

A fascinating book you wouldn't want to read.

Astonishingly, the previous owner of a book we have in the Ancient Library lived to be at least 100. Not so significant these days – but he died in 1640! What was his secret? Well he was a wrestler as a young man and continued to play tennis and fives and practice archery into extreme old age. He was also a keen gardener and perhaps it was his skill as a herbalist that enabled him to read his Hebrew Bible without glasses until the day he died.

His name? Lawrence Chaderton – the first Master of Emmanuel College, a post he held until he was 82. A note by his signature shows he paid 3s 4d for the book (about 17p in today's money) but more interestingly he inadvertently caused a major dispute in St James' Church (now the Cathedral) between Miles Mosse, the preacher, and the Thomas Rogers, the rector of Horringer. They both attended the combination lectures (a sort of clergy in-service training) held in the present nave every Monday in the late sixteenth century. Rogers did not speak on his allocated topic but condemned Chaderton's Presbyterian views that there should be no bishops and deans. The upshot was that Rogers was banned from attending the lectures in future.

The book itself has an attractive leather cover with embossed figures and a woodcut illustration on the title page of a printing press – the device of Jean de Roigny of the Rue St Jacques in Paris. There is a royal warrant from the King of France allowing him sole rights for five years.

Like many books in the Ancient Library, the binding is strengthened with a sheet of medieval parchment with decorated capitals in red and blue.

This Commentary on St John's Gospel was written by Claude Guillaud, a professor at the Sorbonne, and he dedicated it to Cardinal Guise, the uncle of Mary Queen of Scots. It has been well used. There are marginal notes, perhaps for a sermon, by 'I am the light of the world' in Chapter 8. The spilt ink and candle wax shows perhaps that the cleric was working late into the night.

It is in Latin so you probably won't want to read it and if you do the original is available on-line. However it is just one of the fascinating books in the Ancient Library which are well worth having a look at. The library dates from 1595, Guillaud's book is 466 years old and our oldest book was printed in 1482 – not long after Caxton set up his press in London in 1476.

There is always an exhibition of books in the Treasury and to arrange a library tour contact myself or Hannah, the Visitor Manager, in the Cathedral Office.

Stephen Dart