The Incunabula of Sir Charles Frederick

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Charles Frederick was born at Madras in 1709. Educated at Westminster School and New College, Oxford, he became a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1731 and was elected its Director in January 1736. He also became a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1733. In 1738 he resigned his post at the Antiquaries in order to travel abroad. He went to Italy with his older brother John during the years 1737 and 1738. They were at Genoa between 30 September and 18 October 1737, then briefly at Pavia and Milan in November. Going via Parma and Bologna, they reached Rome in December, and were still there on 17 February 1738. They travelled as far East as Constantinople, but were back in Italy later that year since we know that on 3 October 1738 Charles bought a book in Florence which is now in the British Library. His book purchases show a remarkably wide field of interest, and his elaborate book-plate of 1752 (one of two) shows that he had a particular interest in the design of small arms. The brothers were back in London by January 1741. Charles became MP for Shoreham in 1741 and served until 1754, then as MP for Queenborough until 1784. He was made a Knight of the Bath on 23 March 1761. He had married Lucy Boscawen (1710-1784) on 18 August 1746. Sir Charles died at Hammersmith on 18 December 1785.

He also acquired probably no fewer than twenty-two incunabula. We have little, if any, information on when and where he bought these books, nor do we know where the majority of them are now. Nevertheless, it seemed worth while at least to try to identify all the editions of incunabula which were included in the sale catalogue of his library (ESTC t28843). This sale took place in London between 5 and 14 July 1786. The catalogue contained 1259 numbered lots, some of which were volumes consisting of more than one work bound together. The sale of his printed books and manuscripts formed the third part of the entire sale. The descriptions given in the sale catalogue of each incunable vary very much in accuracy and useful detail. In a number of cases it is now impossible to determine which edition is meant. The very first one, instead of giving the short and simple title of the first page, for some strange reason quotes the beginning of the long and verbose colophon at the end of the book. When one realizes this, the identification of the edition becomes clear. The most baffling problem concerns the entry ‘Plutarchi Vitae philosophorum, 1468’.

In the list which follows I have quoted the entry as it stands in the sale catalogue. Below this, where possible, I have given the correct heading for author or text; and below this again I have supplied references for the exact edition, when established. Since the sale of 1786, Frederick’s incunabula have, with two exceptions, successfully hidden themselves from the major publications: the is no example in the British Library, the National Library of Scotland,

1 See D. E. Rhodes, ‘Some Italian Eighteenth-Century Books Acquired by British Travellers in Italy’, Electronic British Library Journal, 2015, art. 2, pp. 1-9 < http://www.bl.uk/eblj/2015articles/pdf/ebljarticle22015.pdf> . See also Jeffrey Spier and Jonathan Kagan, ‘Sir Charles Frederick and the Forgery of Ancient Coins in Eighteenth-Century Rome’, Journal of the History of Collections, xii (2000) pp. 35-90. The only printed book mentioned in this article is a copy of Boccaccio’s Decameron printed by the Giunti in Florence in 1527, which was owned by a friend of Francesco Palazzi, who offered to sell it to Conyers Middleton of Cambridge. There is no mention of Sir Charles Frederick being offered this book; but it does seem likely that most of his purchases of incunabula took place in Rome, except perhaps for the last three (nos 16-18), which probably never left England.

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Cambridge University Library, Oxford College Libraries, Munich SB, Harvard University, and many others. The Vatican has not investigated its provenances, but it is highly unlikely that a Frederick incunable would be found there, or in any other Italian library. On the other hand, such incunables would not easily be recognizable unless one was familiar with the two Franks bookplates, nos 11308 and 11309, which contain neither the owner’s name nor a motto: and Frederick probably did not write his name in incunabula as he did in the only eighteenth-century book from his library which I have seen.

Two books from the elusive Frederick library have found their way to Canterbury, but these are not incunables: Missale ad vsam ac consuetudinem insignis ecclesie Sar., Paris [printed for] Franz Birkemann, 1515 (Mendham Library of the Law Society) and Paolo Giovio, Descriptio Britanniae, Scotiae, Hyberniae et Orchardum, Venice, apud Michaelem Tramezinum, 1548 (Canterbury Cathedral Library). One must assume that the majority of these incunables remained in private hands after the sale of 1786 and were not absorbed into the libraries of public institutions.

List of incunabula owned by Sir Charles Frederick

1. (Sale number 507.)
   Insignis notabilisque Compilatio, haud modicum cuique statui, conferens omne Genus Viciorum suis cum speciebus a cuiusdam fabri lignarii Filio maximam ad Ecclesiae utilitatem. Nurn. 1496.
   This is the beginning of the colophon, on fol. 272a, of the edition of Destructorium viciorum printed by Anton Koberger, Nuremberg, 20 Sept. 1496.
   The anonymous author, referred to as ‘the son of a certain carpenter’, was Alexander Anglus, also known as Alexander Carpentarius, about whose life nothing seems to be recorded.
   GW 867. BMC ii, 443. ISTC ia 00393000.

2. (Sale number 509.)
   Straboni Geographia. 1480.
   STRABO. [Treviso:] Ioannes Rubeus Vercellensis [Giovanni Rossi], 26 August 1480. fol.
   BMC vi, 896. IGI 9173. Rhodes (Oxford) 1644. Rhodes (Treviso) 84. ISTC is 00796000.

3. (Sale number 510.)
   Blondi. Roma instanrata [sic]. Veron. 1482.
   Verona, Boninus de Boninis, 20 December 1481; 7 Feb. 1482. fol.

4. (Sale number 511.)
   Cronica Bossiana.
   No imprint or date, but this is certain to be a copy of the only recorded incunable (a very common book), with this title. Although the book contains a complete colophon and date, either the sale catalogue missed it, or the Frederick copy was possibly imperfect, wanting the colophon leaf.
   Donatus Bossius (born Milan 5 March 1436, died c. 1500) was a notary and chronicler. The title ‘Chronica Bossiana’ occurs on fol. 2 recto. Imprint: impressum per Antonium Zarotum, ad impensas Donati Bossii, 1 March 1492. fol. GW 4952. BMC vi, 722. Ganda 175 (Ganda lists 96 copies.) ISTC ib 01040000.
   Since this item comes in the sale catalogue between nos 509, 510 and 512, which are all incunables, there is no doubt about its identity.

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1 Thanks are due to David Shaw of Canterbury for this information.
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5. (Sale number 512.)
Fasciculus Temporum omnium Antiquorum. Ven. 1480.
ROLEWINCK, Werner.
Venice, Erhard Ratdolt, 24 Nov. 1480. fol.
BMC v, 283. IGI 8414. ISTC ir 00261000.

6. (Sale number 518.)
Bartholomaeus de Proprietatibus Rerum. Nurn. 1492.
BARTHOLOMAEUS ANGLICUS.
Nuremberg, Anton Koberger, 20 June 1492. fol.

7. (Sale number 1005.)
Livii Opera. 1485.
LIVIUS, Titus.
Treviso, Ioannes Vercellensis [Giovanni Rossi], 1485. fol.
BMC vi, 897. IGI 5777. Rhodes (Oxford) 1099. Rhodes (Treviso) 90. ISTC il 00244000.

8. (Sale number 1006.)
LIVIUS, Titus.
Venice, Philippus Pincius, for Lucantonio Giunta, 3 Nov. 1495. fol.
BMC v, 496. IGI 5780. Rhodes (Oxford) 1100. ISTC il 00247000.

9. (Sale number 1007.)
OVIDIUS NASO, Publius.
The only recorded edition of Ovid printed by Bartolomeo Zani in 1487 is the Heroides and Ibis (IGI 7089), not of the De arte amandi and De remedio amoris. The Frederick sale catalogue may have inadvertently conflated two editions, Venetian editions of the De arte amandi and De remedio amoris were printed in 1494 (IGI 7055-7057), but not by B. Zani. Is it possible that the sale catalogue entry is correct as it stands, and that a parallel edition of the De arte amandi et De Remedio amoris was indeed issued by B. Zani in 1487, but has now disappeared? This is hardly likely, since incunable editions of Ovid have normally survived in a good many copies, at least those printed after 1480.

10. (Sale number 1008.)
Sallustii Opera.
No further note. There are many incunable editions of Sallust with no imprint. This is almost certainly one of them, since it is placed between the incunables nos 1005, 1006, 1007, 1009 and 1010.

11. (Sale number 1009.)
Platini Opera. Flor. 1492.
PLOTINUS.
The author is not Bartholomaeus [Sacchi] de Platina (1421-1481; Librarian of the Vatican from 1475) but the philosopher Plotinus (205-270 A.D.) of whose works there is only one Italian incunable edition.
Florence, Antonius Miscominus, 7 May 1492. fol.
BMC vi, 640. IGI 7906. ISTC ip 00815000.
This is a very common book (nearly 210 copies now recorded in GW).

12. (Sale number 1010.)
Suetonii Vitae Caesarum. 1470.
SUETONIUS TRANQUILLUS, Caius.
There are two editions printed at Rome in 1470:
1) [Joannes Philippus de Lignamine.]
BMC iv, 29. IGI 9227. ISTC is 00815000.
2) Conrad Sweynheym & Arnold Pannartz.
BMC iv, 11. IGI 9228. ISTC is 00816000.

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13. (Sale number 1012.)
PLAUTUS, Titus Maccius. 
Comoediae. (Comm. Hermolaus Barbarus, Georgius Merula. Ed. Sebastianus Dulcius and 
Georgius Galbiatus.)
[Milan: Uldericus Scinzenzeler, c. 1497?] fol.
IGI 7874. BMC vi, 773. ISTC ip 0078300. 
Present location: Manchester, John Rylands University Library, no. 3249. 
The sale catalogue suggests no imprint, and merely notes ‘corio mor.’ (morocco binding).

14. (Sale number 1013.)
PRISCIANUS. 
Venice, Johannes de Colonia & Johannes Manthen, 1476. fol.
BMC vi, 231. IGI 8049. ISTC ip 00964000.

15. (Sale number 1015.)
Plutarchi Vitae Philosophorum. 1468. 
PLUTARCH. 
Plutarch’s Lives are always known as Vitae parallelae. There is no edition of 1468. The 
first edition, undated, was printed at Rome by Udalricus Gallus (Ulrich Han) evidently in 
1470. (ISTC ip 00830000). 
The only classical author who wrote Vitae philosophorum was Diogenes Laertius, but he 
also has no edition printed as early as 1468. It seems most probable that the book owned 
by Sir Charles Frederick in this case really was an edition of Plutarch’s Lives, but not of 
1468. There is an edition printed by Jenson at Venice in 1478 (IGI 7922), which seems to 
be the most likely candidate. 
This book is described in the sale catalogue as ‘cum init. illumin. corio Mor.’: having 
illuminated initials and bound in morocco.

16. (Sale number 1016.)
Virgilii Opera. Nurn. 1492. 
VIRGILIUS MARO, Publius. 
Nuremberg, Anton Koberger, 1492. fol.

17. (Sale number 1018.)
Senecae Tragediae. Ven. 1492. 
SENECA. 
Venice, Lazarus de Suardis, 12 December 1492. fol.
BMC v, 491. IGI 8908. Rhodes (Soardi) 5. Oates 2066. Oxford, Bodleian. ISTC is 
00436000.

18. (Sale number 1174.)
Biblia sacra impress. in membr. [i.e. printed on vellum.] Ven. 1487. 
This seems likely to be the Latin Bible printed by Giorgio Arrivabene on 27 Febr. 1487/8 
(GW 4263; IGI 1671; BMC v, 383; ISTC ib 00586000) rather than the Italian translation 
of Niccolò Malermi printed by Giovanni Rossi for Tommaso Trevisano on 31 October 
1487 (GW 4316; IGI 1703; BMC v, 416; ISTC ib 00643000). 
The former is a quarto, while the latter is a folio. 
The copy of the sale catalogue now in the Department of Manuscripts, British Library, is 
partially annotated, and shows that this Bible was sold to Tyson, who has so far not been 
identified.
19. (Sale number 1175.)
CHRONICLES.
Enprynted by me William Caxton In thabbe of westmestre by london, 8 October 1482. fol.
The Frederick copy was sold to Egerton and so is presumably the copy which De Ricci says is in Egerton’s 1787 catalogue: De Ricci 30 : 10.

20. (Sale number 1182.)
An antient printed Missal, finely coloured.
Most probably an incunable.

21. (Sale number 1204.)
Cronycle of Englonde, imp. by Wynkyn de Worde. 1497.
CHRONICLES.
Duff 102. BMC xi, 212. GW 6675. ISTC ic 00482000.
Present location: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Malone 10. (Bod-Inc. C-199, 1.)
It has the Frederick armorial bookplate, Franks 11308. Owned by Edmond Malone (1741-1812). Presented in 1821.
This copy was also sold to Egerton, who presumably sold it in 1787 to Malone.
Egerton catalogue of 1787, no. 233.

22. (Sale number 1205.)
The golden Legende. imp. by Wynkyn de Worde. 1498.
JACOBUS, de Voragine.
Sold in 1786 to Pitt (not identified).

References

Bod-Inc: Catalogue of Books Printed in the Fifteenth Century now in the Bodleian Library <http://incunables.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/>
ESTC: English Short-Title Catalogue <http://estc.bl.uk/F/?func=file&file_name=login-bl-estc>
GW: Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke. Stuttgart, etc., 1925- (in progress).
IGI: Indice generale degli incunaboli delle biblioteche d’Italia (Rome, 1943-81)
Rhodes (Treviso): Dennis E. Rhodes, La stampa a Treviso nel secolo XV, Treviso, 1983.