

117. Dublin, Trinity College 492 (E. 2. 23)

“Bede’s Death Song”

[Ker 104, Gneuss —]

HISTORY: This manuscript, written by a single hand of the mid 12c, is very regular, with a clear unified structure. The hand has been identified with that of the first hand (“upright, fine and regular”) in Cambridge, Pembroke College 72, vol. 1 (McLachlan 1986: 262, 304), and both belonged to the Benedictine abbey of St. Edmund at Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk (Ker 1964: 16–19). On f. 1r there occurs the Bury class-mark “B.296” (number visible only under UV light), “B” standing for *Beda*. It is very possible that both manuscripts were written there. At the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1539) the manuscript presumably left Bury, and its provenance became unknown. Roberts and Watson (1990: 117, item no. M60) report that TCD 492 was proposed *inter alia* by M. R. James as the copy of “Beda de gestis Anglorum” in the catalogue of manuscripts belonging to John Dee (1527–1608), but there is no proof of Dee’s ownership. Later the manuscript came to Trinity College, Dublin, via James Ussher (1581–1656), archbishop of Armagh; Ussher acquired over a dozen of Dee’s manuscripts (Roberts and Watson 1990: 65), but he also acquired manuscripts from many other sources (O’Sullivan 1956).

CODICOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION: [ii] + 180 + [ii] leaves; membrane except for the paper endleaves. Leaves measure 287 x 188 mm.; written space 213 x 133/144 mm. (inner/outer). Bound in blind-tooled red/brown leather ca. 1830; rebaked 1947. Foliation (1958) in pencil excluding paper endleaves. Pricking for 30 horizontal lines of writing is visible on the inner (sometimes) and outer sides of the leaf, 35/40 mm. outside the outer vertical frame rule and 2 mm. outside the hinge-side vertical frame rule. Pricking for the vertical frame rules is visible at the top of the leaves in some quires (I, XIII, XIV, XIX, XXI, XXII) but more generally at the bottom. In Quire I four such prick-marks above the frame correspond to the double-column boundaries, but a double frame

has been ruled either side and a central dividing rule added down the center of the page. In Quire II seven such prick-marks below the frame are visible, two for the double-frame on both hinge-side and outside, and three for the central column. This pattern is repeated in the succeeding quires. The distance of the bottom prick-marks from the bottom of the frame varies between quires from 10 mm. to 45 mm., and often on the same leaf, either dipping towards the outside (e.g., Quires VII, IX, XI, XII) or in the middle (e.g., Quires V, X, XIII-XVI, XVIII-XXI). Ruling is in crayon, the top/bottom two horizontal lines being extended wide across the outer margin, although on ff. 56, 57, and 63r the bottom three lines and on ff. 64r-66r only the bottom line are so extended. All quires are HFHF, except Quire XXIII, which is HF. Catchwords are partially visible after cropping by the binder at the end of Quires VIII (f. 64v) and X (f. 80v) but are insufficiently visible to determine whether they are in the hand of the scribe.

Illuminated initial "G," "made up of dragons with blossoms and leaves" (McLachlan 1986: 320), in green, red, blue, and gold on f. 1r. Green and gold "D" on f. 175v; gold "I" on f. 177r. Incipits and explicits in red, with colored initial "I" in green on f. 1r. "H" in red, first word of preface, f. 1r/10. Capitals in blue, red (sometimes silvered), and green for the capitula on ff. 2v-3v, with chapter numbers in red (and silver). Capitals marking the beginning of books flourished in green, blue, and red, "B" on f. 4r, "H" on f. 36r, "A" on f. 65v, "I" on f. 104v (red and green only), "S" on f. 145r; characterized as "typical but rough Bury flat-colour style" by McLachlan (1986: 320; but cf. also Alexander 1978, who prefers the term "arabesque"). Capitals to mark chapter divisions in red (ff. 6v, 8r, 10r, etc.), blue (ff. 7r, 10v, 13v, etc.), and green (ff. 7v, 8r, 11v, etc.). Names of authorities, as AUGUSTIN(US), GREGORIUS, in red on f. 24r, etc. Annotations in English of second half of the 12c on ff. 4r 'weoloc scælle', 'seolas', 'octo hund mile long & twa hund mile brad', 4v 'weolocas', 8v 'munuc', 9v 'half mile amurg'.

COLLATION: I⁸ (ff.1-8), II⁸ (ff. 9-16), III⁸ (ff. 17-24), IV⁸ (ff. 25-32), V⁸ (ff. 33-40), VI⁸ (ff. 41-48), VII⁸ (ff. 49-56), VIII⁸ (ff. 57-64), IX⁸ (ff. 65-72), X⁸ (ff. 73-80), XI⁸ (ff. 81-88), XII⁸ (ff. 89-96), XIII⁸ (ff. 97-104), XIV⁸ (ff. 105-112), XV⁸ (ff. 113-120), XVI⁸ (ff. 121-128), XVII⁸ (ff. 129-136), XVIII⁸ (ff. 137-144), XIX⁸ (ff. 145-152), XX⁸ (ff. 153-160),

XXI⁸ (ff. 161–168), XXII⁸ (ff. 169–176), XXIII⁴ (ff. 177–180).

CONTENTS:

1. ff. 1r/1–175v/5a Bede, “*Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*”: f. 1r/1 ‘*Incipit præphatio.... Gloriosissimo regi Ceolwlfo BEDA famulus chr(ist)i*’. Ends f. 175v/5a ‘... quam uenerabilis Beda presbiter natus ex eadem gente edidit’ (ed. Plummer 1896; Colgrave and Mynors 1969). [Loss of a quire after Quire XX indicated by the text jumping from ‘*occiderunt dominum iuxta eum*’ (5.14 = MS 5.15) to ‘*Cui claues cæli Cristus*’ in Wilfrid’s epitaph (5.19 = MS 5.20). The text “belongs to a tradition which may have originated at Canterbury” (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: lvii–lviii; Thomson 1972: 642 and n. 159).]
2. ff. 175v/6a–177r/4b Cuthbert, “*Epistola De Obitu Bedae*”: f. 175v/6a ‘*Incipit epilogium.... Dilectissimo in chr(ist)o lectori cuthuino cuthbert*’. Ends f. 177r/4b ‘... ineruditio linguæ facit’ (ed. Plummer 1896: 1.clx–clxiv; Dobbie 1937: 117–27; Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 580–86). [Contains “Bede’s Death Song” written in the main hand, ff. 176r/1a–7a: the text belongs to Dobbie’s “Digby” group lacking ‘*heonengange hwæt his*’ from lines 3–4 (Ker no. 104; Dobbie 1937: 76–83; Dobbie 1942: cv). The only Anglo-Saxon letter-forms are “b” and “wynn,” and the only punctuation is a single point at the end of the poem.]
3. ff. 177r/6b–178v/9b Short tract on the progress of Christianity in England: f. 177r/6b ‘*In nomine d(omi)ni n(ost)ri*’. Ends f. 178v/9b ‘*ad laudem dei & suæ genitricis construxit*’ (ed. Hickes 1705: 4. 115–17; Liebermann 1889: 2–10).
4. ff. 178v/11b–180r/30a “*Notationes De Sanctis qui in Anglia requiescunt*”: f. 178v/11b ‘*He sunt notationes ... S(an)c(tu)s albanus martyr*’. Ends f. 180r/30a ‘*in loco q(u)i d(icitu)r rumesige prope amne(m) taerstaN*’ (ed. Liebermann 1889: 10–20; cf. Hickes 1705: 4. 117–21) [the outer half of f. 180 (i.e., what would have been 180r/b) has been cut off and f. 180v is blank].

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