This is the first comprehensive survey of the history of the book in Britain from Roman through Anglo-Saxon to early Norman times. The expert contributions explore the physical form of books, including their codicology, script and decoration, examine the circulation and exchange of manuscripts and texts between England, Ireland, the Celtic realms and the Continent, discuss the production, presentation and use of different classes of texts, ranging from fine service-books to functional schoolbooks, and evaluate the libraries that can be associated with particular individuals and institutions. The result is an authoritative account of the first millennium of the history of books, manuscript-making and literary culture in Britain which, intimately linked to its cultural contexts, sheds vital light on broader patterns of political, ecclesiastical and cultural history, extending from the period of the Vindolanda writing tablets through the age of Bede and Alcuin to the time of the Domesday Book.

The history of the book offers a distinctive form of access to the ways in which human beings have sought to give meaning to their own and others’ lives. Our knowledge of the past derives mainly from texts. Landscape, architecture, sculpture, painting and the decorative arts have their stories to tell and may themselves be construed as texts; but oral tradition, manuscripts, printed books and those other forms of inscription and incision such as maps, music and graphic images, have a power to report even more directly on human experience and the events and thoughts which shaped it. In principle, any history of the book should help to explain how these particular texts were created, why they took the form they did, their relations with other media, especially in the twentieth century, and what influence they had on the minds and actions of those who heard, read or viewed them. Its range, too – in time, place and the great diversity of the conditions of text production, including reception – challenges any attempt to define its limits and give an account adequate to its complexity. It addresses, whether by period, country, genre or technology, widely disparate fields of enquiry, each of which demands and attracts its own forms of scholarship.

The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, planned in seven volumes, seeks to represent much of that variety, and to encourage new work, based on knowledge of the creation, material production, dissemination and reception of texts. Inevitably its emphases will differ from volume to volume, partly because the definitions of Britain vary significantly over the centuries, partly because of the varieties of evidence extant for each period, and partly because of the present uneven state of knowledge. Tentative in so many ways as the project necessarily is, it offers the first comprehensive account of the book in Britain over one and a half millennia.

JOHN BARNARD • DAVID MCKITTERICK • I. R. WILLISON

General Editors
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Colophons in medieval manuscripts sometimes allude in more or less explicit terms to the vast amount of labour that the production of the volume has entailed and to the burden that it has represented. Some provide information that permits the reader to deduce how long the volume took to write. Others helpfully outline the respective contributions of co-workers, even occasionally commenting on their application to the task. Like most collaborative volumes of this kind, the present one has taken longer than was once hoped.

Of all those who have been involved, I wish first to thank the general editors of this series, John Barnard, David McKitterick and Ian Willison. They have provided crucial support in guiding this volume towards completion. At Cambridge University Press, Linda Bree and Maartje Scheltens have been of quite exceptional help. Then, Kirsty Bennett provided invaluable assistance with the time-consuming business of processing the indices. Above all, it is to my wife that I owe the continuous support that alone has made a Sisyphean task sustainable. Sisyphus’ labour was, of course, unending: the volume that you have in your hands marks an end in itself, though far from an end to the study of the subject. To borrow another topos that runs from ancient author, through medieval scribe, to modern writer, ‘scripsi ut potui non ut volui’.

Richard Gameson
Abbreviations

ASC  Anglo Saxon Chronicle
ASE  Anglo-Saxon England
BAV  Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City
BHL  Bibliotheca Hagiothea Latina Antiquae et Mediae Aetatis, ed. Socii Bollandiani, 2 vols. (Brussels, 1898–1901), Supplementi (Brussels, 1911), Novum Supplementum (Brussels, 1986), cited by item number
BL  British Library, London
BM  Bibliothèque municipale
BnF  Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris
BodL. Bodleian Library, Oxford
BR  Bibliothèque royale Albert I, Brussels
BSB  Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich
CBMLC  Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues
CCCC  Corpus Christi College, Cambridge
CCCM  Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis
CCCO  Corpus Christi College, Oxford
CCSL  Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CIL  Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, ed. T. Mommsen et al. (Berlin, 1869–), cited by series and entry number
CL  Cathedral Library
Colophons  [Bénédictins du Bouveret], Colophons de manuscrits occidentaux des origines au xve siècle, 6 vols. (Friburg, 1965–82)
CMCS  Cambridge/Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies
CSASE  Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England
CUL  Cambridge University Library
List of abbreviations

DCL  Durham Cathedral Library
EEMF  Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile
EETS  Early English Texts Society
EHR  English Historical Review
ep.  epistola
ES  English Studies
facs.  facsimile
HBS  Henry Bradshaw Society
JEH  Journal of Ecclesiastical History
JRS  Journal of Roman Studies
JTS  Journal of Theological Studies
KB  Kongelige Bibliotek; Kungliga Bibliotek
LB  Landesbibliothek
MGH  Monumenta Germaniae Historica
NLS  National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh
NLW  National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth
n.s.  new series
ÖNB  Österreichische Nationalbibliothek
ODNB  Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
o.s.  old series
PBA  Proceedings of the British Academy
PML  Pierpont Morgan Library, New York
q., qq.  quire(s)
RB  Revue bénédictine
RIA  Royal Irish Academy, Dublin
RIB  Roman Inscriptions of Britain (Collingwood and Wright 1990–5, 1995)
RS  Rolls Series
s.a.  sub anno

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List of abbreviations

SB  Staatsbibliothek
SC  Summary Catalogue (BodL.)
Settimane  Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo (Spoleto)
s.n.  no number
s.s.  supplementary series
Tab. Sulis  Tomlin 1988
Tab. Vindol.  Bowman and Thomas 1994
TCBS  Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society
TCC  Trinity College, Cambridge
TCD  Trinity College, Dublin
UB  Universitätsbibliothek; Universiteitsbibliotheek
UL  University Library
Dating conventions and formulae

Few of the books that are the subject matter of this volume are dated or datable on internal grounds; in most cases the dates assigned to them are informed estimates based on their appearance. In the footnotes and certain listings, such estimated dates are generally indicated by the use of a formula consisting of a Roman numeral, which denotes the century, plus a superscript number, fraction or word, which signals the part thereof. Thus ‘x’ means the tenth century as a whole, ‘x10th’ the beginning of the tenth century, ‘x1/4’ the first quarter of the tenth century, ‘x1/2’ the first half of the tenth century, ‘xmed’ the middle of the tenth century, ‘x3/4’ the second half of the tenth century, ‘x3/4’ the last third of the tenth century, ‘xex’ the end of the tenth century, ‘x/xi’ the end of the tenth or the beginning of the eleventh century; and so on. The use of two superscript qualifiers indicates that the likely date straddles the periods in question: thus ‘x1med–3/4’ signifies the middle to the third quarter of the eleventh century. Correspondingly, ‘viii–ix’ denotes eighth to ninth century. s. (= saeculum) means ‘century’.

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