The Battle of Poitiers (19 September 1356), during which Edward III’s son, Edward, the Black Prince, captured John II of France. *Folger Brief History* records the French king’s capture under the year 1358 (24). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. A reference to the Castilian Civil War (1351–69), during which Peter I of Castile and Henry of Trastámara, his illegitimate brother, fought for the throne. The conflict referenced appears to be the Battle of Nájera (3 April 1367), but the information provided is incorrect. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. A reference to The Great Famine of 1315–17, which affected Northern Europe. The *Folger Brief History* mentions famine under the year 1370 (p. 24). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. The Black Death reached England in 1348–49. Cf. *Folger Brief History* (24). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. England experienced various storms, floods and droughts in the late 1320s and early 1330s; see Stone 2014: 435–62. *Folger Brief History* records the “grete wynde” on Saint Maurus’s Day in 1362 (24). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. MS *in* *þe*: *in*. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. The second and third significant recurrences of the Black Death in England were in 1361–62 and 1369. Cf. *Folger Brief History* (24). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. A reference to the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381, during which Simon Sudbury, archbishop of Canterbury, and Sir Robert Hales, Prior of St John of Jerusalem in Clerkenwell and Treasurer of England, were executed at Tower Hill. *Folger Brief History* mentions the revolt but does not give the casualties (24). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. The Siege of Harfleur (17 August 1415 to 22 September 1415) and the Battle of Agincourt (25 October 1415). Both appear in *Folger Brief History* (24). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. MS *townys*: *towrys*. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. This information is repeated on fol. 50r, in a section concerning measurements. Its ultimate source is *Polychronicon*, II, 88–90, which records 45,002 parish churches, 52,080 towns, 60,015 knights’ fees, of which 28,015 are religious. The information is included (with varying figures) in a Latin geography preceding *Folger Brief History* in Folger Shakespeare Library, V.a.198, and a Latin note in British Library Sloane 3285, fol. 85r, another fifteenth-century medical miscellany (See Lipscomb 1996: 20, 23; Scott 1904: 179; and Loen-Marshall: 2005: 112). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. This sentence is rubricated. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. The Battle of Stamford Bridge (25 September 1066). Stamford Bridge is approximately 27 miles from Beverley. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Thurstan, archbishop of York, defeated David I of Scotland at the Battle of Northallerton, also known as the Battle of the Standard (22 August 1138). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. William I of Scotland was captured at the Battle of Alnwick (13 July 1174). To obtain his freedom, he signed the Treaty of Falaise (1174), acknowledging English hegemony over Scotland. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Henry III and his son, Edward, fought against Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester, at The Battle of Lewes (14 May 1264). The battle was part of the civil conflict known as the Second Barons’ War. The year given in the historical notes is incorrect. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Simon de Montfort died at the Battle of Evesham (4 August 1265). The twelve barons who perished at the same time were Henry, de Montfort’s son; Peter de Montfort; Hugh Despenser; William de Mandeville; Ralph Basset; Walter de Crespigny; William York; Robert Tregor; Thomas Hostelea; John Beauchamp; Guy Balliol; and Roger de Rouleo. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. The Battle of Falkirk occurred on 22 July 1298, not in 1278. The Scots army, led by William Wallace, was defeated by Edward I. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. The year of the Battle of Dunbar (27 April 1296) is incorrect. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. The Battle of Stirling Bridge (11 September 1297). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. The English suffered heavy casualties at the Battle of Bannockburn (24 June 1314), due in part to the pits and ditches the Scots had prepared. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. *The* *Brut* (I, 211), *The* *Lanercost Chronicle* (239) and Barbour’s *The Bruce* (II, 426–28), also mention the high number of clerics and citizens slain at the Battle of Myton (20 September 1319). The English were led by William Melton, archbishop of York, John Hotham, bishop of Ely, and Nicholas Fleming, mayor of York. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. MS *folowynge*: *foloynge*. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. This variation of captain is not recorded in the *Middle English Dictionary* (s.v. *capitain*, n.), but it appears as an irregular Scots variation of *captane* (n.) (see *A Dictionary of Older Scottish Tongue* via Skretowicz and Rennie 2004, s.v. *cabdan*, n.). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. A reference to the Battle of Old Byland (14 October 1322), during which the leader of the English force, John of Brittany, earl of Richmond, was captured. Compare with *Polychronicon* (VIII, 317) and *The Brut* (I, 226) but neither recounts the encounter in the same way as this. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. MS *hyght*: *hyrght*.

Many chronicles, including *The* *Brut* (I, 278-79), refer to the heap of Scottish dead at the Battle of Dupplin Moor (11 August 1332), also called ‘Gladmore’ or ‘Gaskemore’. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. The Battle of Halidon Hill (19 July 1333). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. The naval battle at Sluys (24 June 1340) is incorrectly dated. The error may derive from eye-skip (authorial or scribal), as the incorrect month and year – September and 1346 – occur in the next sentence recording the Battle of Crécy. They were presumably copied by mistake. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. As with the previous sentence, an error has crept into the dating of the Battle of Crécy (26 August 1346). The phrase ‘kalend of Septembre’, which appears (incorrectly) in the previous sentence, offers a more accurate description of the date of the battle. It is unclear whether the mistake is authorial, scribal, or carried over from a source. The ‘kynge of Beme’ is John the Blind (1296–1346), king of Bohemia. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Another reference to the Battle of Neville’s Cross (17 October 1346). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Edward III’s siege of Calais lasted from September 1346 to August 1347. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Despite getting the year of the Battle of Poitiers right earlier (19 September 1356), it is incorrectly given as 1346 here. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Another incorrectly dated reference to the Battle of Nájera (3 April 1367). [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. MS *lord*: lod. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. MS *ml ccc lx xxj*: *ccc* inserted above the line with a caret. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. MS *agayn*: inserted above the line. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. MS *fair*: *far*. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. MS *þat*: *þe þat*. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. In addition to repeating the information given earlier, this second, longer reference to the Peasant’s Revolt of 1381, includes the burning of Savoy Palace. Sir Robert Hales, one of the men executed by the rebels, is referred to as two separate people: the ‘knyʒte of þe Rodes’ and the Prior of Clerkenwell. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. The Battle of Homildon Hill was fought on 14 September 1402 (the Feast of the Cross, or Holy Rood Day). Notable captives included Archibald, earl of Douglas and Murdoch Stewart, earl of Fife. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. MS *of*: inserted above the line. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. The Battle of Shrewsbury took place on 21 July 1403, the eve of the Feast of Mary Magdalene. Sir Henry ‘Hotspur’ Percy, son of Henry Percy, earl of Northumberland, was killed, and Hotspur’s uncle, Thomas Percy, earl of Worcester was executed two days later. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. MS *tyme*: inserted above the line. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. The Battle of Agincourt took place on 25 October 1415 (not 1427). The captives mentioned are Charles (1394-65), third duke of Orleans; Charles of Artois (1394–1472), count of Eu; Louis of Bourbon (1376–1446), count of Vendôme (‘Endew’); and John II le Maingre (1366–1421), Marshal of France (known as Boucicaut). The inclusion of the ‘duk of Burgone’ (i.e. duke of Burgundy) is an error: John the Fearless, duke of Burgundy, was not at the battle. It may be a mistake for John (1318–1434), duke of Bourbon, who appears between Charles of Orléans and Charles of Artois in other lists of the French casualties and captives (see, for example, the first version of John Hardyng’s *Chronicle* in British Library Lansdowne 204, fol. 211r, and *The* *Brut* extant in British Library Egerton MS 650, fol. 107v). As the list deals with captives, it is unlikely to be a mistake for one of the sons of Philip, second duke of Burgundy, who died at the battle: Anthony (1384–1415), duke of Brabant, Lothier and Limburg, and Philip II (1389–1415), count of Nevers. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. MS *was*: inserted above the line. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. MS *m*: inserted above the line. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. The Battle of Verneuil (17 August 1424) was a decisive English victory over the French and Scots, whose forces were decimated. The dating of the battle to the eve of the Feast of the Assumption of Mary incorrectly places it on 14 August, the feast day being on 15 August. The year is also incorrect. Significant casualties included Archibald (†1424), earl of Douglas; and John Stewart (†1424), earl of Buchan. The earl of Mar did not die at Verneuil, but this is an error that occurs in other chronicles: see, for example, *The Brut*, II, 441, 498; and *An English Chronicle* (58). Of particular interest is the Latin Chronicle in London, College of Arms, Arundel 5, which includes the same names and the phrase ‘Deo Gratias’ (see Gairdner: 1880: 164-65 and Kingsford 1913: 321). [↑](#footnote-ref-67)