

MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD

THE SCRIBE

In the Middle Ages, all books were made by hand. The first printing press wasn't invented until 1440 in Germany.

Medieval scribes were usually monks. They wrote, and copied manuscripts. Specially trained monks carefully cut sheets of parchment, made vellum, made the ink, wrote the scripts, bound the pages, and created the covers.

Most of these activities were carried out in a *scriptorium*, a room which was usually kept quiet for better concentration. Large scriptoriums could house about 40 scribes.



From *Li livres dou santé* by Aldobrandino of Siena . British Library manuscript Sloane 2435, f. 44v.

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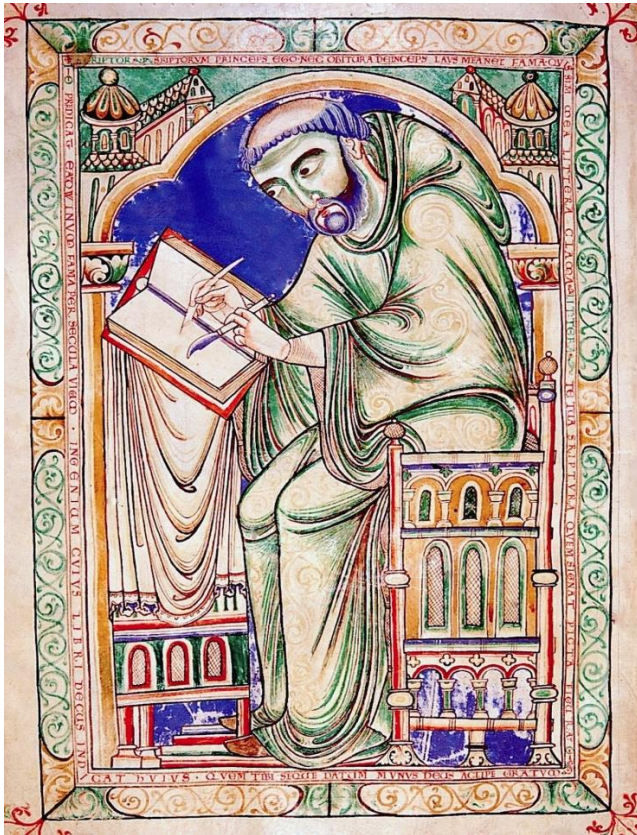


Miniature of Vincent of Beauvais writing in a manuscript of the *Speculum Historiale* in French, Bruges, c. 1478–1480, British Library Royal 14 E. i, vol. 1, f. 3.

Scribes often did beautiful pictures in their books, called illuminations.

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At the end of the Middle Ages the monks of Margam Abbey played an important role in the development of Welsh culture. The book in Latin, *Annales de Margan* was written here. This held important information about the history of Glamorgan and other documents.



Unknown artist Eadwine the scribe at work Psalter Christchurch Canterbury C1160-70. wikipedia/commons

Margam Abbey was founded in 1147 by the Norman lord, Robert of Gloucester. The Cistercian monks in its scriptorium worked for the Abbey, and they also made documents for the Earldom of Gloucester.

Medieval scribes would wake for the morning service before dawn at 3.00 a.m. and would work between services and meals, at which the bible was read to them, until the evening. The main purpose of their work was to promote the ideas of the Christian Church.

There is an old Irish poem, which laments the hard lot of the scribe, touchingly sung on the CD 'Songs of the Scribe'.

<https://www.irishsong.com/music/songs-of-the-scribe/>

Also on 'Viewpoints' Mysterious Afan video.



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Text adapted from:

The Scriptorium of Margam Abbey and the Scribes of Early Angevin Glamorgan: Secretarial Administration in a Welsh Marcher Barony, c.1150-c.1225 by Robert B Patterson