

Friossart's Chronicles

The Chronicles of Jean Froissart (1337-1410) are arguably the most important contemporary narrative of the political and military events of the 14th century reigns of Edward III and Richard II. Many of the original copies of the Chronicles were elaborately illustrated with the characters and events of the times. There have been many translations from the original French which themselves been edited and re-printed by later writers. The two most famous English translations are discussed below, along with modern translations and online versions.

Original translations

HEre begynneth the first volum of sir Johan Froyssart: of the cronycles of Englande, Fraunce, Spayne, Portyngale, Scotlande, Bretayne, Flaüders: and other places adjoynyng. Trāslated out of frenche into our maternall englysshe tonge, Jean Froissart, J. Bouchier, 1523-25, London, R. Pynson.

This book is not widely available (there is not one at the British library) and requires a great deal of effort on the part of the reader, as it is written in the language of 16th century England. Lord Berner's version was translated from the original French at the request of King Henry VIII, and is one of earliest translations of Froissart and has been widely used over the centuries by other editors to produce contemporary language versions and/or abridged versions. Although written in the language of the Tudor period, Lord Berner's translation better reflects the intentions of original author, in his use of language. Today, it is one for the scholar rather than the general reader but originally it was read by those of the Tudor court and literate classes, who would have been interested in the chivalric traditions, and the events and traditions of the time.

The Chronicles of England, France and Spain, Jean Froissart, Thomas Johnes, 1806, Haford

A later translation from the original French, Johnes produced and self-published this work. Not widely available in print but it is a text that later editors have used to produce updated versions. Whilst earlier versions of the Chronicles were 'epitomes' or condensed versions produced from Lord Berner's translation, this translation by Johnes was of the full Chronicle and was published in twelve volumes. It is available online in a digitised version to download for free.

Adaptations from the above translations

The Chronicles, Jean Froissart, translated by Lord Berner, E.V. Utterson, 1814, London, J.Davis

One of the early re-printings of the Chronicles, with the names and locations of places corrected from Lord Berner's version, and it also includes a detailed index and a memoir of Lord Berner. by E.V. Utterson. This edition would be useful for the scholar, wishing to read an early 19th century version to maybe compare with later translations. This book is available from antiquarian book-sellers, in a modern reprint, and also a digitised version online that is free to download.

The Chronicles of Jean Froissart in Lord Berners' translation, Jean Froissart , edited and reduced into one volume by G.C. Macaulay, 1895, London, Macmillan.

This is a late nineteenth century reprinting of the original translation by Lord Berner. The language and spelling has been modernised for its time and it also includes a glossary. This book can be bought from antiquarian book-sellers and in a modern reprint. Whilst not online as a whole text, there are many copies in libraries around the UK and so is still widely available.

The Chronicles of England, France and Spain, Jean Froissart, H.P.Dunster, 1891, London, G. Routledge & Sons.

A condensed version of the Thomas Johnes translation, useful for scholars wishing to get an overview of the Chronicles and the language and style of the Johnes translation.

Online Version

Peter Ainsworth and Godfried Croenen, The Online Froissart (version 1.5), 30 December 2013, Sheffield: HRIOnline, <<http://www.dhi.ac.uk/onlinefroissart>>

The Online Froissart offers access to full or partial translations of the manuscripts of the first three books of the Chronicles and to some of book four. It has some modern English translations and is an excellent resource for exploring the Chronicles. It also contains a plethora of secondary materials, but this wealth of material does mean it is not an easy introduction to Froissart and is aimed at the scholar and academic. A less daunting start may be to choose one of the following two books.

Easily obtainable

Froissart's Chronicles, edited and translated by Jean Froissart, 2012, Faber & Faber.

This book is a widely available, recently translated version of Froissart's original work and is written in modern English. As such it is an ideal text for a student new to the Chronicles or simply an interested reader to access, having the advantage of being at an affordable price.

Chronicles, Jean Froissart, Geoffrey Brereton, 27/04/1978, Penguin Classics.

Like the Faber & Faber version above, this book is a modern translation of Froissart's original work and is written in modern English. It too is widely available at a reasonable price, and forms part of Penguin's Classic series, a well-respected series, often used schools, libraries and academics alike. It is more suitable to a general audience than the scholar and includes an introduction by Brereton.

Others of interest

Illuminated Illustrations of Froissart's chronicles, Jean Froissart, Henry Noel Humphreys, 1844, Fleet Street, London, William Smith

This book is useful as it contains some of the many illuminated illustrations together with their accompanying section of the text. Almost all of the translations focus on the text and ignore the illustrations. The illustrations are stunning works of art in themselves, depicting the events as Froissart visualised them. It is available free online via google books and is useful for the historian scholar, beginner, art historian or anyone with an interest in design or the period.

Stories from Froissart, Jean Froissart, Henry Newbolt, Illustrations by G. Browne, 1899, London, Wells, Gardner, Warton & Company, Paternoster Buildings, London.

This delightful version is aimed at the general reader and is an updated version of Lord Berner's original translation. There is an introduction by the author and black and white illustrations to accompany the text. There are no footnotes accompanying the text and it is written in accessible style. It is still widely available from second-hand book sellers.