In 1877 the four hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the first printing press in England was celebrated with, among other things, a staggering exhibition in the National Art Library, South Kensington (now the Library of the Victoria and Albert Museum). Inspired by William Blades, a practical printer, whose biography of Caxton was a landmark in English bibliographical studies, it was organized by an unwieldy series of committees, but Blades's section on Caxton's printing was of the highest importance. The exhibition aimed at comprehending every activity of the printing industry and the massive catalogue records 4734 items. In addition to Caxton and early printing in England and Scotland, there were sections dealing with the development of printing in foreign countries, 'specimens notable for rarity or for beauty and excellence of typography', examples of modern commercial printing and music, illustration, portraits of distinguished authors as well as members of the book-trade, books relating to printing, 'curiosities and miscellanies', type, type-founding and type specimen books, stereotyping and electrotyping, copperplate printing, lithography and photography, paper and papermaking. The inaugural meeting of the Caxton Celebration committee only took place on 17 February 1877. It is not altogether surprising therefore that when the vast exhibition was opened by Mr. Gladstone on 30 June it was far from ready, and when it closed nine weeks later, after attracting nearly 25,000 visitors, it was felt that it should have been kept open at least until all the exhibits had been labelled.

Since 1877, the discovery of various entries concerning Caxton among the muniments of Westminster Abbey by E. J. L. Scott and the finding in February 1928 of an indulgence of Pope Sixtus IV in Caxton's types, with the date of issue filled in by hand as 13 December 1476, have made it clear that the fifth centenary must be celebrated in 1976. The British Library's contribution is an exhibition on a distinctly more reasonable scale that will last through the autumn months and be devoted mainly – like Blades's book – to the biography and typography of Caxton, with a section on 'Caxton' bindings. Although there will be some outstanding loans, including the Pierpont Morgan Library's copy of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, the majority of the books exhibited will come from the British Library's Caxton collection, probably the most comprehensive in the world, although followed closely by the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, the University Library, Cambridge, the John Rylands Library, Manchester, and the Bodleian Library, Oxford. In this article
Fig. 1. Caxton’s device in 1490
something will be said of the additions made to the British Library's collection since the publication in 1909 by the Bibliographical Society of Seymour de Ricci's *A Census of Caxtons*. In the last sixty-seven years there have been very many changes in the location of books listed in private hands in Great Britain, and the great majority of them have crossed the Atlantic, some going into private collections, many more into institutional libraries. These can be located in Frederick R. Goff's *Incunabula in American Libraries (Revised)*, 1973. For institutional holdings in Great Britain, however, De Ricci is still the primary authority and until the publication of the final part of the *Catalogue of Books printed in the XVth Century now in the British Museum*, which is not likely to appear for two or three years, his book remains the most accessible list of the British Library holdings.

Of the 103 separate editions (including six at Bruges and the two printed for him by Maynal in Paris) which he listed, thirty-five were not in the British Museum. The Public Record Office *Indulgence* of 1476, the Laurentius Gulielmus de Savona, *Epitome Margaritae eloquentiae*, c. 1480, and the first printing of the *Quattuor Sermones* in July 1483 bring the total now to 106. Of these twenty-eight are now not in the British Library, while a further four are represented by leaves or fragments of leaves.

The first addition to the Caxton collections of the Department of Printed Books after the publication of De Ricci's *Census* was appropriately enough a copy of the first book printed in England to bear a date—the Huth copy of the first edition of *The Dicts or Sayings of the Philosophers*. All copies of this book have a statement on fol. 74 reading: 'enprynted by me william Caxton at westmestre the yere of our lord .M.CCCC.Lxxvij.', and that in the John Rylands Library has an additional colophon on fol. 76 recording that the printing 'was fynisshed the xviii day of the moneth of Novembre'.

The book was acquired under one of the special terms of the Huth Bequest. Alfred Henry Huth, who died in 1911, allowed the Trustees of the British Museum to choose fifty books from the magnificent library formed by his father, Henry Huth, and considerably augmented by himself. The Trustees were permitted to exchange a copy of a book they already possessed for a finer one, although any such book was to count as one of the fifty, and this choice was exercised in favour of the *Dicts and Sayings*. The Museum already possessed two copies, as described by De Ricci under nos. 36:6 and 36:7, but neither was up to exhibition standard. Copy no. 6 had indeed been completed, except for the three blank leaves, by taking three leaves from copy no. 7, but it was described by De Ricci as 'stained, mended and scribbled over'. Copy no. 7 now lacks five leaves and the three blanks, is stained, mounted, and a sorry spectacle. It was copy no. 6 that was exchanged for the Huth copy and this is now in the Scheide collection at Princeton. The Huth copy (De Ricci's no. 10, now IB. 55005) is clean and has wide margins, although it unfortunately lacks the blanks and leaf 74, while leaves 8 and 65 have been supplied from another copy. The missing printed leaf is present in the other British Library copy (IB. 55004).

The next Caxton acquisition was effected in 1913 when the Department obtained from the St. Bride Foundation Library, Fleet Street, some fragments of John Lydgate's *Life
of Our Lady.\textsuperscript{5} The King's Library (that of George III, acquired by the British Museum in 1828) already contained a copy of Caxton's edition of 1484,\textsuperscript{6} perfect except for the last blank leaf. In about 1878 Blades discovered an imperfect copy of Caxton's \textit{Boethius} of c. 1478, which was in its original binding containing a number of copies of the conjugate leaves a3 and a6 of the \textit{Life of Our Lady}. This book and the leaves were acquired by St. Bride's after Blades's death, and De Ricci, under his no. 72, records seven copies of these same two leaves (or one of them), still at St. Bride's in 1909. Two other pairs had respectively been given by Blades to the Cambridge University Library in 1878 and to W. H. Dutton in 1879 (the latter now in the Pierpont Morgan Library). Another copy of the same two leaves recovered from a different binding was already among the Douce fragments in the Bodleian Library. Duff pointed out that 'it is curious that though Blades gave a photograph of two of these leaves in his "Enemies of Books" to illustrate the ravages of a bookworm, yet he never noticed how much they varied from the complete edition'. De Ricci calls this group of leaves the 'so-called second edition, but more probably printer's waste (cancelled leaves)'. This was a reasonable assumption from his evidence, but he did not realize that the fragments of a2 and a7 (another pair of conjugate leaves from the same gathering) in the British Library which he listed as 71:11 – in other words as part of the regular edition – also exhibit a number of spelling differences, and are therefore more properly treated as part of his 72. All these four leaves, a2, a3, a6, and a7 are clearly from a different setting of type and show quite numerous spelling and some capitalization differences. There is nothing on them to suggest any reason for cancellation. A more plausible explanation would appear to be that Caxton increased the size of the edition after sig. a was printed and distributed, had to reset and reprint it, and this time printed too many. The conjugate leaves a2 and a7 in the British Library, mentioned above, came from another discovery by Blades – a different Caxton \textit{Boethius} in its original binding. This was discovered in 1858 in the library of St. Albans Grammar School, and the covers yielded fifty-six half-sheets of printed paper from thirteen different books printed by Caxton, of which three were previously unknown. These fifty-six leaves were acquired by the British Museum in 1874. The two fragments of the conjugate leaves a3 and a6, which between them almost complete the text, come from the St. Bride's leaves noted by De Ricci under 72:2.

The opportunity occurred in 1916 of filling another gap, when a copy of the third edition of the \textit{Diets and Sayings of the Philosophers} came up at Sotheby's.\textsuperscript{8} It belonged to Sir Joseph Radcliffe, Bt., of Rudding Park, Harrogate, and earlier owners were Thomas Elys, Thomas Stretton, Peter Stowghton of Dartford, and, in 1742, Titus Adshead. It reprints the date 1477 of the first edition, but probably dates from 1489 and is clearly distinguishable from the two earlier editions by the use of type 6 and the presence of Caxton's device. The most interesting feature of this copy is that, although it has been rebacked, it has retained its original blind-tooled covers over wooden boards and this binding was the work of the 'Caxton binder'.\textsuperscript{9} Thirty-six bindings from this shop are known, and it seems not unlikely that it was under Caxton's control during his lifetime and
then passed into the hands of Wynkyn de Worde, his assistant and successor. Out of twenty-eight printed books among these bindings thirteen were printed by Caxton and four by De Worde. Eight of the thirty-six have or had leaves of Caxton printing, either used to compose the boards or as paste-downs or strengtheners; a number of these leaves are clearly printer's waste, being printed on one side of the leaf only and never perfected. Of these eight bindings with Caxton leaves, five were on books printed by Caxton, one was on a De Worde and the other two were on books printed abroad. Another book, printed at Lyons, has waste from De Worde’s press. Five of the seven manuscripts show a Westminster connection. Two were written for Westminster Abbey by a scribe named William Ebesham, who was at one time their tenant; one probably was bound for a member of the royal family; another was a record of the Exchequer; and a fifth contains a life of St. Edward the Confessor together with a sequence for St. Edward’s day that is apparently only known from the great Missal given by Abbot Nicholas Lytlington to the Abbey in 1384, and still preserved there. The evidence for the bindery having been in Westminster is thus very strong, and the fact that no printed leaves from the shop of any printer other than Caxton or De Worde has been recorded in any of the thirty-six bindings seems at first glance to make it highly probable that the binder was in turn the employee first of Caxton and then of De Worde. It must be remembered, however, that most of these leaves have been removed from the bindings in which they once were, and there is the possibility that other leaves, which had not been printed by Caxton, were discarded or not recorded. It may be that this binder lived not far from Caxton, who from time to time supplied him with his waste-paper. The history of the bindery after Caxton’s death — so far as it can be deduced from the bindings it produced — does not lead us to any firm conclusion, but there are one or two pointers. It clearly continued to work for De Worde up to 1511, but, with one exception, none of the tools used on this group of bindings is found on a book printed later than that year. It is likely that all the manuscripts which have connections with Westminster and the Abbey were bound before 1500, in which year De Worde moved from Westminster to the City of London. There is evidence that when he died in 1535 he did have a binder’s shop as part of his business, but that he also sent books out to a neighbouring binder, for in his will he made bequests to Alard, bookbinder, his servant, and to Nowell Havy, bookbinder in Shoe Lane. It therefore seems advisable to talk of the ‘Caxton binder’ with some reservations though Caxton and De Worde may well have had a binder working in their shop.

Caxton’s *Book of Divers Ghostly Matters*, printed in about 1491 in his type 6 throughout, is made up of three treatises as its very long-winded colophon explains: ‘Thus endeth this present boke composed of diuerse fruytfuU ghostly maters / of whiche the forseyde names folowen to thentent that wel disposed persones that desiren to here or rede ghostly Informacions maye the sooner knowe by this lityll Intytelyng theeffectis of this sayd lytyll volume / In asmoche as the hole content of this lityll boke is not of one mater oonly as here after ye maye knowe’. It then proceeds to enumerate the three parts as 1. *Orologium*
sapiencie (vij chapitours); 2. xij proffytes of tribulacyon (xij chapytours); 3. The holy rule of saynt Benet (xxxiij poyntes to be observed).

The book is a quarto in 8s, and each of the three sections has separate signatures: A–M⁸; A–D⁸; a–b⁸c⁴. Each also finishes as if it were complete. M⁸ verso ends: 'C Emprynted at Westmynstre. C Qui legit emendet / pressorem non reprehendat C Wyllelmū Caxton. Cui de⁹ alta tradat.' (The reader might be prepared to forgive the printer for his misprints more readily than for the scansion of his final pentameter.) The verso of D⁸ of the second treatise bears Caxton’s printer’s device (McKerrow i), while the third one repeats the colophon noted above. The three parts are therefore capable of standing alone and appearing to be perfect, and this no doubt encouraged a thief who stole the Twelve Profits, a considerable time before 1838, from the copy which had earlier belonged to English Benedictine nuns of our Blessed Lady of Good Hope in Paris, and was then in the possession of the Earl of Dysart. This section was sold in that year to Lord Ashburnham and at his sale in May 1898 (lot 3760), was bought by Quaritch for the British Museum. In 1938, on 30 May, the remainder of the book came up at Sotheby’s (lot 41) and was bought, again through Quaritch, for the Museum for £640. This must have been one of the last books which Caxton printed.

In February 1952 the British Museum purchased with the aid of the Pilgrim Trust, the National Art-Collections Fund, the Friends of the National Libraries, and an exchequer grant of £74,500, a number of outstanding manuscripts and printed books from the library of the Earl of Leicester at Holkham Hall. Of the forty incunabula acquired on this occasion two were English, and one was printed by Caxton. It was a copy of John Russell’s Propositio ad Carolum ducem Burgundiae, without printer’s name, place of printing, or date, but printed throughout in Caxton’s type 2. Only one other copy of this four-leaved quarto pamphlet is known: the Marquess of Blandford–Earl Spencer copy now in the John Rylands Library, Manchester.

In 1467 Edward IV had begun negotiations with the new Duke of Burgundy, Charles the Bold, who had succeeded Philip the Good in that year. Anxious to secure the support of the Burgundian Duke against Louis XI of France, Edward arranged a marriage between his sister Margaret and Charles at Bruges in July 1468 and appointed him a Knight of the Garter. The customary embassy to invest him with the habit and insignia of the order was sent to him early in 1469 led by Galliard, sieur de Duras. Ashmole, the historian of the order, explains how such an embassy was normally chosen, with a knight companion to lead it, Garter King at Arms, and some persons of rank or office near the sovereign – on this occasion Sir John Scott and Sir Thomas Vaughan, respectively comptroller and treasurer of the royal household. He continues, 'To these Persons, the Sovereign thought fit sometimes to add a Doctor of the Law, or a dignified Clergyman, and such as had the language of the Country' in order that he might explain the nature and customs of the order, answer any questions about it that the 'Stranger-elect' might put, and administer the oath at the investiture. 'And for these reasons was John Russell, Doctor of Civil Law, and Archdeacon of Berkshire, joined in commission with the said Sieur de Duras.' The
Propositio was the speech delivered by Russell at the investiture. It was probably printed soon after Caxton’s return to England in 1476, perhaps to mark the promotion of Russell to the Bishopric of Rochester in that year.

The next Caxton to be acquired was not a book that had been printed by him, but the Legenda printed for him by Guillaume Maynyal in Paris in 1488. This book had been known only from twenty-nine leaves in the Cambridge University Library, which had formed the ‘boards’ of the binding of a book printed in 1595, and ten leaves found elsewhere. But in 1956 Mr Paul Morgan, now of the Bodleian Library, while completing the cataloguing of the books in the library of St. Mary’s, Warwick, found the Legenda among the last few imperfect volumes. Despite the presence in the book of Caxton’s well-known device and a colophon stating that it was printed by Maynyal in Paris and finished on 14 August 1488, the 1881 catalogue described it as Breviary, or Service Book, Latin, black letter [imperfect], fol. The new edition of the catalogue printed in 1910 repeated this with the gratuitous and untrue addition of ‘N.D.’ A faculty for the sale of this book to the Department of Printed Books was granted in September 1957.

The book, which lacks about thirty leaves, has been the subject of an admirable article by Paul Morgan and George D. Painter in The Library, where it is pointed out that, incorporated in the text of the book at C2v, is one of the extremely few corrected proof pages to have survived from the fifteenth century. Caxton no doubt arranged for Guillaume Maynyal to print this Legenda and a companion Sarum Missal for him owing to the amount of red printing involved. Maynyal specialized in this work, while Caxton’s early attempts at using two colours were both primitive and unsuccessful. The whole forme was first of all inked in black, then some attempt was made to clean the black ink off the rubrics, which were then inked in red. But the black under-inking was never completely removed and the results were very dismal.

This Sarum Legenda was a liturgical work containing readings from the Bible, lives of Saints, and homilies suitable for each day in the Church’s year and differs from the Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine of which fifteenth-century editions were printed by Caxton after 20 November 1483 and c. 1487, and by Wynkyn de Worde in 1493 and 1498.

The most recent Caxton accession to the Department of Printed Books dates from July 1960, when the Baptist College, Bristol, disposed of its copy of the second edition of Vincent de Beauvais, The Mirror of the World, printed c. 1489. Owned in the sixteenth century by Robert Foxe, vicar of Boreham, this copy came into the hands of Andrew Gifford, an assistant librarian in the early days of the British Museum, who bequeathed it in 1784 to the Baptist College. It is in its original binding from the ‘Caxton binder’s’ shop, and had as the paste-down on the lower cover a sheet of printer’s waste deriving from Caxton’s edition of Fifteen Oes, and other prayers, c. 1491.

In a fascinating article in the Gutenberg-Jahrbuch for 1963, suitably entitled ‘Caxton through the looking-glass’, Mr. George D. Painter discussed this fragment and the two
offsets from other printed books on either side of it. The *Fifteen Oes* is a quarto in eights, and the fragment comes from the inner sheet of sig. a with portions of a3, a4, a5, and a6. ‘By an accident not unparalleled in Caxton’s office’ the inner forme was wrongly imposed, and the mistake was not discovered until the outer forme of the sheet had been distributed. The outer forme had therefore to be reset entirely and the pages of the inner forme re-imposed to produce the correctly printed quire found in the only known complete copy of the work.19

The two different offsets found on either side of this fragmentary sheet are even more interesting. With great persistence and ingenuity with a mirror Painter was able to show that they were both from otherwise unknown editions of the Sarum *Book of Hours* printed in Caxton’s type 8, one an octavo and the other a quarto. On balance he was inclined to think that both were printed by Caxton, although there remained the possibility that they were De Worde’s work. He did print similar editions in this same type 8 which he used after Caxton’s death, and, as we have already seen, the ‘Caxton binder’s’ shop also worked for De Worde.

Only two tools were used on the binding of the *Mirror of the World* (fig. 2) and it is the only example of this shop’s work in which one tool was used on one cover and a different one on the other.20 At one time it was thought that two distinct binders had worked for Caxton, and G.D. Hobson in *English Bindings before 1500* postulated a first binder who came from Bruges, perhaps with Caxton, and a second binder who used tools which probably came from South Germany. Nearly all these ‘Caxton’ bindings have, within a rectangular frame, a panel divided by diagonal lines into lozenge-shaped and triangular compartments. A number have fleurs-de-lis arranged in groups of four in the lozenges and singly along diagonal bands, in a manner particularly typical of Bruges and Ghent,21 and some have a border made up of a triangular tool of a dragon which is also characteristic of west Flanders.22 The nosegays and the large griffin tool (square, but always imposed lozenge-wise) of a second group of bindings, on the other hand, are characteristic of south Germany and particularly of Nuremberg.23

In his Sandars Lectures, given in 1949, J.B. Oldham,24 who by then knew of eighteen bindings of the Nuremberg-type group, pointed out that the tools overlapped with the Bruges-type bindings in a way which made it very difficult ‘to draw a line between one binder and his successor, if indeed there were two and not either one or several’. The continued connection with De Worde after Caxton’s death suggests that we are dealing with one shop and that it may have been on their premises.

Finally, mention should be made of the gift by Lord Thomson, as chairman of Thomson Newspapers, of fifteen original deeds, dating from 1420 to 1467 relating to the Caxton family of Little Wratting in Suffolk. These have been fully discussed by Mr. Norman F. Blake in the *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology*,25 while the documents were listed with a judicious summary by T.C. Skeat in the *British Museum Quarterly* in 1964.26 The difficulties in identifying William Caxton, the printer, who said firmly that he was born in the Weald of Kent, with the William Caxton who was the son of Philip
Fig. 2. *Mirror of the World* printed by W. Caxton c. 1489 and bound by the 'Caxton binder'.

Brown calf, blind-tooled
Caxton of this Suffolk manor, would appear to be formidable. Nevertheless, there are some interesting connections between the printer and this family, which certainly make it very desirable to have these documents readily available in the British Library as the controversy over his birthplace continues.

1 The first edition was published in two volumes in 1861 and 1863 as *The Life and Typography of William Caxton*. A second version, *The Biography and Typography of William Caxton*, was produced in 1877, in one volume 'in a more handy form' and it is this book, with an admirable introduction by Mr. James Moran, which was reprinted and published by Frederick Muller Ltd. in 1971. Unfortunately the 'handy edition' of 1877, while adding a good deal of new material, omitted some other bulky but valuable sections of the original volumes, and any serious student of Caxton needs both the first book and Moran's reprint of the second.


3 As Keeper of Manuscripts in the British Museum from 1888 until 1904 Scott has been rather overshadowed by his predecessors and successors. But in his last years at the Museum and for fourteen years after his retirement he carried out a remarkable feat in calendaring and indexing single-handed over 50,000 documents in the Muniment Room at Westminster Abbey, making that outstanding collection available to scholars for the first time. The Sacrist's roll for 1476-7 shows that Caxton rented a shop outside the Poets' Corner door of the Abbey for the quarter beginning at Michaelmas 1476.

4 *Census of Caxtons* (1909), p. 136. De Ricci's 37 and 72 are not now considered to be separate editions. He numbered the four books printed in French at Bruges 3a, 3b, 3c, and 3d.


6 De Ricci. 71:2; Duff 266.

7 This date is given by A. W. K. Miller, Keeper of Printed Books, in his report to the Trustees of the British Museum, 15 May 1913.


9 G. D. Hobson, *English Binding before 1500* (1929), pl. 43. The tools used on it are J. B. Oldham, *English Blind-stamped Bindings* (1952), pl. XXI, nos. 240, 244.

10 One tool is found on the binding of a manuscript in the Bodleian (Douce MS. 131) used in conjunction with Henry Jacobi's royal arms panel (J. B. Oldham, *Blind panels of English binders*, HE23), which seems unlikely to have been used much before 1520. This tool could have passed into other hands by then. A study of this bindery by the present writer will appear in the *Journal of the Printing Historical Society*, no. 11, 1976/7.

11 De Ricci 12:2; Duff 55. Now IB. 55141.


13 De Ricci, 90:2; Duff 367. Now IA. 55011.


15 De Ricci 101:[7]; Duff 247. IB. 40010.


17 De Ricci, 95:7; Duff 402. Now IB. 55142.

18 The fragment is preserved separately as IB. 55144.

19 De Ricci 44:1; Duff 150. Now IA. 55144.

20 This book is illustrated in *The Book Collector*, Spring 1964, opposite p. 52. Oldham's tool 237, a rather horse-like dragon, used on the lower cover has not been found elsewhere. The other cover was decorated with a nosegay (or more probably a carrot), which is Oldham 240.

21 G. D. Hobson in his *Bindings in Cambridge Libraries*, p. 49, notes that Jean Guilebert of Bruges used these groups of four fleur-de-lis, while Lievin Stuvaert of Ghent arranged them singly along diagonal bands.

22 In his very important article 'The Names of some English Fifteenth-century Binders' in *The Library*, 5th ser., xxv, p. 205, Mr. Graham Pollard stated that the Caxton binder's triangular dragon tool and free fleur-de-lis occur on two Flemish manuscripts, one from Ghent, and one...
from Bruges in the Bodleian Library – Douce MS. 365 and Lyell MS. 47. But the tools are not the same. The fleur-de-lis tools are easily distinguishable by the use of a magnifying glass on plates VI and VII of his article – note the shape of the two horizontal leaves and the ‘armpits’ under them. The Bruges dragon is taller than the London one, with greater angles at the base of the triangle. It is no. 16 in G. D. Hobson’s list on p. 30 of *Bindings in Cambridge Libraries*. Hobson does not illustrate it, but refers to pl. IX, nos. 13 and 15, in A. Hulshof and M. J. Schretlen, *De Kunst der oude boekbinders* (Utrecht 1931). The fleur-de-lis is no. 16 on that plate. Hobson refers to Douce MS. 365 in his list on p. 29, no. VIII. The Caxton binder’s dragon is Hobson no. 17.

23 Ernst Kyriss in *Verzierte gotische Einbände im alten deutschen Sprachgebiete* (Stuttgart 1951–8), illustrates griffins of this type from five different Nuremberg binderies (Taf. 225, 231, 233, 235, and 237), two of which also had nosegay tools.

24 *English Blind-stamped Bindings* (1952), p. 27.

