

**FORGET THE 4.30 A.M. START:  
Recovering a Palimpsest in the York *Ordo paginarum***

*Meg Twycross*

One of the most memorable details about the staging of the York Corpus Christi Play is the 4.30 a.m. start, the instruction that:

... euery player that shall play be redy in his pagiaunt at convenyant tyme that is to say at the mydhowre betwix iiij<sup>th</sup> & v<sup>th</sup> of the cloke in the morning.

To be accurate, one should say ‘the 4.30 a.m. call’, though it has popularly become translated into the actual start time, and there may be some justification for this.<sup>1</sup> It is cited in standard works such as Richard Beadle’s edition of *The York Plays*,<sup>2</sup> and in his article – and mine – in the *Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*.<sup>3</sup> Lucy Toulmin Smith, the first editor of the script of the pageants, commented approvingly in 1885: ‘The picture of these good folks up at half-past four on a summer morning ready to act their parts one after another reminds us of Ober-Ammergau, in strong contrast to the habits of the modern stage’.<sup>4</sup> It has even been extended gratuitously in the public imagination to other cycles, real or imaginary: Garrett Epp cites a graduate student’s essay on the *Second Shepherds’ Play*, posted on the internet, which declared ‘A medieval spectator at Wakefield, beginning at 4.30. A.M., would view the Creation ...’<sup>5</sup>

The source of this inviting information is the York City Archives A/Y Memorandum Book, fol. 255<sup>r</sup>. To put it in context for the more general reader, A/Y is York’s chief late-medieval document of record. It contains, as its name suggests, ‘things to be remembered’. These include the arrangements for the City’s annual contribution to the celebration of Corpus Christi Day. In 1415 the new Common Clerk, Roger Burton, had a full list of pageant-descriptions drawn up and entered at the back of the book for easy reference,<sup>6</sup> together with the names of the guilds responsible for mounting them, by a scribe we shall call Hand A. This list was probably copied, and updated, from the notices (known as *billets* or *sedule*) sent out annually to the guilds, warning them officially of their responsibility to produce that particular pageant in that form on the day itself. A later marginal note suggests that it thereafter acted as the official

copy-text for them.<sup>7</sup> It is headed *Ordo paginarum*: the ‘sequence of the pageants’, and is our first comprehensive piece of information about the content of the Corpus Christi Play. The second of these is the ‘York Register’, now BL Additional MS 35290, which contains most of the scripts of the pageants as they existed sometime between 1463 and 1477.<sup>8</sup> It too was an official civic document putting on record the content of the pageants, though in a different and more comprehensive way, and was updated during the sixteenth century.<sup>9</sup> The theme of updating is going to become important later in this paper.

Roger Burton also had other official material connected with the celebration entered in A/Y by Hand A. The *Ordo paginarum* (fols 252<sup>v</sup>–254<sup>v</sup>) is followed on 254<sup>v</sup> by a list of the processional torches which escorted the Host, with their bearers. There then follows a *Proclamacio ludi corporis christi facienda in vigilia corporis christi* (‘Proclamation of the Play of Corpus Christi to be made on the eve of Corpus Christi’), which extends from halfway down fol. 254<sup>v</sup> to the top of 255<sup>r</sup> (see PLATES 20 and 21). After this, at a slightly later date,<sup>10</sup> a second hand (call him Hand B) has entered another, briefer checklist of pageants, and a further, presumably emended, list of torches.

The Proclamation reveals the major concerns of the City administration about the efficient and peaceful conduct of the celebrations. Written to be read out in public on the eve of Corpus Christi, and invoking the authority of the King, the Mayor, and the Sheriffs, it deals with matters such as public order (no swords or Carlisle axes to be carried during the festival, with some permitted exceptions); restriction of the number of places where the pageants are to be played; proper attire and conduct of the torch-bearers in the procession; and proper timekeeping. Infringements of these ordinances are to be punished variously with forfeiture of weapons, imprisonment, heavy fines, and loss of franchise: all serious sanctions reflecting the importance of the event. The section which refers to 4.30 a.m. — or to be precise, ‘the mydhowre betwix iiiij<sup>th</sup> & v<sup>th</sup> of the cloke in the morning’ — comes at the end of the Proclamation, at the top of fol. 255<sup>r</sup>, together with instructions about the actors, their costuming and voice projection, and the importance of promptness and keeping to the proper sequence of pageants.

Most of the Proclamation is untouched and unaltered from its 1415 state, apart from a superscript insertion specifying the precise amount of the fine to be paid for playing at an unofficial stopping place, *bat ys to say xl s*,<sup>11</sup> and probably the title itself, which is by Hand B.<sup>12</sup> However, this

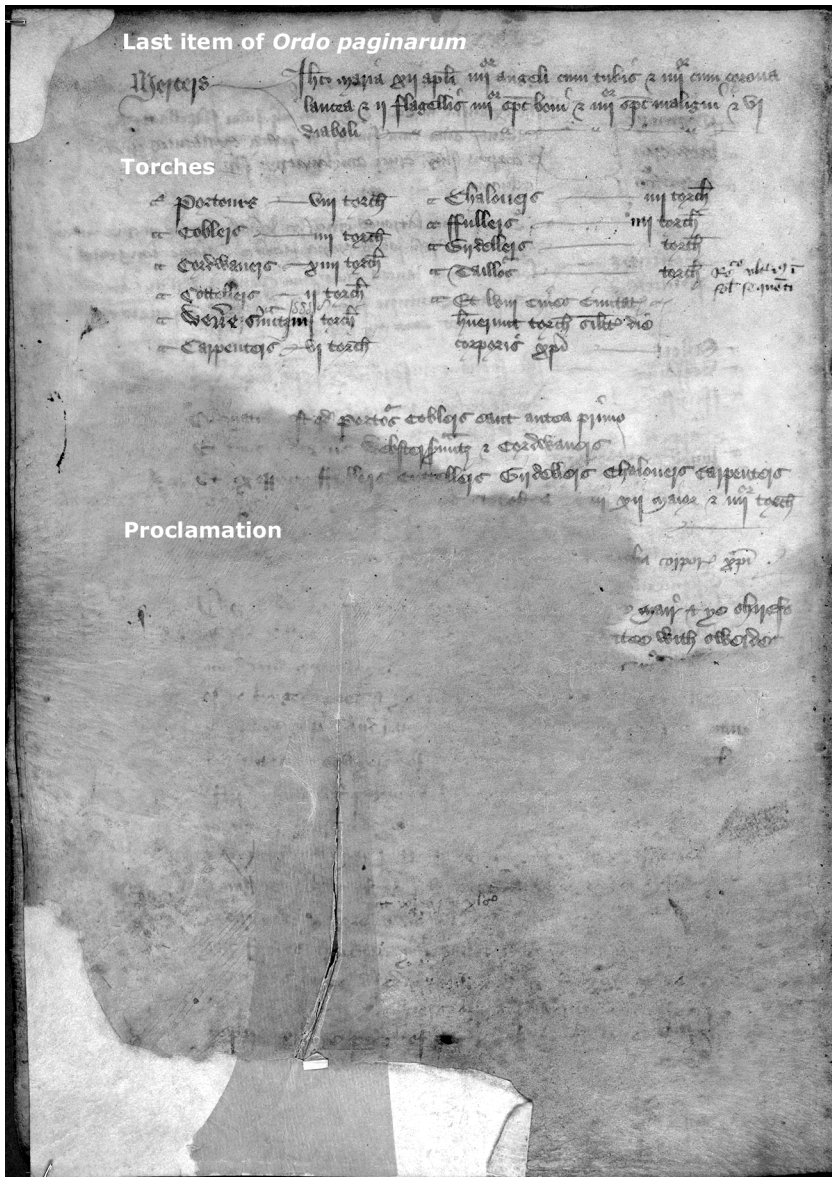


PLATE 20: York City Archives: A/Y Memorandum Book, fol. 254<sup>v</sup>.  
Photo DIAMM, © York City Archives.

### Last section of Proclamation

firmness & pure desire to please God all men & quarters of thought fully engaged in the struggle for good things most devoutly & earnestly praying before him of whom it is to prove to the change & future any good thing that one places that little plan to pay in his payment at a certain time that to say it is made by the heart in the morning to work all of it with the Christian to the end of the struggle in heart & soul and so to come

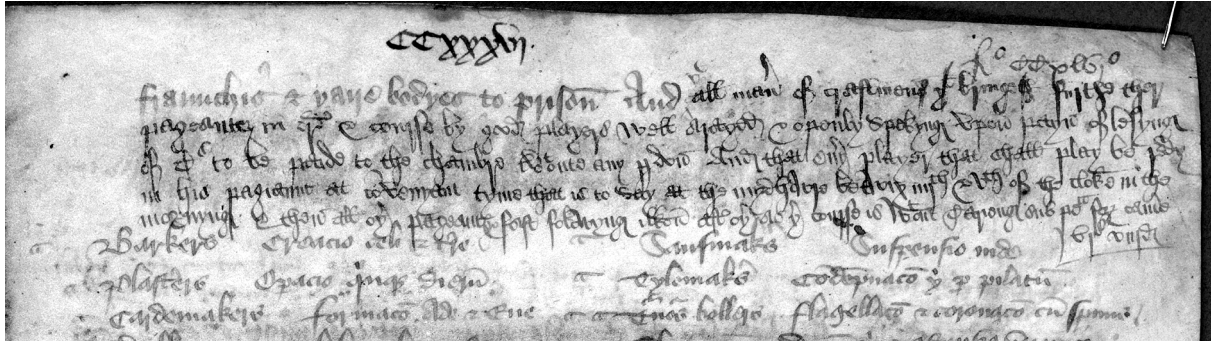
## Second List

[illegible]

## Second Torch List

1	Portiere	my torch
2	Glonerio	my corset
3	Smirthe	my corset
4	Doornick	my torch
5	Capitain	x torch
6	William	fully p. and magr
7	Thomas	Wulfard my torch





fraunchis & þaire bodyes to prisoun And <sup>bat</sup> all maner of craftmens ~~bat~~ bringeth furthe ther  
 pageantez in order & course by good players well arrayed & openly spekyng vpon payne of lesyng  
 of C<sup>s</sup> to be paide to the chambre woithoute any pardoun And that euery player that shall play be redy  
 in his pagiaunt at conuenyant tyme that is to say at the mydhowre betwix iiij<sup>th</sup> & v<sup>th</sup> of the cloke in the  
 mornyng & then all oper pageantes go fast folowyng ilkon after oper as per course is without  
 Tarieng

sub pena facienda camere

vj<sup>s</sup> viijd

PLATE 22: Top of fol. 255r (detail).

Photo DIAMM, © Meg Twycross.

last section has been tampered with (PLATE 22). At the top of fol. 255<sup>r</sup>, after the first seven words (*fraunchis & baire bodyes to prisoun And*), another scribe (call him Hand C) has erased the original words and overwritten them with a later version. This is precisely the section which talks about the 4.30 a.m. call.

It seems to have been generally assumed — by myself as well as others — that this new version probably replicates the old one in its essentials and, I suspect, that 4.30 a.m. is so delightfully particular that it *must* always have been there. Even the original REED editors, who scrupulously indicated the alteration in their transcription, talk elsewhere as if it were original, and Margaret Dorrell made it the starting point of her complex timetable for the cycle.<sup>13</sup> Martin Stevens in his 'Postscript' to her article took on board the original assumption, while enquiring cautiously in a footnote, 'Can she be sure, for example, that the assembly time of 4.30 a.m., *specified in the proclamation of 1415*, would still have applied when procession and play took place on different days?' (my italics).<sup>14</sup> It has become one of the givens for any argument about the timing of the pageants, with or without the Corpus Christi procession; and for debates about whether the Play could ever have been completed in the time available, or whether we have to posit some other type of performance than true-processional.<sup>15</sup> It was not until I started looking at the manuscript again with the very real possibility, through the use of computer imaging techniques, of being able to find out what was underneath the alteration that I began to admit that there might be major discrepancies between the two versions, and even then I have to confess that I rather hoped there would be a time there: not the same time, perhaps, but a time. (To keep the suspense alive, there is and there isn't.)

Looked at dispassionately, it is clear from the layout (PLATE 22) that this later hand had more to write than was in the original: his hand is smaller, but he not only overflows lavishly into the right-hand margin, he gets in five-and-a-bit lines to the original three. His last line spoils the neat earlier layout by filling up the blank space left between the end of the Proclamation and the second shorter list of pageants, and even then the last two words (*vj<sup>s</sup> viij<sup>d</sup>*) overflow into a sixth line in the right-hand margin.

For the reader's convenience, I repeat the transcription of the whole section under the image on PLATE 22 in a horizontal format. The original 1415 script is presented in Goudy (MET<sup>h</sup> house style), the over-writing in Verdana (sans serif):

fraunchis & paire bodyes to prisoun And <sup>^</sup> \pat/ all maner of  
craftmens ~~pat~~ bringeth furthe ther

pageantez in order & course by good players well arrayed & openly  
spekyng vpon payne of lesyng

of C<sup>S</sup> to be paide to the chambre woi~~th~~oute<sup>16</sup> any pardoun And that  
euery player that shall play be redy

in his pagiaunt at conuenyant tyme that is to say at the mydhowre  
betwix iij<sup>th</sup> & v<sup>th</sup> of the cloke in the

mornyng & then all oper pageantes go fast folowyng ilkon after oper  
as per course is without\_Tarieng sub pena facienda camere

vj<sup>S</sup> viijd

There are two new readings here, supplementing the REED transcription. In the first line the *bat* after *craftmen* has definitely been crossed out vertically, in the same way as the scribe crossed out the aberrant *s* on the end of *-men*.<sup>17</sup> He also clearly intended to delete the *th* at the end of *bringe*, though he only managed to draw a line through the *t*.

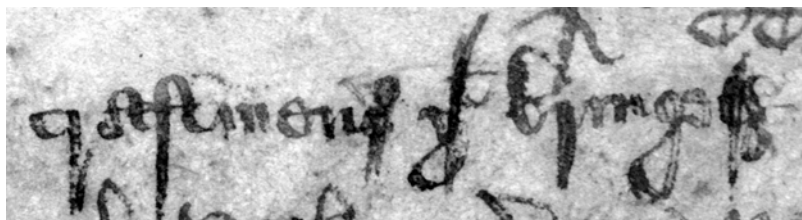


PLATE 23: Vertical erasures in top line.

In the fifth and last line, there is a minute *go*, definitely in his hand, inserted between *pageants* and *fast folowyng*.

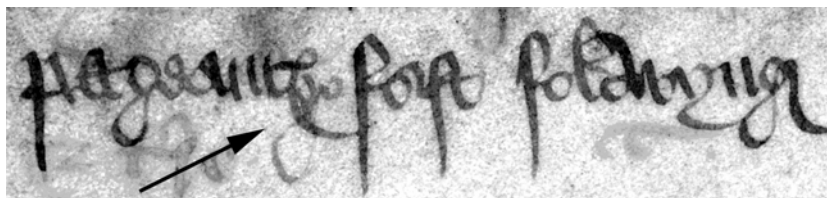
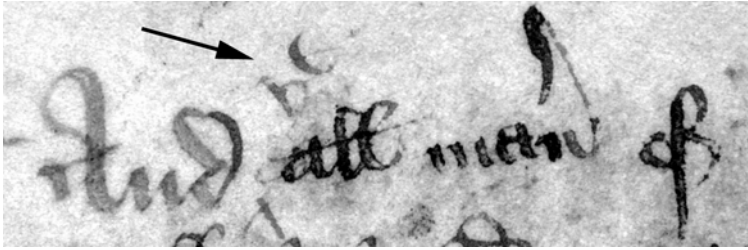


PLATE 24: Inserted *go* in fifth line (follow line of arrowhead). I have slightly faded the writing in the lines above and below for the sake of clarity.

PLATE 25: Top line, inserted superscript *bat*.

This, with the inserted superscript *bat* after *And* in the first line (PLATE 25), gives us a sequence of indirect commands with verbs in the subjunctive, dependent on the *We comand* (in the King's name etc.) at the beginning of the proclamation:

And *bat* all maner of craftmen *bringe* furthe ther pageantez ...  
 And that euery player ... *be* redy in his pagiaunt ...  
 & [that] then all oþer pageants *go* fast folowyng ...

This is satisfying syntactically — the previous transcription always felt a bit jerky — and makes sense of the crossings-out and insertions.

Returning from structure to content, the stipulations here are:

crafts to ensure that

pageants are 'brought forth' in the correct order;	
actors are of good quality;	
actors are well costumed;	
actors are audible;	fine: 100s;
actors to be ready to start at 4.30 a.m.;	
pageants to follow promptly one after the other;	fine: 6s 8d.

The last two are presumably also orders issued to the crafts. It does not make it clear whether all the actors, or only the beginners, are to be there at 4.30 a.m. If the former, there would have been a lot of hanging about for the players in the later pageants, up to 12 hours for the last ones. The phrase 'getting steadily drunker' comes to mind.

This is not, of course, purely an investigation to find out whether the authorities specified a 4.30 a.m. call in 1415. The entire content of this last section has a particular bias which suggests that the quality of the actors, their costumes, and their voice-projection, is important to the success of the day, sufficiently important to be specified in a public proclamation. It throws an emphasis on the pageants as theatrical performances; it even has

a whiff of publicity about it which does not sit quite comfortably with the anxieties expressed in the rest of the proclamation, which is concerned with public order. (Justifiable anxieties: we know that fights did break out, and that delays had occurred.)<sup>18</sup> In the context of the sporadically-revived debate about the actual nature of pageants in the early fifteenth century — were they full-scale plays, as recorded in the Register fifty or sixty years later, or were they little more than dramatic tableaux? — the content of the original entry, *even if it does not say very much*, and the date of its replacement, are going to be highly significant pieces of evidence.

Both layers, in fact, are important. Manuscript archaeology, like the more earthy sort, has its stratigraphy. In our anxiety to get at the equivalent of Homer's Troy, we should not consign the upper layers to the spoil-heap. Each belongs to its time, and forms part of the document as it was read at that time.

This particular investigation is part of a larger and more complex one on which I am at present engaged. It started with the observation, which is not a new one, that the *Ordo* and to a lesser extent its accompanying documents, is not a fixed text. It is an historical document which more than most reflects the processes of *change* in the event it records. When pageants changed hands, the guild attributions were altered. When the pageants themselves changed — when they were amalgamated because two or more guilds decided to pool their resources, or when new characters and episodes were added — the original entry was updated by being scraped out and rewritten, in part or in whole. A detailed study of these changes, which includes distinguishing between different scribal hands, has recently become easier because of the advances in digital photography and the techniques of 'virtual restoration' which can be applied on-screen to images of damaged and altered manuscripts. It is even possible to read what is no longer visible to the naked eye. This enables us to see and to compare two stages of the history of the document, and thus of the event it reflects, or, more subtly, of the attitude of the writer of the document towards that event.<sup>19</sup>

It also enables the scholar, more easily and in closer detail, to compare and present side by side other examples of the same hands in different documents — in the same archives or elsewhere. Since many of these documents are dated this provides another useful historical tool. By extending this network, it is also possible to link alterations to guild attributions in the *Ordo* to particular hands and dates. To anticipate, at least two and possibly three separate cases in the period I have identified

for the main alteration can be linked to the hand who minuted the changes to which they refer in the York House Books (see below PLATES 35–37). My illustrations — another bonus of working with computer images is that one can look at these in very fine detail — will enable the readers to dissent from my identifications if they want to, instead of taking them on trust. This is not new to palaeographical study, of course, but scans provide a much more flexible instrument than the standard black-and-white photograph.

This grappling with the historical process has some parallels with recent interest in the use of computer techniques in genetic criticism, the analysis of the physical evidences of the process of composition in literary works, for example the relation of James Joyce's Notebooks to *Finnegan's Wake*. It is not exactly the same, however, since the alterations here were not made for aesthetic reasons, but for administrative ones. Even the sixteenth-century additions and alterations by John Clerke, Deputy Common Clerk, in the Register, which we think of primarily as a literary text, 'The York Plays', were made in response to a practical need: if a passage in a pageant was 'newly made', the clerical officer had to get it down in writing so that he or his successor could check its accuracy in the next outing of the pageant.<sup>20</sup> He was presumably only secondarily if at all interested in it as a literary enhancement.

### **The Council's Clerical Officers and the Play**

One side-effect of this investigation is that it focuses attention on the clerical staff of the City Council and their involvement with the event. Peter Meredith started off investigating 'John Clerke's Hand in the York Register' and ended up also investigating John Clerke. This may at first seem like a slightly more respectable version of the currently popular game of Hunt the Ancestor (the staff at the Borthwick Institute at York tend to assume anyway that that is what you are after), but it has wider-ranging if more intangible results. You begin to build up a tentative sense of pattern: of who was officially responsible for the entries, and possibly why they made them and under what constraints. You even begin to wonder how involved they themselves became with the world they were apparently merely supposed to be recording.

These clerical officers are our main channel of information about the York Play. Some of this is because they minuted decisions made at council meetings, like the 1428 settlement of the dispute between the Marshals and the Smiths or the 1515 shift in funding for the pageant of the

Condemnation of Christ;<sup>21</sup> or because they copied out ordinances of the various guilds who asked to have them entered among the memoranda. In these cases they would have little autonomy about what they recorded and how.

But they appear to have had quite a lot of autonomy in organising their paperwork about the Play. The *Ordo paginarum* is one example: it was 'compiled' by the Common Clerk in 1415, apparently on his own initiative, and updated over the next twenty years, in his own hand.<sup>22</sup> There is no surviving civic ordinance from the 1460s or 1470s telling the Common Clerk or anyone else to compile the Register;<sup>23</sup> was this also a personal initiative? It is at least possible. And why was it done? Was it an administrative response to the eventual separation of Procession and Play, first really evidenced from 1468? Or more particularly to the 1476 directive that a committee of four experienced players be set up to scrutinise not only the actors but also all the 'plaies and pagentes' of Corpus Christi Play?<sup>24</sup> (My ultimate ambition is of course to find the identity of the two main fifteenth-century hands.) Was it originally intended merely as a record, or as (a fashionable term but inescapable) an instrument of control? Did the existence of the Register make the examination of the scripts possible, or did it come into existence so that they might be examined?

The Register is an interesting case because it remained a working document for the best part of a century, long enough to see itself used against the very Play it records. By the middle of the sixteenth century this had become a sensitive politico-religious issue. Perhaps coincidentally, organisational changes (in guild attributions, for example) were now recorded in the Register and not in the *Ordo*. The major updatings, the insertion of whole plays previously for some reason unrecorded, were both apparently in response to directives. On 9 July 1557 it was minuted that 'suche pageantz as be not registred in the Cite booke shall be called in to be registred by discrecion of my lord mayor'. By the time (1559) John Clerke was paid 12d 'for entryng in the Regyster the regynall of the paygant pertainyng to Craft of ffullars whiche was never before Regestred', Elizabeth was on the throne. No other pageants were forthcoming, either through inertia or caution. On 17 June 1567, it was again 'Aggreed that the Pageantes of Corpus christi suche as be not allready Registred shalbe with all convenient spede be fayre written by Iohn Clerke in the old Registre perof, for which he 'or oþer taking payne to be honestly recompensed'.<sup>25</sup> Was this a reaction to the performance on 29 May, or in anticipation of the impending arrival of a new Reforming Dean, Matthew

Hutton?<sup>26</sup> The City Council may have been making a not-so-covert statement of intent that the Play was to go on: but they were giving a hostage to fortune. Despite public demand, the next year's Council agreed that 'the book [of Corpuscrysty play] shuld be perused, and otherwise amendyd before it were playd'.<sup>27</sup> The following year was the last recorded performance. An abortive attempt to revive it in 1579 failed when the Register was handed over to Archbishop Grindal and Dean Hutton for a preliminary critical viewing, and vanished into the Minster, never, apparently, to return.<sup>28</sup>

The very name of the Register throws light on the relationship of the Common Clerk with the Play. He was in charge of the City's record keeping. But this was not just general archiving. It gave what he recorded a special quasi-legal status. He was often a trained lawyer. Burton, who was a notary public, twice subscribed entries in the *Ordo paginarum* pages, with his mark and/or his signature. The R in both cases stands for Registravit,

This image has been removed for copyright reasons. You can see the original if you buy a paper copy of *Medieval English Theatre 25*: see <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/users/meth/intro.html> for instructions on how to order.

PLATE 26: A/Y Memorandum Book: Burton's marks and signature:

left, fol. 252<sup>v</sup>, next to heading; right, fol. 255<sup>r</sup>, at end of second pageant list.

'registered [it]'. To *register* a document was — it still is — to make it a matter of official record. The material in the Memorandum Book and in the House Books was not only there for reference,<sup>29</sup> or as an exemplar (as with the billets), it could also set a precedent.<sup>30</sup> If a document like the *Ordo* or the Proclamation were entered into the book, it remained enforceable until it was rescinded or amended. The scripts in the Register were the official scripts, though there seems to have been an amount of latitude for the crafts to perform 'new matter' before it was entered. On this last occasion, however, doctrinal censorship intervened: what was to be played must be strictly what was in the book, and what was in the book must be corrected first — when the censors could find the time.

Was there a causal relationship, due to the dynamics of local government, between the considerable amount of attention paid to the *Ordo* and then to the Register by the Common Clerk and his Deputy, and



their later involvement in the actual event? Were they seen as in some way ultimately responsible for it because they had made themselves responsible for the documentation, perhaps beyond the call of duty? It would be a not unfamiliar scenario in the world of administration. The Council directive of 3 April 1476 lays down that the plays and pageants are to be vetted, in advance, by a committee of players. We hear no more of them. The next time anything of this sort is mentioned, the Common Clerk is 'keeping the Register' on the day itself. How did he become involved?

There may be a parallel to his rôle in the ordering of the Corpus Christi procession. Eight weeks later, on 31 May 1476, another directive provides for the bearing of torches in the Friday Corpus Christi procession. All members of guilds or crafts who carry torches either from devotion or out of custom

compareant et pacifice eant in suis ordine forma et locis prout Clericus Communis huius Ciuitatis pro tempore existens tunc eos & eorum quemlibet ad hoc premunire uocare et nominare faciet seu premuniet nominabit et vocabit <sup>31</sup>

'are to appear and go peaceably in their order, manner, and places as the Common Clerk of this City for the time being shall then cause them and everyone of theirs<sup>32</sup> to be summoned, called, or named to that effect, or as he [himself] shall summon, call, and name [them]'

on pain of a fine of 40s. The polite fiction that all such instructions are issued by the Mayor seems to have been shelved: the Common Clerk draws up the lists, so the Common Clerk summons them.<sup>33</sup> Moreover he seems to be given authority to alter the running order. There is no reason why he should not: by this time his rôle was executive as much as it was secretarial. Similarly, if the Common Clerk was in charge of keeping the Register in a secretarial sense, it seems only natural that he should 'keep' it in an administrative sense as well. Secretariially, he was a professional reader and writer, used to taking notes under difficult circumstances. (It may also be that in the 1470s and 80s the 'Connyng discrete and able playeres' could do the one but not the other.)<sup>34</sup> Administratively, he had the authority. The exact date at which he started to do this is unknown. The earliest actual reference to his keeping the Register at the first station is 1536, but his occupying the station is noted from 1520, and in 1501 he seems to have had a special 'place' (*locus*) alongside the first station.<sup>35</sup> He might have been there, quietly unmentioned, for the last quarter-century.

This is not the place to discuss what exactly ‘keeping the Register’ implied: we can see what John Clerke did, and Miles Newton before him, but not what followed as a result. They seem to have been driven largely by the quest for accuracy. I mention it merely because it gives a historical setting to our particular interest.

### The Questions

There is no external evidence that I know of that the Common Clerk was asked to have this particular change to the Proclamation entered in A/Y. We do not know who actually redrafted the final paragraph, or when, and in response to what, or by whom it was approved, or what the time-lag was between the drafting and the entering. But here it is, and one can extract some information from it.

The obvious questions are:

1. Whose was this later hand?
2. When were the alterations made? and
3. What was there originally?

To which may be added Question 4: ‘What are the implications?’

Questions 1 and 2 can be answered by traditional scholarly means. Question 3 can be now answered by the application of computer science. Question 4 is a matter for discussion.

### Who and when?

The reviser has a very distinctive late-fifteenth/early-sixteenth-century hand. In the facsimile of the *York Plays* and the *Ordo paginarum*, Peter Meredith pointed out that

the hand of this revision occurs later in the A/Y Memorandum Book in entries dated 5 October, 21 Henry VII (1505; f. 350v) and 4 June 2 Henry VIII (1510; f. 369). The script is Anglicana of the late-fifteenth or early-sixteenth century.<sup>36</sup>

I don’t think, having looked at it closely, that the script on fols 350<sup>v</sup> or 369<sup>r</sup> is written by the same hand, though it is very like. It is not just that on 369<sup>r</sup> he spells ‘chamber’ *chalmer* throughout, and does not use a *þ* in standard abbreviations like *oper*, *þat*, and *þer*, as Hand C does: similar spelling variants are common throughout the documents in the records. Hand C appears tighter and narrower, and leans slightly backwards. However, I would be the first to acknowledge that I am not an expert in

recognising individual hands, especially when the scribes have been trained to write in different styles for different occasions and languages – and when they avail themselves of a full range of letter forms, especially for *a*, *e*, and *w*. (I was encouraged to discover that in a case concerning slanderous bills in 1536, one professional York scribe could not swear to the identification of his own hand. However, he was a convicted forger, and was being understandably cautious.)<sup>37</sup> It is certain, however, that both are written in a style which appears in the York civic documents for the first two decades of the sixteenth century, after which it was superseded by the more flamboyant Secretary script associated with John Clerke.

To make identification even more difficult, the entry in the Proclamation is also written over a roughened piece of parchment, and packed in quite tightly, as if the scribe had rather too much material to enter into a restricted space. He uses a very fine pen, a matter of choice, perhaps, rather than convenience. Either as a result, or because it came naturally to him, his hand is rather small, smaller than Hand A, which is not itself particularly large. PLATE 27 shows the exact size.

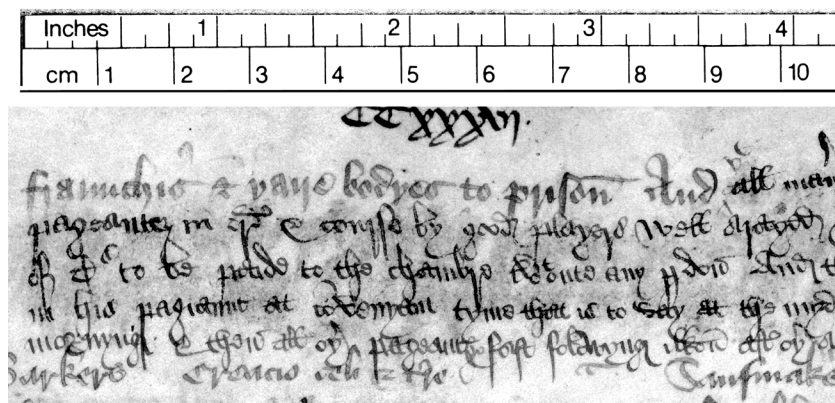


PLATE 27: Scripts at top of fol. 255r, exact size.  
Photo DIAMM, © York City Archives & Meg Twycross.

I have not, however, been able to resist the temptation of pursuing it through other York civic documents. An exact match would help to date the entry more precisely. There are various sources of dated material for the period: chief are the Freeman's Register, the B/Y Memorandum Book, and House Book 9.

Folios 4<sup>r</sup> to 27<sup>r</sup> of the Freeman's Register (these pages are not, unfortunately, edited in the Surtees Society volume),<sup>38</sup> contain minutes of the annual election of the Mayor of York,<sup>39</sup> and the immediately following election or re-election of the Common Clerk. This is a hitherto almost untapped resource of scribal hands. It is not, however as straightforward a resource as one might think, as there is no guarantee that the scribe who recorded the election of the Common Clerk was actually the Common Clerk himself. Roger Burton did not record his own first election in 1415 (fol. 12<sup>r</sup>), though he seems to have recorded his election in the subsequent year, with a firm statement of the amount of the salary. The hand which records the elections of Robert Plumpton in 1505 and 1506 also records his death in office in the latter year (fol. 25<sup>r</sup>). The history of scribal hands in the York records is complex. This section does however provide a chronology of Common Clerks, and a snapshot of changing fashions in professional scripts. This is expanded by the actual lists of admissions to the freedom of the city which follow.

The most promising section is the Common Clerkship of John Beilby, which ran from St Blaise's Day, 2 Henry VIII (3 February 1511 by our reckoning), when he replaced Robert Pulleyn (folio 26<sup>r</sup>), to 1519.<sup>40</sup> The first (1511) entry is not by our scribe: but at the bottom of 26<sup>r</sup> and the top of 26<sup>v</sup> a small, neat, and very similar hand records the elections of Mayor

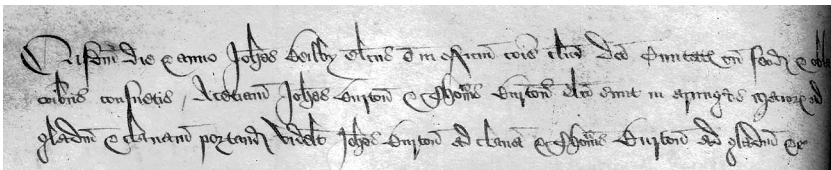


PLATE 28: Freeman's Register (MS D 1) fol. 26<sup>v</sup>, detail; ©York City Archives.

George Kirk and Common Clerk John Beilby on St Maur's Day and their swearing-in on St Blaise's Day, 3 Henry VIII (15 January and 3 February 1512). The entries recording the admission of Freeman in the period 1511–1517, fols 176<sup>v</sup>–179<sup>r</sup>, are written in variants of the same kind of script, but none is definitely identifiable as our Hand C.

York kept several other ongoing books of record. The A/Y Memorandum Book (1376–1547) which contains the *Ordo paginarum*, is the most substantial. It was supplemented by the B/Y Memorandum Book, which runs in parallel with items from 1371–1596. According to its editor, Joyce W. Percy, it is possible 'that B/Y was intended originally as a register

of deeds, since the first third of the volume, for the period 1371–c.1430 is devoted entirely to records of this kind'.<sup>41</sup> We will come back to it. The surviving House Books begin in 1476,<sup>42</sup> though there was a now lost volume which covered material of the 1460s. They record the business of what we would now call council meetings, though they also record decisions made by the Mayor and select council officials, and copies of official letters, writs, and other material.

The entries in House Book 9 extend from 1503–1519. There are a number of scribal possibilities on folios ranging from 56<sup>f</sup>, dated 21 November 2 Henry VIII (1510) to the top of 96<sup>v</sup>, dated 11 June 10 Henry VIII (1518). The one which looks clearest to me is on fol. 94<sup>v</sup>, dated

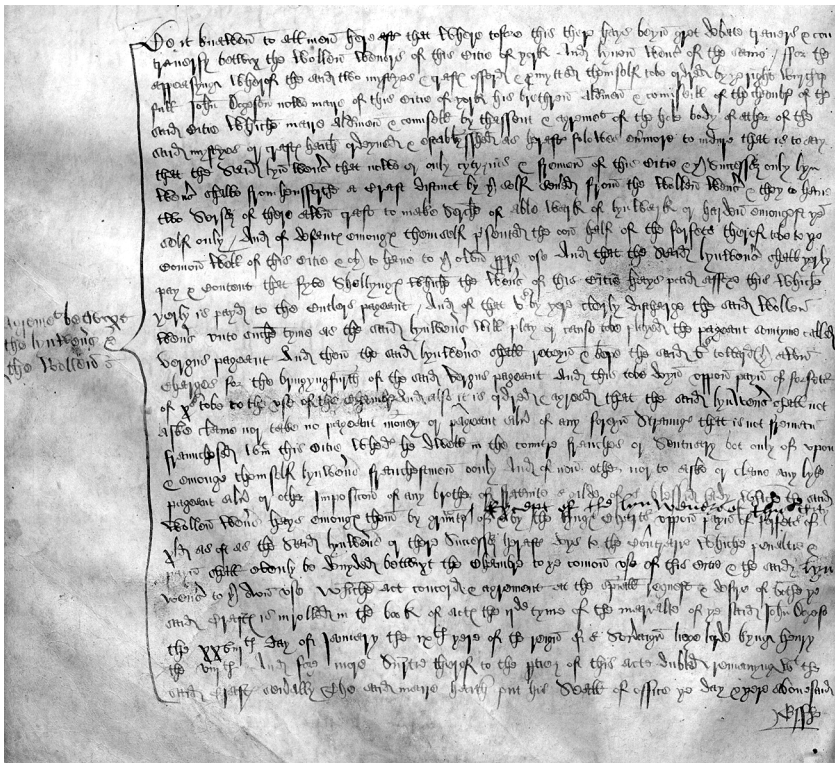


PLATE 29: House Book 9, fol. 94v, lower portion.

Photo © York City Archives and Meg Twycross.



PLATE 30: Comparison of hands,  
A/Y fol. 255r (left) and House Book 9, fol. 94v (right).  
I have faded the other words in the images for added clarity.

22 January 9 Henry VIII (1518). This page contains the second agreement between the Linen Weavers and the Woollen Weavers concerning the 5s which the latter customarily pay to the Cutlers as pageant dues. These are henceforth to be paid by the Linen Weavers until such time as they 'will play or cause to be played the pageant somtyme called Vergus pageant', when they may retain it for their own use.<sup>43</sup> 'Vergus pageant' is of course the notorious *Burial of the Virgin* which was something of a hot potato; the City Council seems never quite to have given up hope that the Linenweavers might someday be persuaded to perform it. This entry is full of useful comparative words such as *pageant*, *play*, *craft*, and *bryngyng furth*, not to mention *the*, *that*, *ther*, and *And* (for a selection see PLATE 30). And it is signed at the bottom.

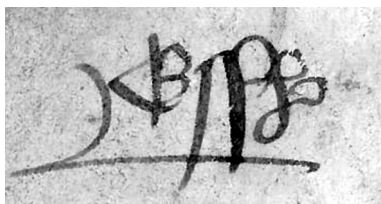


PLATE 31: Esshe's signature, introduced by a bracket.  
Compare with the bracket enclosing *vjs viij<sup>d</sup>* on A/Y fol. 255<sup>r</sup>.

So who was Esshe?

He signed a great many of the entries both in House Book 9 and in the B/Y Memorandum Book. At this time several scribes had taken to signing their work: besides Esshe there is 'Beilby' (the Common Clerk, who clearly did not write our entry) on fol. 71<sup>v</sup>, and 'Blagge', otherwise unknown to me so far, in the B/Y Memorandum Book fol. 205<sup>v</sup> (middle of page). The range of scripts he used (if all the signatures were to demonstrate that he had written them personally) is bewilderingly varied, especially according to language. Latin is written in a different style from English. But there is no doubt who he is. In the Freeman's Register, fol. 176<sup>v</sup>, for the mayoralty of Bartram Dawson, dated 3 February 1511 to 3 February 1512 (our style), the new Common Clerk and Deputy Common Clerk are admitted to the freedom of the city. Their names are John Beilby, *Communis Clericus*, and William at Esshe, *Subclericus*.

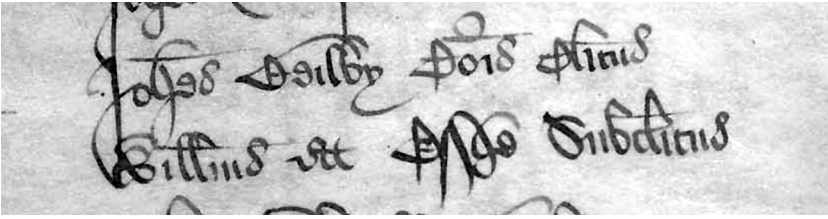


PLATE 32: Freeman's Register fol. 176<sup>v</sup> (detail). Photo © York City Archives.

In the official records, the spotlight is on the Common Clerk. His Deputy is a much more shadowy figure. It looks very much, however, as if they came effectively as a package. The election of the Common Clerk is officially recorded each year in the Freeman's Register, but the fee paid to him appears, at least in the earlier years, to have included his *subclericus*. The Freeman's Register for the 1380s–1390s, when William de Chestre was Common Clerk (1380–1405), specifically states that he was paid *pro feodo suo et clerici sui* ('for his fee and that of his clerk': Freeman's Register fol. 9<sup>r</sup>). The earliest surviving Chamberlains' Roll (1396/1397) records quarterly payments of 35s to the Common Clerk for himself and for his clerk: *clerico communi pro se et clerico suo*.<sup>44</sup> The same seems to have been true of William del Bothe (1405–1415), and Roger Burton (1415–1436).<sup>45</sup> For some of the time at least, Burton's Deputy Clerk was William Revetour.<sup>46</sup> John Shirwood's (1441–1469) long-standing Deputy was John Rukeby.<sup>47</sup> Other names appear occasionally in the accounts, and would probably appear more often if more had survived: Thomas Davyson, Deputy to Nicholas Lancaster (1477–1482), who seems to have lost his job when his chief retired to go on to higher things;<sup>48</sup> William Lelegrave, Deputy to Robert Plumpton (1491–1507) in 1499–1500; Ralph Batty, Deputy to John Pulleyn (1507–1511).<sup>49</sup> The best known of them all, thanks to Peter Meredith, is John Clerke, whose long-running involvement in the later record-keeping of the Corpus Christi Play suggests that his predecessor may have been involved in a similar way.<sup>50</sup>

The evidence so far suggests that when a new Common Clerk came in, there was also a new Deputy. John Clerke was an exception: when his master Miles Newton died in 1550, the incoming Common Clerk Thomas Fail agreed to keep him on in the same position, 'for suche diligent paynes as he the same John haith heretofore takyn in the said office of a Long tyme'.<sup>51</sup> Possibly the relationship between them was that of the chief executive and his trusted personal assistant. The Common Clerk was a



high-ranking servant of the Council.<sup>52</sup> The actual secretarial work was clearly often left to his Deputy or other clerks. In the later years he was often away on diplomatic missions, liaising with the Recorder in London. Virtually the first thing that John Beilby was asked to do on becoming Common Clerk (20 January 1511 — he was elected on 15 January) was to ride to London to negotiate with the King for ‘suche and lyke socour and helpe’ as the city had had from his ‘most honourable progenitorz’.<sup>53</sup> This would have left William at Esshe in charge of the Council administration.

It may well be that record-keeping for the Play was always delegated to the Deputy Common Clerk. Though Roger Burton compiled the *Ordo paginarum*, he initially gave it to someone else (Hand A) to make a fair copy for the records.<sup>54</sup> There will have to be a lot more careful comparison before one can be sure. In A/Y, apart from the early substantive alterations to the *Ordo*, and this one to the proclamation, there are only a few often heavily damaged changes in guild attributions to go by. However, if our Hand C is William at Esshe, he not only updated the last paragraph of the proclamation, but also possibly made the last visible change in guild attribution, the addition of the Vestmentmakers who became contributory to the Skinners pageant in 1517.<sup>55</sup> This is only tentative, but

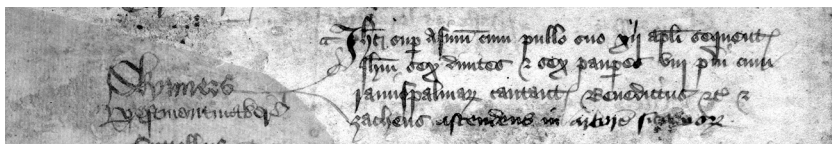


PLATE 33: A/Y Memorandum Book fol. 253v (detail).

Photo DIAMM, © York City Archives.

House Book 9, fol. 93<sup>v</sup>, contains an entry in a very similar hand, though unsigned, dated 21 November, 9 Henry VIII (1517), recording the final

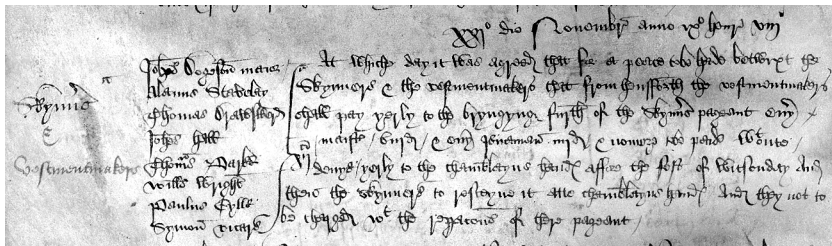
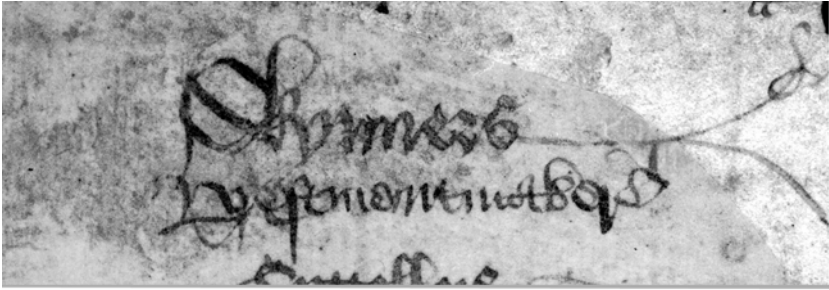
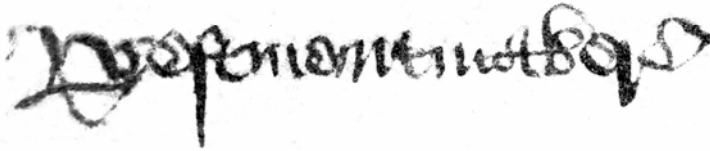


PLATE 34: House Book 9, fol. 93v (detail). Photo © York City Archives.

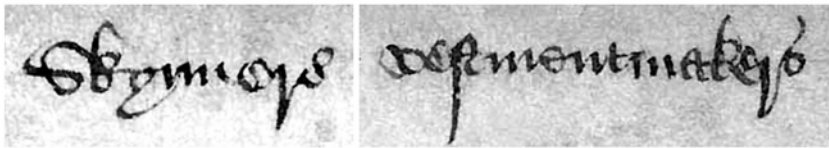
settlement of this arrangement. The person who wrote this entry, whether Esshe or not, seems to have written the guild attribution on A/Y fol. 253<sup>v</sup>.



*Ordo paginarum* : A/Y Memorandum Book fol. 253<sup>v</sup>.



*Ordo paginarum* : Vestmentmakers (colour selected).



House Book 9, fol. 93<sup>v</sup>: from entry dated 21 November, 9 Henry VIII (1517).

PLATE 35: Comparison of hands: n.b. *k* and *-ers* in *Skynners*.

It is possible that he also wrote the guild attributions for the Linen Weavers on A/Y fol. 254<sup>r</sup>: the script is similar to that of *Skynners*. In that case he might well be Esshe, finishing off the job on House Book fol. 94<sup>v</sup>.

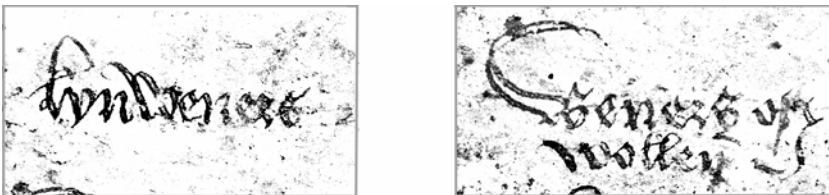


PLATE 36: A/Y Memorandum Book, fol. 254<sup>r</sup> (detail), guild attributions.

The one complication in this argument is that Hand C definitely appears on House Book 9, fol. 37<sup>r</sup>. It is an exact match (PLATE 38), but the date is far too early for the rest of the hands: 16 April, 22 Henry VII (1507 our style).<sup>56</sup> It deals with a potential overlap between the Carpenters' and Cartwrights' crafts, and states that the Cartwrights are to pay pageant money to the Carpenters, 'as is in there ordinall'. However, it looks as if it were a later addition. It does not quite fit on the layout of the page: perhaps it was copied later from a piece of paper or parchment that had been misplaced.

This hand, or one near to it, also seems to have made alterations to the top three guild attributions in that immensely complex palimpsest, the composite play of *The Condemnation of Christ*. On 25 April 1515 the 'Tilehouses' (Tilemakers, not to be confused with the Tilehatchers), who had been lead group with 'the Milners Saucemakers & oþer misteres', were excused from bringing forth their pageant because the craft was 'ruinous & decayed', and the Milners (Millers) were made responsible for the bringing forth '& to be the Tope of the same'.<sup>57</sup> This is reflected by the alteration on fol. 253<sup>v</sup> of the *Ordo*. It is difficult to see, because not only is the list erased and overwritten, most of it is under the paper guard and appears through it as a blurred image: but there is enough to see that the writing of *Milners* ('the Tope of the same'), *Ropers*, and (possibly) *Seveourz*<sup>58</sup> is the same or very close.



PLATE 37: Left, guild attributions on A/Y Memorandum Book fol. 253<sup>v</sup>. Right, compare similar forms from House Book 9 fol. 37<sup>r</sup>, especially the slope of the *m*, and the abbreviations *per/par* in *Ropers* and *partie*, and the *-urz* ending *Seveourz* and *Sersourz*.



PLATE 38: Comparison of Hand C in *Ordo paginarum* (left)  
and in House Book 9, fol. 37r (right).

Hand C does not appear to have made any additions or alterations to the Register, not even to the first re-attribution of the Tilemakers' pageant to the Mylners on fol. 180<sup>r</sup>.

It looks, then, as if we can date the alteration to the A/Y proclamation to 1511–1519, or at the earliest 1507. It is not part of the 1415 scenario. It belongs to the early years of Henry VIII, not to Henry V. It does not tell us anything about the length or duration of the early Play.

William at Esshe is otherwise somewhat elusive. He joined the Corpus Christi Guild with Mar[ion?] his wife in 1512, three years before Beilby.<sup>59</sup>

He witnessed the will of Issabell Blythe, widow of Andrew Blythe, on 13 May 1515. She had Corpus Christi Guild and All Saints' Pavement connections.<sup>60</sup> He was present, with John Beilby, in the Council Chamber on 14 June 1512 when Richard Kendall asked for two deeds to be enrolled in the B/Y Memorandum Book, which Esshe duly did, and subscribed.<sup>61</sup> Most of the deeds entered into the B/Y book at this period are his work. I have not located a will, or, as yet, looked at the City Chamberlains' Books for possible payments. Master Tristram Tesshe, described in 1536 as gentleman, whose servant Nicholas Green turned out to be the real copyist of the slanderous bills I mentioned earlier, may have been a relative.<sup>62</sup>

So far, then, a more shadowy figure than John Clerke, whose biography Peter Meredith sketched in such detail, but one whose relationship to the Corpus Christi Play may have been similar. He might even have deputised for John Beilby in 'keeping the Register' at the Common Clerk's place by the first station at the Priory Gates. Unfortunately in the only record dating from Beilby's term of office, 1516, that particular entry is left blank: the first explicit record dates from 1520.<sup>63</sup> But perhaps William at Esshe had first-hand experience of the 4.30 a.m. start.

### **What was underneath?**

So we appear to have an office, a name (perhaps), and a date. Now to Question 3. Because this later hand (let us continue to call him Hand C, even if Esshe seems an attractive candidate) has more to get in than was in the original, and writes a smaller hand, after the first half-line he is not writing directly on top of the original. This is convenient, because it makes it easier to recover the original lower layer of the palimpsest.

#### **A. *Methodology.***

Those who are not interested in technicalities can skip this. It will in any case probably be obsolete in a couple of years. However, it shows how I reached my current findings.

Thanks to digital photography, it is now possible to work non-invasively on problem manuscripts, using the techniques of 'virtual restoration' pioneered by Kevin Kiernan in the *Electronic Beowulf* edition: see <[www.uky.edu/~kiernan/eBeowulf/main.htm](http://www.uky.edu/~kiernan/eBeowulf/main.htm)>. I was kick-started into this part of the investigation by the help of Julia Craig-McFeely, the Project Manager of the Digital Image Archive of Medieval Music (DIAMM). She gave me advice based on her accumulated experience in

dealing with medieval manuscript palimpsests, and a much appreciated master-class. (For a description and explanation of these techniques, see their website at <[www.diamm.ac.uk](http://www.diamm.ac.uk)>.)

I have written several paeans in praise of the digitisation of manuscripts elsewhere,<sup>64</sup> so I will not repeat myself. Suffice it to say that recently over a very short space of time, desk-top computers have become powerful enough to cope with scans of a size which were unimaginable only recently — the ones on which I have been working are on average 230+ MB each — and will doubtless in the next few years make even these look like pygmies. Despite the references in the newspapers to satellite technology, everything described here was done in Adobe Photoshop 5.5. I would however appreciate the use of a video spectral comparator, as I suspect that infra-red, for example, may be a useful tool.

York City Archives have recently disbound the A/Y Memorandum Book for conservation and rebinding, and are making use of the opportunity to scan it. (This work is still in progress.) However, though the flatbed scanner they use has produced some very readable results,<sup>65</sup> it also automatically 'sharpens' the images. This removes some of the finer gradations in colour between pixels, which reduces their usefulness for really detailed work. The Archivist, Mrs Rita Freedman, very kindly gave me permission to bring in DIAMM's current specialist manuscript photographer, Peter Scott, with their camera, to take supplementary digital photographs of the *Ordo paginarum* and various pages from the Freeman's Register.<sup>66</sup> He also took ultra-violet scans of the *Ordo folios*.<sup>67</sup>

My campaign on the palimpsest used both kinds of photograph, the high-resolution RGB scans, and the UV scans. Both yield different types of information. In this particular case these often supplemented each other. A/Y is a textbook example of pretty well everything that can happen to a manuscript, except (*absit omen*) fire, though it has come close to it.<sup>68</sup>

The RGB scans reproduce the manuscript in very fine detail. Slight differences in colour, imperceptible to the naked eye, can be manipulated in Adobe Photoshop to 'restore' faded and even erased inks. You can make the colour darker to increase visibility, or even change it completely (a strong dark blue is useful) to distinguish it from the rest of the image. This has been very useful in my work on the body of the *Ordo paginarum*, though in this particular case it turned out to be supplementary to the UV.

Sometimes it is effective when working on an RGB scan to select one range of colour and copy it to create another image without the distractions of the background. This colour range can be as narrow or as wide as you

like. PLATE 39 shows the results on fol. 254<sup>v</sup>, the main body of the Proclamation. You can pick up some of the writing under the paper guard.

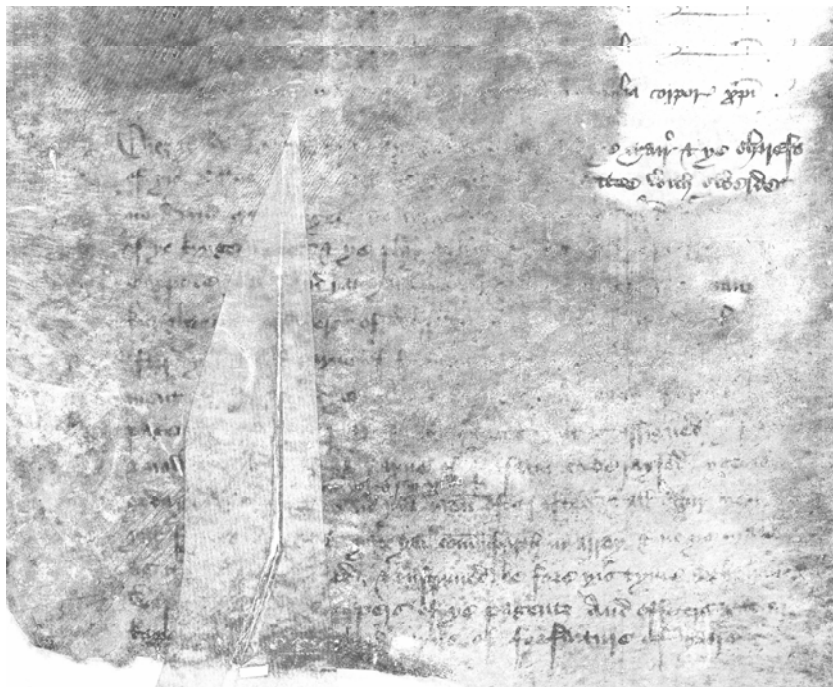


PLATE 39: Proclamation on fol. 254<sup>v</sup>, original colour enhanced and selected.  
Photo DIAMM, © York City Archives and Meg Twycross.

UV effectively, after many manipulations,<sup>69</sup> produces what looks like a very grainy black-and-white photograph — though in this case it started off royal and turquoise blue. It has an extremely restricted tonal range. In normal circumstances with faded ink, this would be the obvious first technique to use and might well tell you all that you need to know. The peculiar circumstances of this manuscript, however, make it rather more difficult. Since UV picks up *all* the ink which fluoresces, you cannot at first tell the difference between over- and under-writing, and have to devise techniques to get round this.<sup>70</sup> (IR might be more useful, and I hope to try this next.) Where there is water damage, UV also picks up the grain of the parchment which has absorbed the washed-over ink. The bottom of this manuscript is heavily water-damaged, which made the UV scan of

fol. 254<sup>v</sup> less than sharp, and very difficult to enlarge meaningfully. This was particularly frustrating when I wanted to use words and phrases from the rest of the Proclamation for comparison.

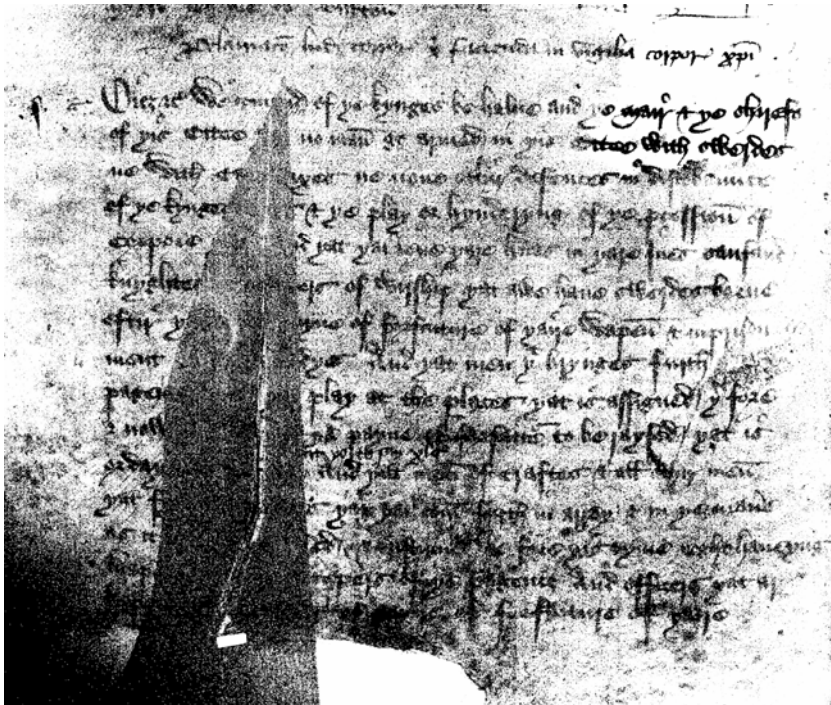


PLATE 40: Proclamation on fol. 254<sup>v</sup>, from UV scan.

A small patch of undamaged text can be seen on the top right-hand side.

Photo DIAMM, © York City Archives and Meg Twycross.

The following is about as good as it gets:

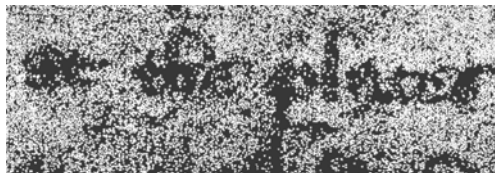


PLATE 41: Detail from fol. 254<sup>v</sup>.



PLATES 42 and 43 show various stages in the reconstruction of the UV scan of the passage in question.

There are no artificial editorial intrusions. I have not added to these images in any way. Nor have I 'cleaned up' the images. The only alterations I have made are at one stage in layering an inverted image of the overwriting on top of the original (see PLATE 43).<sup>71</sup> Inverting the colour of an image produces a negative, and makes a very dark colour, like the ink, very light. I inverted the original RGB image, and then selected the colour of the writing, lightened it to make it as near to white as possible, copied those pixels, and layered the copy onto the original. Using the original scan as a guide, and working in extreme close-up on a black layer as background, I *have* removed from the overlying layer any extraneous white (originally dark) patches and dots which were not part of Scribe C's writing. (Some of these patches and dots were irregularities in the parchment or very conspicuously later ink blots, some ghosts of the original.) I then suppressed the black layer, leaving the white image over the overwriting: see PLATE 43(a). A supplementary stage was to merge the layers, select the colour of the underlying writing, and copy that onto a new image: see PLATE 43(b). Sometimes this may give a less distracting image.

Dr Craig-McFeely prefers to change the colour of the over-writing to something like that of the background parchment. In this particular case, I found that making it flat white made it, paradoxically, easier to disregard: it was like looking at a garden through a white-painted fence. One useful side-effect is that where the later writing overlies the original, the eye takes note that there may be something underneath and compensates. This may occasionally be misleading, but employed with caution is a useful tool.

I thus had two versions to work from. The first was the enhanced original RGB scan: see PLATES 44, 45(a). This was not as forceful as the UV, but gave some information which was lost in the UV, especially on the right-hand side of the image, where the contrast was not so good. The second was the manipulated UV scan. This gave most of the information, but inevitably lacked gradations of tone.

There is a third witness. The show-through from the recto onto the verso is very faint, and at first I was afraid that it was the overwriting that was coming through: however, there were traces of the original which could be heightened electronically: PLATE 45(b). They are not very strong, but appear to confirm some of my readings, especially at the right-hand edge of the parchment, which is darker and almost illegible in the UV.

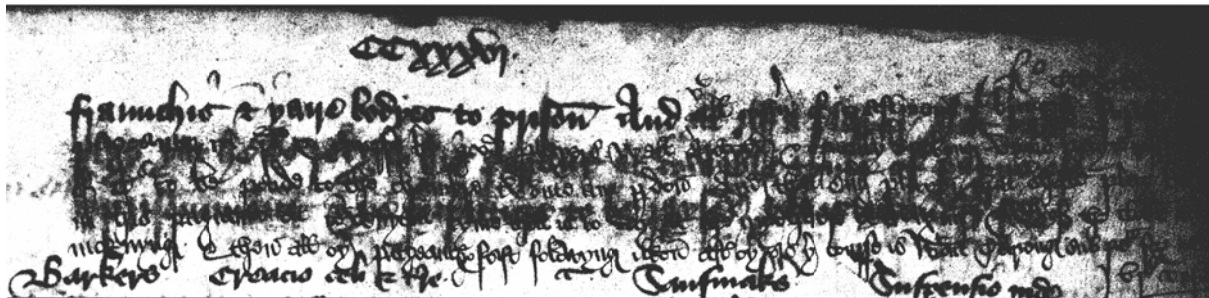
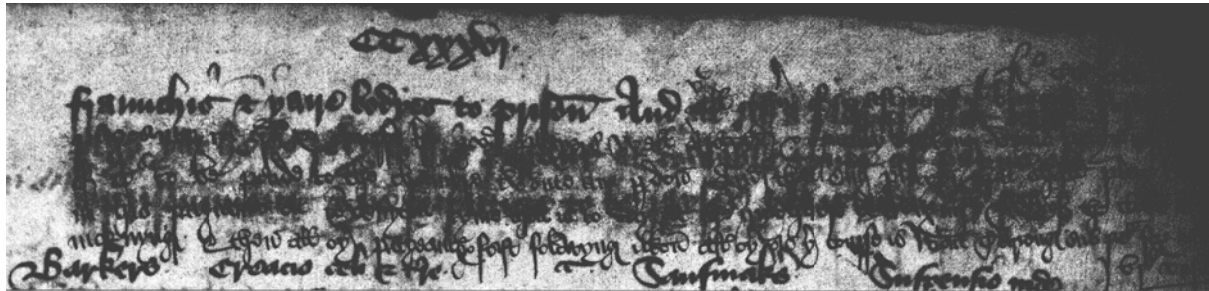


PLATE 42: Top of fol. 255<sup>r</sup>.

- (a) UV scan after several manipulations. Both layers of script are visible. The underlying text appears as a blur. The parchment appears dark grey.
- (b) UV scan with background lightened. The underlying text is more visible, but the over-writing interferes with a clear view.

Photo DIAMM, © York City Archives and Meg Twycross.

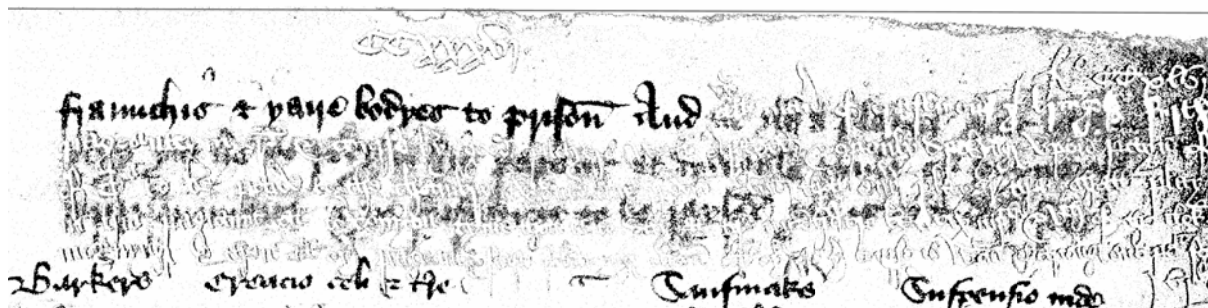


PLATE 43: Top of fol. 255v: further work on UV scans.

- (a) The colour of the over-writing has been inverted on a separate scan, cleaned up, and superimposed on the original scan. It is easier to make out the original writing underneath it.
- (b) The colour of the original writing has been selected, and copied to a new file. It appears fainter but free from surrounding distractions. The overwriting is still visible, but as an absence. N.b. that where the overwriting overlaps the original, the original is not visible.

Photo DIAMM, © York City Archives and Meg Twycross..

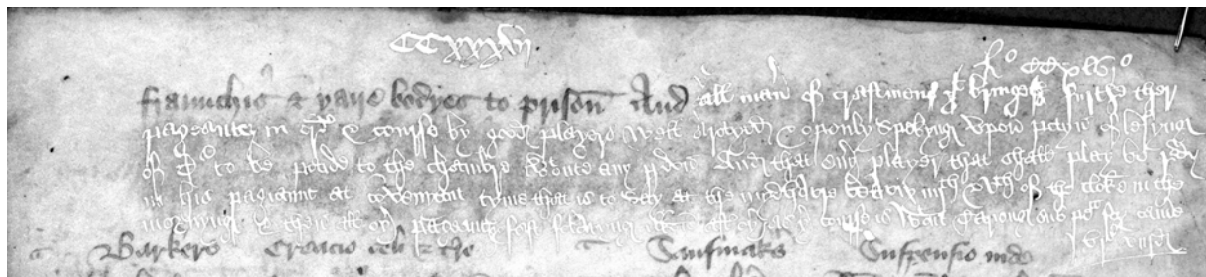
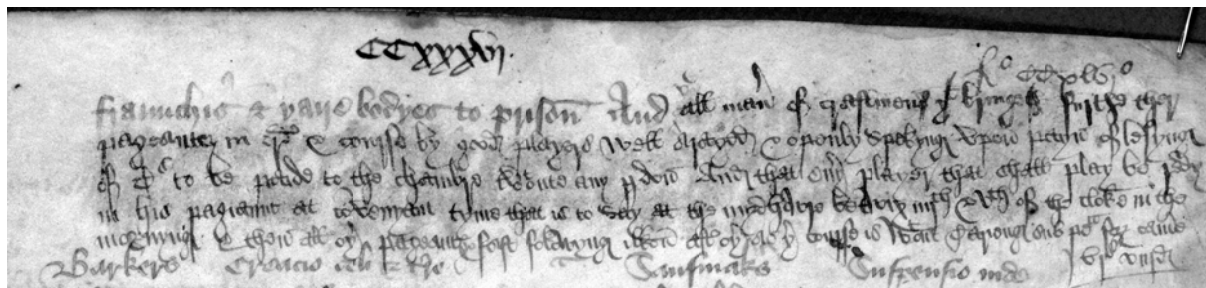


PLATE 44: RGB scan of top of fol. 255<sup>r</sup>.

- (a) Original with levels enhanced.
- (b) Previous image with white inverse of Scribe C's writing superimposed.

Photo DIAMM. © York City Archives and Meg Twycross.

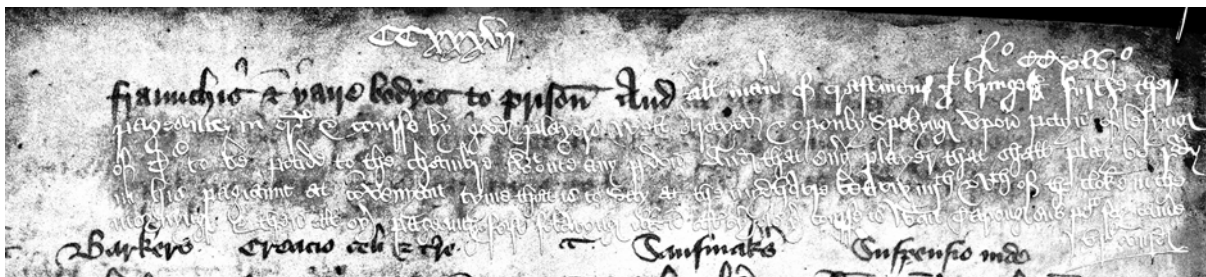


PLATE 45 (a): Previous image with selected colours heightened.

Photo DIAMM, © York City Archives and Meg Twycross.

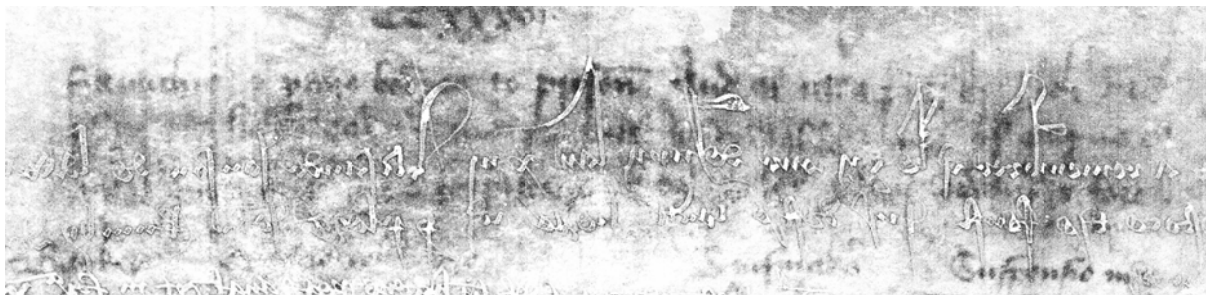


Plate 45 (b): Showthrough on fol. 255v enhanced, image reversed horizontally

Photo DIAMM, © York City Archives and Meg Twycross..

No one technique gave an all-inclusive result. The state of the manuscript varies from area to area and deciphering it was very much a matter of trial and error.

Palaeographers know that very often recognising a word depends on its overall shape: piecing it out letter by letter is the second confirmatory stage. In this case some words were half concealed by the over-writing, for example the first word on the last line, which looks like a series of minims. One can however make an educated guess both from the context and by comparing visually with a word or phrase from the rest of the text of the Proclamation on the facing page (fol. 254<sup>v</sup>).

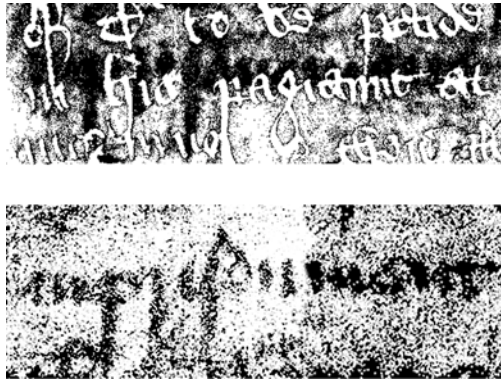


PLATE 46: Comparison:

- (a) fol. 255<sup>f</sup>: first word of third original line (UV scan enhanced);
- (b) fol. 254<sup>v</sup>: *imprisonment* (UV scan: composite from end of one line— *inprison* — and beginning of next — *ment*).  
Photo DIAMM, © York City Archives and Meg Twycross

This also involved restoration: it is bad luck that the one piece of protracted writing in English in the *Ordo paginarum* folios should have been almost completely washed out by the Ouse. The UV scan is useful but, as I said before, easier to read from than to use for detailed comparisons. The enhanced RGB scan (PLATE 39) works for some of the page but not all. Often it is a trade-off between the two.

The final witness is of course Hand C. The re-draft may have had more material than his original, but since it was an official proclamation, and one that was familiar through a century of use, it seems likely that it

kept some of the original phrasing where it was relevant. I shall refer to him, with cut-out images, when it seems appropriate.

### ***B. Presentation***

One difficulty in presenting this research in a paper format is that some of the RGB work depends on enhancing minute gradations of colour in various ways; you can thus see things on screen which disappear when the results are printed in greyscale. Another is that on screen, the results are enlarged. You can cut out details and print them, but cannot show the larger picture when you are restricted to the printed area of a *METH* page, 11 cm x 16 cm. With the UV scans, it is paradoxically easier to read the text when the image is reduced, but more difficult to get detailed images for comparison of individual words. I may thus speak with more confidence than the printed evidence might seem to warrant.

### ***C. Transcription***

It is sometimes easier to read the script from the overall impression when the image is smaller. Sometimes one needs to get in close. I shall split it up into sections and transcribe it bit by bit, with comments on the difficult-to-read words. As it does not divide neatly down the middle, I shall do this phrase by phrase.

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#### ***Line 1, phrase A***

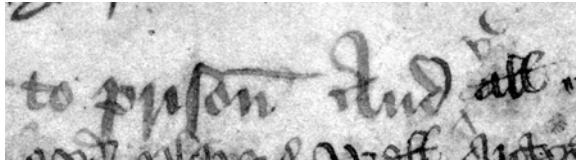
This image has been removed for copyright reasons. You can see the original if you buy a paper copy of *Medieval English Theatre 25*: see <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/users/meth/intro.html> for instructions on how to order.

#### **fraunchis & þaire bodyes**

This image is the original. Note the ‘dotted’ *i*: the loop will appear below as a diagnostic feature. There is no visible difference between the *þ* in *þaire* and the *y* in *bodyes*, but I have transcribed them as two different letters.

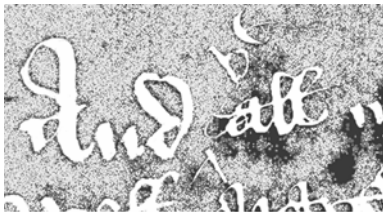
---

## Line 1, phrase B



to prisoun<sup>bat</sup> And <sup>bat</sup>bat

The top image is the original, the lower UV. The first of the reconstructed words, *bat*, is not easy to disentangle. Scribe C has erased it very thoroughly, written over it, and then had second thoughts about his syntax (see page 105). He has inserted a superscript *bat*, whose tail curves down and gives the impression in the UV scan of a bow on an underlying *a*. It may be that Scribe A also made an alteration. The *all* over the top also suggests that there is an *all* underneath, but this is an optical illusion. Compare this with *And bat* from the Proclamation on fol. 254<sup>v</sup>:



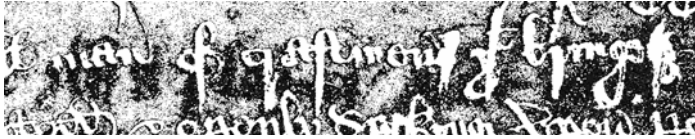
Top image: UV with over-writing superimposed in white.

Lower image: UV of the same words from fol. 253<sup>v</sup>.

Annoyingly, the tail of the *p* has also got entangled with some showthrough from the verso, a distinction only visible on-screen in colour. The caret mark adds a further layer of confusion.

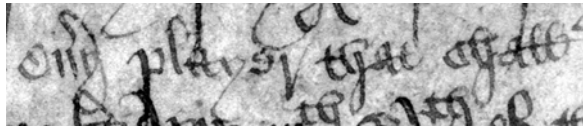


Line 1, phrase C



ylk a player bat [shal]

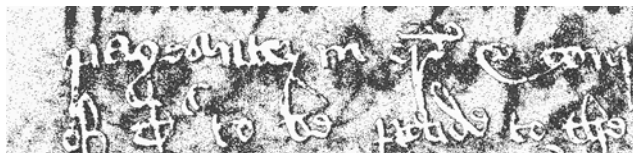
The first three words are fairly clear. The *bat* is a guess based on the general shape and the apparent crossbar of the *t*. The last word is not really visible at all, though there is a hint of it in some of my scans. I am probably influenced by Hand C's version – see below.



euery player that shall

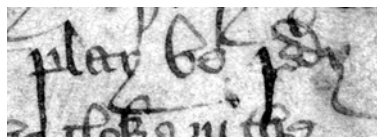
---

Line 2, phrase A



play bat he be redy

This seems fairly clear. The *he* is particularly sharp. See also Hand C:



play be redy

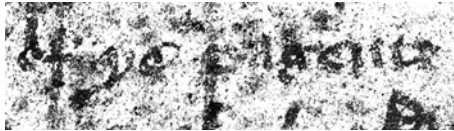
---

Line 2 phrase B


**in his pagent**

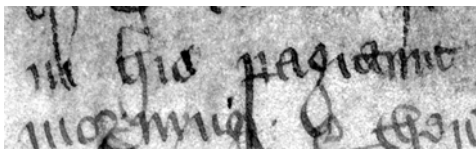
The loop over the *i* in *his* is very clear. This particular image was obtained by selecting a reduced range of colour from the underlying writing. It is marginally clearer than the UV version. Hold it quite a long way away from your eyes.

The *g* appears short in comparison with Hand C's. However, compare Hand A from the Proclamation on fol. 254<sup>v</sup>:



**of þe pagentz**

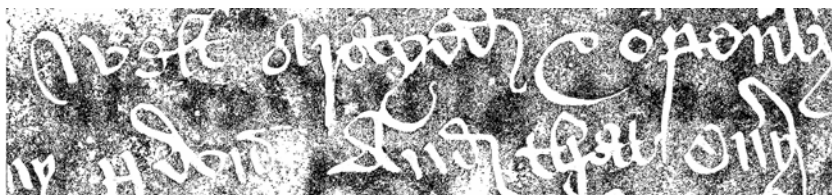
Compare also, for content, Hand C's version:



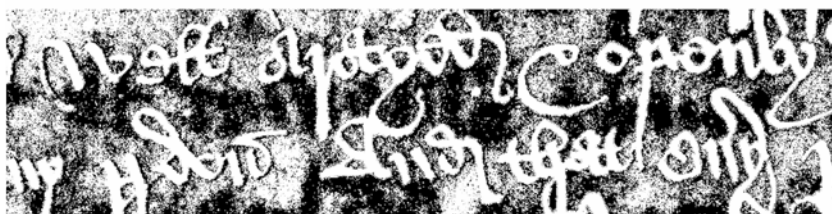
**in his pagiant**

---

## Line 2 phrase C



RGB enhanced

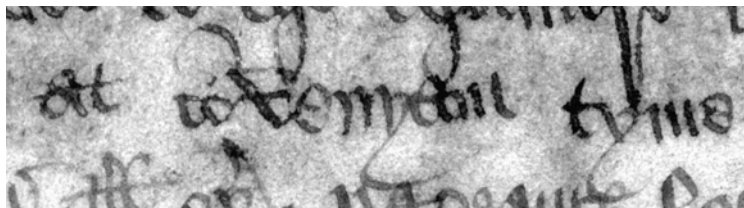


UV selected colours

**at .... able tyme**

Possibly. This one is a killer. The *at* and the *tyme* are fairly clear. The middle word seems to end in *-ble*, possibly *-able*. It may begin with *co*. If so, what is the curious backstroke projecting from the head of the *c*? Is it an abbreviation? If so, where is the rest of it? It might be a *d*, but there is no return on the loop. It is not showthrough. The third letter is too low to be an *l*, and has no descender so cannot be an *s*. It might be a *v* or a *w*. Letters from other writing by Hand A floated over the top at least show that the rough forms and sizing are right.

Hand C, rewriting the passage, has come up with:



**at convenient tyme**

He has used an extravagant abbreviation for con. Was this because the original also started with the same abbreviation? The obvious solution

would be the older form *convenable*. This also appears, according to the *MED*, as *covenable*, *cuvenable*, *comenable*, *conable*, and *cunable*. The only problem is, all these forms are either too short or too long to fit, and if there is a second abbreviation mark, it has been masked by the overwriting. I refuse to destroy my eyesight any further on this problem, and declare open season on it.

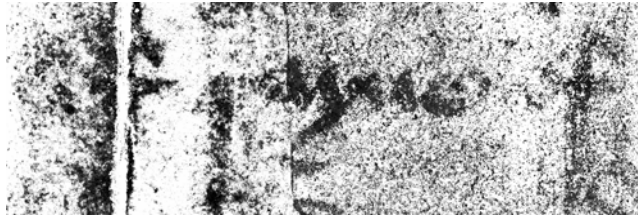
---

#### Line 2 phrase D



of payne of

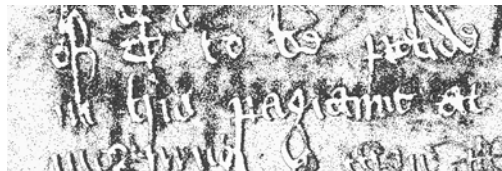
Compare the Proclamation, fol. 254<sup>v</sup>. Unfortunately here the phrase is half under the paper guard, and dissected by the slash.



of payne of

---

#### Line 3 phrase A



inprisonment

Compare with fol. 254<sup>v</sup> (see PLATE 46):



inprisonment

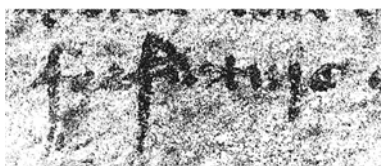
---

Line 3 phrase B



& þe forfaiture

Compare the word *forfaiture* on fol. 254<sup>v</sup> (two different examples: one RGB enhanced, one UV). The tail of the *r* following the *o* and curving beneath it can be seen next to the descender of the first *f* in all three. The stroke above the *t* is a descender from the line above.



For a clearer version of the *or*, and the backwards-curving tail of the *r*, see this from the list of torches on 254<sup>v</sup>.

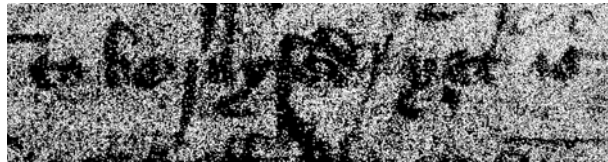


Line 3 phrase C



to be raysed þat is

Compare fol. 254<sup>v</sup> (UV).



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Line 3 phrase D



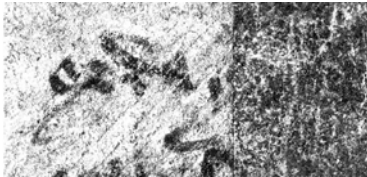
ordand þer fore

Another dark scan from the far right of the page. The showthrough from this passage on fol. 255<sup>v</sup> shows the *fore* remarkably clearly.

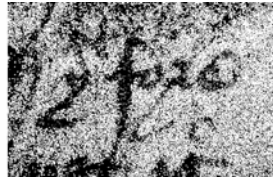


Show-through from fol. 255<sup>v</sup>.

The first word is not easy to see, being partly obliterated by *betwix*, but one can make out the two *ds* with their forward-leaning loops, and the forward-facing tail of the *r*, which must follow a bowed letter. Compare the same words from fol. 254<sup>v</sup>.



orday[ned]



ber fore

Again, the *r* with the backwards-curving tail after the *o* is in evidence.

There is no room for and no sign of a *y* in the word *ordand*: however, this is a perfectly possible spelling in this period. Compare Play 2 (the Plasterers') line 29, 'Syne þat þis world es ordand euyng', and Play 8 (the Shipwrights') line 128, 'And qwen þat it is ordand soo'.

The original entry thus seems to have read:

fraunchis & þaire bodyes to prisoun And þat ylk a player þat [shall]  
play þat he be redy in his pagent at .....able tyme of payne of  
inprisonment & þe forfaiture to be raysed þat is ordand ber fore

replaced by:

fraunchis & þaire bodyes to prisoun And ^\pat/ all maner of  
craftmens þat bringeth furthe ther  
pageantez in order & course by good players well arrayed & openly  
spekyng vpon payne of lesyng  
of C<sup>s</sup> to be paide to the chambre wouthoute any pardoun And that  
euery player that shall play be redy  
in his pagiaunt at conuenyant tyme that is to say at the mydhowre  
betwix iij<sup>th</sup> & v<sup>th</sup> of the cloke in the  
mornyng & then all oper pageantes go fast folowyng ilkon after oper  
as per course is without Tarieng sub pena facienda camere

vj<sup>s</sup> viijd

### What are the implications?

In a way, the original version is disappointing. There are no exciting new details. It would have been good, for example, to know what time of day was considered [...]*able* in 1415, when the pageants, we assume, went out after the Corpus Christi procession,<sup>72</sup> or even what the fine was for unpunctuality. One might observe that *bat he be redy in his pagent* suggests even more forcefully that in 1415 the players were assumed to be generically male.

But in another way, its very reticence is significant. This is the last item in a proclamation preoccupied with keeping the peace and the logistics of procession. Its phraseology, very similar to that of other proclamations recorded in the House Books,<sup>73</sup> marks it out as essentially a public-order directive. It was a legally binding announcement, made in the presence of the Mayor and the Sheriffs, the authorities responsible for law and order in the city.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, it does not go into details about the programme: it assumes that these are already known. It mentions *players* as an integral part of the event, but only as the last of a longer list of possible hitches to the smooth running of the timetable. Officers in charge of policing royal weddings and other public displays today would recognise the state of mind, though nowadays lack of punctuality is not usually penalised with disenfranchisement and a spell in the cells.

In contrast, the new version suggests not only a possibly more complex affair than in 1415, but an interest in quality control and performance which is missing from the earlier proclamation. This is of course not new to the second decade of the sixteenth century. The famous council minute of 3 April 1476 setting up an annual scrutiny of 'all þe plaiers and plaies [and] pagentes throughte all þe artificeres belonging to corpus christi Plaie'<sup>75</sup> declares an official interest in production values instead of just the rate of throughput. This may have been part of a new consciousness of the pageants as theatrical entities in their own right reflected in the drawing-up of the Register. This in turn may, as has been speculated, have followed upon the splitting off of the procession from the Play, proposed at the instigation of William Melton in 1426, but executed at an unknown date, possibly between 1463 and 1468.<sup>76</sup> It would have given those involved a chance to concentrate separately on the two events; and of course allowed the Play to expand into the time available and probably beyond it again.

Nevertheless, though the proclamation itself might have been altered at any time, the alteration was not entered in A/Y until a good forty years after the 1476 initiative, maybe fifty after the potential split. By that time



the proclamation had been continuously made for a century, and however important its law-and-order function remained in practice, it must by then have moved in the public perception from a police notice to an 'ancyent Custome'.<sup>77</sup> As such the inclusion of the statement about the quality of the players would make more sense. It certainly makes very little as a serious last-minute instruction, unless the Council was in search of a source of extra revenue from fines. If so, they do not seem to have collected many. The only time it appears to have been implemented was 1554, when the Girdlers were fined 10s 'for that there players was not Ryddy at Convenyent tyme to play in ther paygant', an almost exact quotation from the proclamation, if not the specified fine.<sup>78</sup>

The evidence we have depends so much upon what the clerical staff of the City Council decided to record and revise. It would appear that every now and then someone comes along with a mission to tidy up the information on the Corpus Christi Play, and thus presumably make its administration easier. Roger Burton (Common Clerk 1415–1436) was one such. Whoever organised the Register (John Shirwood, Common Clerk 1441–1470? Thomas Yotten the embezzler, Common Clerk 1470–1476? or possibly John Rukeby, Shirwood's Deputy?) was another. William at Esshe (Deputy Common Clerk 1510–?1519) seems to have been another, though whether on his own initiative or under instruction we cannot know. John Clerke (Deputy Common Clerk ?1535–?1580) was the last.<sup>79</sup> A gap of about 40 years appears to be the norm between revisions. What we cannot tell is whether these men were moved by a personal desire to rationalise their paperwork, or because someone from the Council, or their boss, was breathing down their necks, or because it had become politically expedient, or because they were temperamentally predisposed to prioritise the Play.

So, forget the 4.30 a.m. start, at least as far as 1415 is concerned. That is a relief if we had envisaged the Mayor, his brethren, and the clergy of York attending a Corpus Christi Day Mass *before* the procession, and then the Play, set out. Though in fact, 4 a.m. in summer might not have been such an unnervingly early hour as it seems to us.<sup>80</sup> And it throws back into the arena the whole question of the nature and complexity of the 1415 Play, and how it developed after the *Ordo paginarum* was set down. The Play as enshrined in the Register probably did need at least 19 hours to run from beginning to end — even with *Fergus* missing. A longer series of much briefer pageants might not have.

Lancaster University

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like above all to thank the staff of York City Archives, especially Rita Freedman, Anna Wheeler, Sarah Costley, Joy Cann, and Christine Baldock, who makes the images, for allowing me to invade their territory, occupy their attention, and monopolise their manuscripts. I particularly owe them thanks for supplying me with the scans from the A/Y Memorandum Book which started this investigation, and for supplementing these with more images from other manuscripts as the plot thickened. Not all of these images appear in this article, but they were essential to the research, allowing me the luxury of working in close-up on the evidence at my own computer a hundred miles away. Judith Franks supportively answered my e-mail queries when I could not trust my own notes. I am also very grateful to Rita Freedman for allowing me to bring in the DIAMM photographer for a day's concentrated shooting; and to Peter Scott, the photographer, for his efficiency and good humour under pressure. None of this could have happened without Julia Craig-McFeely, her original generous sharing of expertise and continued support.

I am also grateful to Peter Meredith for his comments on my reconstruction, for lending me the original photographs from the 1983 Leeds Texts and Monographs facsimile, and then all his notes on the *Ordo paginarum*. Malcolm Parkes and Ian Doyle also speculated on it at an earlier stage, as part of a larger investigation.

Sarah Carpenter and Olga Horner have provided support and constructive criticism, always appreciated, never taken for granted. Many thanks also to Rosemary Phizackerley for her insights into the technicalities of local government.

### COPYRIGHT

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Some of the plates in this article (PLATES 30, 35, 37, and 38) are composites, made up of details taken from York City Archive scans (House Book 9 fols 37<sup>r</sup>, 93<sup>v</sup> and 94<sup>v</sup>) and DIAMM photographs (A/Y Memorandum Book fol. 255<sup>r</sup>), with some digital intervention by Meg Twycross. This consists of slightly fading parts of words in the surrounding text, and in cutting out and arranging the details for comparison's sake. The words themselves have not been manipulated, apart from a slight alteration in levels for added clarity.

All the details in the last section ('Transcription') are from DIAMM photographs and are © Meg Twycross. It would have been unnecessarily visually confusing to put a by-line under each of them.

## NOTES

1. E.g. Margaret Dorrell (Rogerson)'s ground-breaking article on 'Procession and Play: Corpus Christi Day in York Before 1427' the first of her 'Two Studies of the York Corpus Christi Play' *Leeds Studies in English* NS 6 (1972) 65–111, at 83–4: 'The 1415 proclamation orders the actors to be ready at 4.30 a.m. This can be interpreted to mean that the wagons were already marshalled and that the first pageant began to play at the first station at that time'. Her proper tentativeness has been taken as hard fact, as tentative scholarly statements tend to be.

However, in 1584 when the Play had been laid down, and the summer entertainment replaced by a Show of Armour on Midsummer Eve, the Show was to begin 'betwene iijor & five of the clocke ... and to be endid by xj of the clocke'. The play produced by Grafton was to start after that at 1 p.m. (REED: York 406). One could argue for a continuing tradition.

Miri Rubin even makes it the start of the Corpus Christi procession in York: 'In the fifteenth century the procession at York began with an assembly at 4.30 am before the gates of Holy Trinity Priory in Micklegate and was led by priests and boys carrying candles ...' *Corpus Christi: the Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge UP, 1991) 261.

2. *The York Plays* edited Richard Beadle (London: Arnold, 1982) 29.
3. *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre* edited Richard Beadle (Cambridge UP, 1994): Richard Beadle 'The York Cycle' 85–108, at 93; Meg Twycross 'The Theatricality of Medieval Plays' 37–84, at 39.
4. *York Plays: The Plays Performed by the Crafts or Mysteries of York on the Day of Corpus Christi in the 14th, 15th, and 16th Centuries ...* edited Lucy Toulmin Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885) xxxiv.
5. Garrett P.J. Epp "'Corected & not playd": an unproductive history of the Towneley Plays' *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 43 (2004) 38–54, at 49 and note 46. The website is no longer available.
6. Originally the A/Y Memorandum Book was in two volumes, the *maior registrum* and the *novum registrum*, with a paper section intended for an index: see Richard Beadle and Peter Meredith *The York Play: a facsimile of British Library MS Additional 35290, together with a facsimile of the 'Ordo Paginarum' section of the A/Y Memorandum Book* (Leeds: University of Leeds School of English, 1983) li, and *Records of Early English Drama: York* edited Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, 2 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979) 1 xx. The *Ordo* was written on a series of folios which would originally

- have been at the back of the first volume, possibly preceded by a few blank leaves which were later filled up with material dated 1419 and after.
7. This marginal addition, possibly late fifteenth-century, says *Deliu<sup>er</sup>ande Sunt S<sup>ed</sup>ule Paginarum subsequenter in forma . subscripta . Artificiis Per vj. Seruientes Maioris ad clauam prima vel ij<sup>a</sup> septimana xl<sup>ma</sup> Annuatim scribende per Communem Clericum* ('The schedules of the pageants are to be delivered as follows in the form written below to the crafts by the 6 Sergeants-at-Arms of the Mayor yearly in the first or second week of Lent, and are to be written by the Common Clerk'): see REED: York 17, but my translation. The first surviving Chamberlains' Roll (C1: 1) dated 1396 records the purchase of parchment *tempore billarum corporis Christi*: see REED: York 9.
  8. Richard Beadle and Peter Meredith 'Further External Evidence for Dating the York Register (BL Additional MS 35290)' *Leeds Studies in English* NS 11 (1980) 51–5.
  9. Beadle and Meredith *York Play Facsimile* Introduction, ix–xli; Peter Meredith 'John Clerke's hand in the York Register' *Leeds Studies in English* NS 12 (1980/1981) 245–7.
  10. Beadle and Meredith *York Play Facsimile* lvi–lvii.
  11. Water damage from the 1892 Ouse flood and the paper patch over the mysterious slash that runs vertically just left of centre through the bottom half of the page have rendered the part of the Proclamation on fol. 254<sup>v</sup> (PLATE 20) very difficult to read. It is however possible to read it using ultra-violet and other electronic photography (PLATES 39 and 40), which shows that it is in a fairly virgin state. It is not possible at present to say whether the insertion is by the same hand (Hand A) or another.)
  12. Another can of worms which I do not propose to open here. The discussion of this belongs with one on the alterations to the title of the *Ordo* itself.
  13. Dorrell 'Procession and Play' 84: 'The 1415 proclamation, then, suggests a 4.30 a.m. start'.
  14. Martin Stevens 'Postscript' *Leeds Studies in English* NS 6 (1972) 113–15, at 15, note 1.
  15. E.g. Martin Stevens 'The York Cycle: from procession to play' *Leeds Studies in English* NS 6 (1972) 37–61, at 46; Alan Nelson *The Medieval English Stage: Corpus Christi Pageants and Plays* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago press, 1974) 43. Eileen White is one of the few people to point out that this is a sixteenth-century version of the Proclamation: *The York Mystery Play* (York: Yorkshire Architectural and York Archaeological Society with William Sessions; 1984) 18.
  16. The scribe clearly intended the standard abbreviation, as in the following line. However either he misjudged the second bow of his *w* and added a bit to it that

looked like an *o*, or put the *o* of *oute* too far to the left so that it looked like part of the *w*. He then put another *o* to the right of the superscript *t*. Either way, there are two distinct *os* in the word, one to the left and one to the right of the *t*. The resulting spelling *woithoute* may be unintentional, but it is there.

17. Why he put it in in the first place is a mystery. He had already ended *craftmen* with a flourish on the *n*.
18. Though not as many as one might expect. The major fights were over precedence in the *procession*, not the pageants. The Masons refer to the effect of their play of *Fergus* on the audience as *lites contenciones & pugne* ('disputes, quarrels, and fights'), 1431/2: REED: *York* 48. Delay caused by Girdlers fined 1554: REED: *York* 312. General delays mentioned 1399, 1422: REED: *York* 11, 37. Fights and walkouts in the procession: Skinners vs. Carpenters and Cordwainers 1419, REED: *York* 32–33; Weavers vs. Cordwainers 1490 and ongoing: REED: *York* 158–160, 162–4 (1491), 164–8 (1492), 168–74 (1493). Miri Rubin talks about the possibilities of disorder on Corpus Christi Day, but she rather overstates her case: they appear to have been no worse than on any festival which drew large numbers of people together, and more disputes were solved by arbitration than by fisticuffs: *Corpus Christi* 263–4.
19. I discuss this in detail in 'The *Ordo paginarum* revisited, with a digital camera' in 'Bring furth the pagants': *Studies in Early English Drama presented to Alexandra F. Johnston* (University of Toronto Press, 2006).
20. That at any rate is the usual assumption about the purpose of 'keeping the Register'; see Meredith 'John Clerke's Hand' 265..
21. Marshals and Smiths, A/Y Memorandum Book fol. 287<sup>v</sup>; REED: *York* 45; Condemnation of Christ, House Book 9 fol. 81<sup>f</sup>; REED: *York* 212.
22. See 'The *Ordo paginarum* Revisited' for detailed discussion of the identity of Hands A and B.
23. The House Book for the early 1460s is missing; see *York House Books 1461–1490* edited Lorraine Attreed, 2 vols (Stroud: Alan Sutton for Richard III and Yorkist Society Trust, 1991) xvi–xvii; but there is nothing in the Memorandum Books either.
24. Separation of Procession and Play, see Alexandra F. Johnston 'The Procession and Play of Corpus Christi in York after 1426' *Leeds Studies in English* NS 7 (1974) 55–61. Auditions (more precisely vetting committee): REED: *York* 109. Richard Beadle suggests the relationship between the committee and the Register in his chapter on 'The York Cycle' in the *Cambridge Companion*, at 90.
25. REED: *York* 324 (1557); REED: *York* 330 (1559, Fullers' pageant); 330–331 (1559: Inholders' representative promises to bring in their 'Regynall' so that it may be entered before next midsummer: they did not, probably because by that

- time the play had been laid down permanently); *REED: York* 351 (1567). See for an extended discussion Meredith 'John Clerke's Hand'.
26. Hutton was elected in April 1567, installed by proxy on 15 May and in person on 27 September: John LeNeve *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae, 1541-1857, Vol.4: York Diocese* compiled by Joyce M. Horn and David M. Smith (London: Athlone Press, 1975; previous updated edition, Oxford: 1854) 5-7. By the following February he was politely but firmly quashing any hopes of the performance of the Creed Play that year: *REED: York* 353-4.
  27. *REED: York* 354.
  28. *REED: York* 390. For the context, see Eileen White 'The Disappearance of the York Play Texts — New Evidence for the *Creed Play*' *Medieval English Theatre* 5:2 (1983) 103-109.
  29. There is a good account of a search in the 'registres, archives ande othere bookes of olde and newe remembraunces always abiding and remaynyng in our saide counsall chamber under saufe and suyre keeping' dated 2 March 1476 and inserted at the beginning of the first House Book: *Attreed York House Books* 1 4.
  30. The devisors in charge of the Entry of Henry VIII into York in 1541 were called before the Mayor and had 'delyuered vn to them a Copy of an olde precedent of the furst commyng of kyng henry the vij<sup>th</sup> to this City' in 1486: *REED: York* 271.
  31. *REED: York* 109-10. This seems to have sparked off the violent and ongoing controversy between the Weavers and the Cordwainers, which ran and ran.
  32. Some persons might have servants carrying their torches for them.
  33. This ordinance is reiterated (in French) in 1492: *REED: York* 165. In 1501 a bill was showed to all crafts and occupations of the city in the presence of the Mayor and Council 'howe þei singlry shal go in procession on morn next after corpus christi day': *REED: York* 186; *House Books* B8 fol. 112<sup>r</sup>; it is recorded among the achievements of the mayoralty of John Stockdale that 'euery craft was put in a clothing & ordered howe thei shall go in procession at Corpuscristnemes ...' *REED: York* 186, *House Book* B8 fol. 124<sup>v</sup>. The 'bill' is copied into the A/Y Memorandum Book, fol. 380<sup>f</sup>. In 1536 it was 'agreyd that the Common Clerke shall gyve Sufficent warnyng to the said occupacions how[e]ls thay shalbe orderyd & goo in the same procession': *REED: York* 262.
  34. Despite increasing literacy in the fifteenth century, it is a revelation to see how many of the City Council in 1490 could not sign their names: see for example *House Book* 7, fol. 10<sup>r</sup>.
  35. *REED: York* 263 (1536); 220 (1520); 187 (1501). In 1501, William Catterton leases the first station *ultra locum Communis Clerici* ('beyond the place of the Common Clerk', then Robert Plumpton) Chamberlains' Roll C 5:1. This sounds as if the Common Clerk's 'place' was already a fixture, but did not

count as a station. Richard Catterton continues to lease the same station up to and including 1508. In 1516, the next surviving record, the first station is left blank. In 1520, it is officially assigned to the Common Clerk, with no receipts. This state of affairs then recurs for a continuous run from 1521–1528. (But in 1527, the Chamberlains' Accounts show that Thomas Clerk deputised for Miles Newton keeping the Register: *REED: York* 244). In 1538, it is spelt out: 'In primis the ffyrst place at Trenytie yaites where as the Comon Clerke kepys the Registre wherefore that place goith free' (*REED: York* 263; Chamberlains' Book Y: CC3 (3) fol. 9<sup>r</sup>). For a convenient summary, see my table in "Places to hear the play": pageant stations at York, 1398–1572' *REED Newsletter* (1978: 2) 10–33, at 30–33.

36. Beadle and Meredith *York Play Facsimile* liv.
37. *York Civic Records Volume 4* edited Angelo Raine *Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series* 108 (1945 for 1943) 8.
38. *Register of the Freeman of the City of York* edited Francis Collins, 2 vols *Surtees Society Publications* 96 and 102; (1897 for 1896 and 1900 for 1899).
39. Usually on St Blaise's Day (3 February), but in the period in which we are interested, the election is recorded as having taken place on St Maur's Day (15 January) and the swearing in on St Blaise's Day. The formula for the election of the Common Clerk was 'in the same day and year'. See *Register of the Freeman* 1 xii, for changes of date, with the corrections that the date in the later fourteenth century is stated to be the day after (*crastino*) the Purification (2 February), and the earlier saint's day was St Maur the Abbot, not St Maurice, as Collins says. The double formula, election plus swearing-in, first appears in 5 Henry VII (1489/90).
40. These minutes run out on fol. 27<sup>v</sup> with the entry for 7 Henry VIII (3 February 1516 our reckoning), so there is no record here of the end of Beilby's Common Clerkship.

John Beilby retired from the Common Clerkship in 1519 in order to pursue a career as a 'gentleman', buying property in Moor Monckton, Wilthrop, and Goodmanham. He was Sheriff in 1530/31, and died in 1540. Biographical information from Robert H. Skaife *Catalogue of the Mayors and Bailiffs, Lord Mayors and Sheriffs, the Representatives of Parliament, and the Records and Town Clerks of the City of York*, MS volumes, York City Library: microfilm in York City Archives.

Beilby's will, made 21 December 1539 and proved 5 June 1540, provides for his burial in St Mary Bishophill Senior, and leaves his property in York to his 'son putative', John Beilby. He appoints John Aske (of Aughton), Esquire, guardian to his bastard son till the latter comes of age (Borthwick Institute, Reg. Test. 10, fols 438<sup>v</sup>–9<sup>r</sup>). He joined the Corpus Christi Guild in 1515, by himself, though an Isabella Beilbe is mentioned later in the list: *The Register of*

- the Guild of Corpus Christi in the City of York* edited Robert H. Skaife, *Surtees Society Publications* 57 (1872 for 1871) 184.
41. *York Memorandum Book BY* edited Joyce W. *Surtees Society Publications* 186 (1973) viii.
  42. See *York House Books 1461–1490* edited Lorraine Attreed, 2 vols (Stroud: Alan Sutton for Richard III and Yorkist Society Trust, 1991) xv–xvii, for a description of the history of the House Books, including the missing Volume 1, which covered material from the 1460s.
  43. *Records of Early English Drama: York* edited Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, 2 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979) 1 216. In 1486 the Linenweavers were fined 5s *pro forisfactura de non ludendo pagine Vergus: Chamberlains' Accounts* 177.
  44. *York City Chamberlains' Account Rolls 1396–1500* edited R.B. Dobson, *Surtees Society Publications* 192 (1980 for 1978–9) 3. The *subclericus* is unnamed.
  45. In 1416 Burton's entry specifies that it is *pro feodo suo et clerici sui consueto septem librarum*: *Freemen's Register* fol. 12<sup>v</sup>, and see *Chamberlains' Accounts* edited Dobson (11) for 1433/4, though these only record fees for two quarters (up to Easter, and to midsummer), and the first is the odd sum of 43s 8d (including bonuses?), the second the more normal 35s.
  46. Alexandra F. Johnston 'William Revetour, chaplain and clerk of York, testator' in *Essays in Honour of Peter Meredith* edited Catherine Batt *Leeds Studies in English* NS 29 (1998) 153–172.
  47. *Chamberlains' Accounts* edited Dobson 22, 24, 31, 33, 61, 63–4, 72–5, 91, 93–5, 99). Rukeby acted in the same sort of diplomatic role as Shirwood: in 1454–5 he was sent on a mission to Pontefract and Doncaster to speak with Sir John Neville and others of the counsel of the Duke of York (95).
  48. *Chamberlains' Accounts* edited Dobson 171, described as *subclerico* (1478/9). Were he and Thomas Clerke one and the same? Clerke was to have an annuity like that of John Shirwald (Shirwood?) when he gives up his *officium clericalis*: Attreed *York House Books* 214 (12.4.1480). Davyson takes home civic documents *York House Books* 409, 537 (1487).
  49. Radulphus Batty *subclericus civitatis*, free 1507/8: *Freemen's Rolls* 231.
  50. Meredith 'John Clerke's Hand' 245–71.
  51. House Book 20, fol. 34 (8 December 1550); quoted Meredith 'John Clerke's Hand' 249. Not in *York Civic Records Volume 5* edited Angelo Raine *Yorkshire Archaeological Record Series* 110 (1946 for 1944) 47: Raine only transcribes the passage about Fail's election.
  52. See D.M. Palliser *Tudor York* (Oxford Historical Monographs; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979) 74–5. The Chamberlains' Accounts and House Books show the



- Common Clerk being sent to conduct official negotiations: see e.g. *Chamberlains' Accounts* edited Dobson 47, 48 (Shirwood 1444/5), 57 (Shirwood 1445/6), etc.
53. *York Civic Records Volume 3* edited Angelo Raine *Yorkshire Archaeological Society* 106 (1942) 34–5, from House Book 9, fol. 57v.
  54. Twycross 'The *Ordo paginarum* revisited'.
  55. REED: *York* 214, 215; Beadle and Meredith *York Play: Facsimile* liii. See 'The *Ordo paginarum* revisited'.
  56. REED: *York* 204–5. The alteration of the guild attribution in the *Ordo* is in an earlier hand.
  57. REED: *York* 212: House Book 9 fol. 81<sup>r</sup>.
  58. This is Lucy Toulmin Smith's reading (see xxv). If the first letter is an S, it is very slim. Further work is needed on this section.
  59. *Register of Corpus Christi Guild* edited Skaife 176.
  60. *York Probate Register Wills* 9 fol. 17v. His surname is spelt Ateshe.
  61. *Memorandum Book BY* edited Percy, 249 (fol. 202<sup>v</sup>).
  62. *York Civic Records Volume 4* 7–13. *Trestramis Teshe et uxor* joined the Corpus Christi Guild in 1515: *Register of Corpus Christi Guild* edited Skaife 186. A Thomas Teshe graduated BCL at Oxford 1509, was admitted Vicar of Crambe, Yorks, 1521, and Canon of York Minster with various livings 1539: A.B. Emden *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford, A.D.1501–1540* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974) sv *Teshe*.
  63. See note 35.
  64. 'Teaching Palaeography on the Web' *Journal of Literary and Linguistic Computing* 14:2 (1999) 257–283; 'The *Ordo paginarum* revisited'.
  65. Especially since it acts as a sort of light-box, which emphasises some of the deleted letters.
  66. He used a PowerPhase FX camera, taking images as RGB under daylight-balanced lighting conditions. This is 'cold light' and does not harm the MS by overheating it. Images were digitised at 850 dpi, and stored as uncompressed TIFs.
  67. These were taken using reflective low-frequency UV light (4 x blacklight tubes) and captured as RGB images, but with the blue channel boosted. (Private communication from Dr Julia Craig-McFeely.) The original scans come out looking like undifferentiated royal-blue sheets, but there is enough information there for manipulation.
  68. The Common Hall was bombed on 29 April 1942 and burned to the ground. Fortunately, as Angelo Raine reported, 'In the angle between [the Common

Hall and the old Council Chamber] is the strong room containing the MSS., but it was not damaged in the slightest degree. Students of History everywhere will feel grateful to the Corporation for the precautions they adopted to make safe their historical treasures': *York Civic Records Volume 3* edited Angelo Raine *Yorkshire Archaeological Record Series 106* (1942) vii.

69. I used a slightly different procedure from the one recommended by DIAMM, using the Hue/Saturation tool as well as the Level Adjust, rather than turning the image into greyscale from the start. Keeping the colour gives slightly more data to play with.
70. When the dpi ratio is reduced, for example from 850 to 600, the computer estimates the relative distribution of dark and light pixels, and produces an in-between range of grey tones. This enables you to manipulate these shades to produce a clearer image. It also however, means that you lose some colour from the letters themselves when you attempt to lighten the surrounding parchment. This loss appears as small holes in the letters. They can be filled in again, but (a) this is an editorial intervention, and (b) it looks unnatural.
71. When it came to layering the white writing onto the UV scans, I had to make some slight adjustments of scale, as the UV scans were taken in a different batch from the RGB scans, and though the focal length was supposed to be exactly the same, the distance between camera and manuscript inevitably altered very slightly. The effect was of a dark margin (the original) peeping out slightly to the left on the left-hand side, and to the right on the right-hand side. Enlarging the layer of white writing by 1% (before I layered it onto the UV image) made it a perfect match.
72. Dorrell 'Two Studies of the York Corpus Christi Play', first part at 65-77; Johnston 'Procession and Play' 55-61.
- 73 E.g. Attreed *York House Books* 315, described as a 'proclamacion ... proclaymed within the cite of York by the mayer and the shirrifis of the same ... in iiij generall placez of the cite'; concerned with wool-broking and riotous assemblies (1484); 631, proclamation to keep the peace during mayoral elections (1489), made in the name of the King, the Mayor and Sheriffs. .
- 74 The evidence for this is all late. In 1561 after the Reformation, towards the end of the Play's lifetime, it was agreed that 'on Corpus even my lord mayour & Aldermen shall in making the proclamacion accustomed goe about in seemly sad apparel & not in skarlet': *REED: York* 333.

For a proclamation concerning butchers and Thursdaymarket in 1425 made in *presencia maioris vicecomitum et aldermannorum predictorum necnon multitudinis populi astantis presencia, ex parte domini regis maiorisque vicecomitum dicte civitatis*, see *York Memorandum Book* edited Maud Sellers, 2 vols *Surtees Society Publications* 120 (1911), 125 (1915) 1 57

75. *REED: York* 109.

76. Her earliest evidence is the payment recorded in the Chamberlains' Roll for 1468/9 for a sermon preached by an Austin Friar in the Minster in the day after Corpus Christi, *in crastino dicti festi* — see *Chamberlains' Rolls* edited Dobson 127. It is included among the *Expense maioris et aldermannorum in festo Corporis Christi*. This sermon seems likely to have been the final act of the procession. There is no such entry in the preceding surviving Roll, for 1462/3.
77. Of the Sheriffs' Riding on Corpus Christi Day, 1537: REED: *York* 263. It is interesting that the new version does not seem to have attempted to disentangle the procession from the Play in the earlier part of the proclamation, which assumes that they are running on the same day: presumably the wording would just about do.
78. Later in the same accounts, two bakers were 'presented' for failing to 'attend vppon ther paygant' as laid down in the earlier part of the proclamation: REED: *York* 314–15.
79. Meredith *Facsimile* xxi; 'John Clerke's Hand' 254. He made his alterations on the Register (1559, 1567) rather than on the *Ordo paginarum*.
80. Dorrell 'Two Studies' 69: but her evidence for this seems slender. Miri Rubin does not mention the possibility of a pre-processional mass: *Corpus Christi* 246–7, 261.

In August 1485 the hours during which the city gates were locked were 9 p.m. (curfew) to 4 a.m.: Attreed *House Books* 738. It was also the time at which the 'day bell' [angelus] could be rung in city churches: Maurice Keen *English Society in the Later Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990) 100. Quotations in MED and OED suggest this was at dawn. See also note 1 for the start time of the later sixteenth-century Show of Arms.