



Library & Information History Group

News from the Chair

Welcome to the autumn issue of the Library and Information History Group newsletter. We are delighted to present a wealth of new material. There is a fascinating article from Heather Johnson, Special Collections Librarian of the National Museum of the Royal Navy, on the integration of the collections of some UK armed forces museums. There is also a report from the conference on reading and book circulation that took place at the University of Stirling back in April, and from LIHG's own online conference on Work in Progress, which took place in June. We heard from LIHG committee members Drs Jill Dye and Nadine Kozak, and rare book cataloguer Ted Simonds presented their ongoing research into the Sion College Library collection, now housed at Lambeth Palace Library, for more on which turn to the paper included in this newsletter. We were very grateful for the interest of librarians and scholars of library and information history in attending the conference in good numbers – we had nearly a hundred delegates logging in over the two days of the event.

Rest assured we are cooking up some new ideas for events and conferences, and we look forward to hearing from you and learning about your own research interests, both virtually and in person, in the next few months. As always, thank you for your ongoing support.

Kathryn Peak
Chair, CILIP Library & Information History Group

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Cataloguing and Conserving the Paper Bindings of Granville Sharp in Sion College Library, Lambeth Palace Library



Figure 1: Three books donated by Sharp in a red paper binding, a green leather binding and a blue paper binding. Image courtesy of Lambeth Palace Library.

During recent routine cataloguing of Sion College Library, a small collection of books was found that were given to the Library by their author; the polymath and early campaigner for the abolition of slavery Granville Sharp. Sharps' presentation books are special because of their materiality. At first sight, the books resemble tanned and stained animal skin, with a glossy (almost waxy) finish, gold tooled borders, board edges and spine compartments, and even

with leather title labels in a darker coloured material on the spine. Upon closer inspection, we see that the covers are constructed from paper, a material usually associated with less luxurious finishes. Due to Sharp's status as a significant early figure in the British abolition movement, [Lambeth Palace Library's recent exhibition highlighting the Church of England's historical links with transatlantic chattel slavery](#), and the uniqueness of their bindings, a decision was made to catalogue these books and to conserve them for the future.

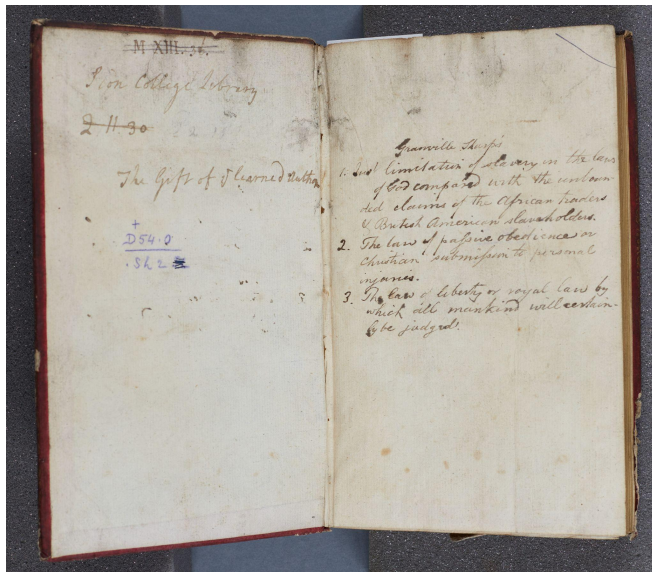


Figure 2: D54.0/Sh2(3) 01-03 Inscription reading 'the gift of the learned author' on pastedown with list of titles on flyleaf. Image courtesy of Lambeth Palace Library.

The book-binding historian Julia Miller remarks on the rarity of gold-tooled paper bindings, noting that although uncommon, paper can be receptive to gilding. Miller is clearly a champion of these bindings, as in the closing paragraphs of her follow-up book *Meeting by accident*: Selected historical bindings, she uses these bindings as an example of books that look "very plain" (or normal), but which is decidedly "not ordinary".

Miller deploys the language of a binding description when she writes:

The binding on the Sharp book is laid paper, surface-coated rose-red; the spine is gilt with a black title label tooled in gold; the decorative borders and board edges are also tooled in gold. [...] Plain laid endpapers; the text block sewn on three recessed supports, the sewing support ends laced into the boards

Great effort was taken to embellish and decorate these books, and the paper was

surface coated to increase its longevity. But why did Sharp bind his books like this? Was it a desire to make beautiful things, to influence people to support his political causes, or was he working in response to material conditions? Miller suggests their effect was to make people "look at them and keep them", which is certainly the case with Sion College Library, which holds 6 volumes of abolitionist tracts, including the first abolitionist pamphlet to be printed in Britain. Sion College also holds other works by Sharp similarly bound. Whereas his abolitionist works are bound in pink papers, the other books are covered in blue paper and green sheep skin. These books are on various subjects, such as linguistics, ecclesiastical courts, and the construction of the Thames Embankment. Some, but not all of these works are polemical. So, whilst it is conceivable that Sharp would be soliciting to change opinions through the making and giving of these decorated books, it also became something of a personal style.



Figure 3: B41.1/Sh2 Red paper binding showing gold tooling on boards and spine. After treatment. Image courtesy of Lambeth Palace Library.

At the time that Sharp was writing and campaigning, Sion College Library enjoyed a

copyright privilege that allowed them a claim on every book entered at Stationers Hall. Indeed, there is a copy of one of Sharp's books in Sion which was given from the Stationer's Company (bound in leather), and a copy in the Lambeth Palace Library collection that is bound in the common but temporary blue paper boards. Sion College was an important library, used by clergy in the City of London. It is evident that Granville Sharp wanted his books represented in a certain way on the shelves of Sion College Library, revealing Sharp's notions of himself, the tastes of the day, and Sion's status in London.

But there are also more mundane factors at play: there was a shortage of leather in England in the 1760s. The shortage was responded to in various ways, causing binders to experiment by necessity to use other materials. With limited options, it is easy to see the appeal of vibrantly coloured papers. With gold decorations and surface treatment, Sharp's paper bindings are neither cheap nor temporary. We are dazzled, as maybe the earliest readers were too, by the gold and bright coloured papers, and are proud to be custodians of them.

To serve as a counterpoint, there exists in the Lambeth Palace Library collection an additional copy of one of Sharp's abolitionist texts which survives in a contemporary blue paper covered binding, with the edges of the text block left untrimmed. It is visible that this copy was not ever meant to look dazzling. The binding serves its purpose: to retain the integrity of the text and to protect it as it moves through the world.

Sharp's designs do the same thing, of course, but do so with a style that continues to generate curiosity. To ensure these books will continue to tell their own story, a course of action was decided which would not only

stabilise the books but draw attention to the materiality of their bindings.

Treatment

Sharp's bindings are interesting as material objects, and the texts contained within them are also important and rare. In order to conserve these works the first step was to photograph and document the initial condition of the books. While these bindings were not severely damaged, a few had detached or loose boards. By focussing on the bindings, we were able to make the texts consultable in a way that does not sacrifice the intrigue of them as material objects.



Figure 4: D54.0 Sh2. Red paper binding showing gold tooling on boards and spine. After treatment. Image courtesy of Lambeth Palace Library.

The text blocks were water stained from a pre-transfer incident. This resulted in some of the pink dye from the covers washing out and across the pages of the text block. Otherwise, the pages were soiled by other debris (dirt, soot, etc.), but the condition and sewing was sound. As a result, they only needed surface cleaning with soot sponges

and soft brushes. Some of the covers had further staining due to mould. One had adhered elements from a neighbouring book due to previous water damage. These were removed using enzymes on cotton buds. This was also used to clean the areas of tooling to brighten the gold.

The detached boards were secured with two weights of Japanese tissue toned to match the books. Cooked wheat starch paste was used as an adhesive throughout. A heavier tissue was used inside the covers for strength and a lighter tissue was used on the outside. The lighter tissue allows the uneven texture of the original paper and board to show through more readily than a heavier tissue would do. Board edges were covered with thin strips of this lighter tissue. Corners were consolidated but not flattened or straightened.

References

Julia Miller, *Books will speak plain: A handbook for identifying and describing historical bindings*. Legacy Press, 2023. p.261.

Julia Miller, *Meeting by Accident: Selected Historical Bindings*. Legacy Press, 2018. p.665.

Granville Sharp, *Remarks concerning the encroachments on the river Thames near Durham-Yard : Addressed to the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, the worshipful the aldermen, and the Common-Council of the City of London. In two parts*. London, 1771. [Sion Main Octavo: B45.1/Sh2]

Granville Sharp, *An account of the constitutional English polity of congregational courts*. London, 1786. [Sion Main Octavo: D13.2/Sh2]

The books all received new boxes and are ready for researchers to access in the reading room. The overall effect of this intervention is to stabilise the books in a way that is sympathetic to the materials and colours of the bindings. We welcome anyone to come and visit the library and to consult the books mentioned in this article.

Postscript: during writing this piece, we were routinely moving books in the stacks and another Granville Sharp book in a blue paper cover was found. The Sion College Library collection certainly has more surprises in store for us!

Ted Simonds, Project Cataloguer &
Talitha Wachtelborn, Project Conservator,
Lambeth Palace Library

Granville Sharp, *A short treatise on the English tongue. Being an attempt to render the reading and pronunciation of the same more easy to foreigners*. London, 1767. [Sion Main Octavo: H18.2/Sh2(1)]

Stuart Bennett, *Trade Bookbinding in the British Isles, 1660-1800*. Oak Knoll Press, 2008. p.93.

Granville Sharp, *The just limitation of slavery : in the laws of God, compared with the unbounded claims of the African traders and British American slaveholders*. London, 1776. [Lambeth Palace Library, Main Collection: MT1163.(S4)]

Early Modern semi-public libraries workshop

Lambeth Palace Library,

November 7 at 14:00 – 18:40

In association with the History of Libraries seminar.

This event brings together work on a wide range of early modern private and institutional libraries which were in some way public. Speakers will introduce research on libraries and collectors in England, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, and Germany, inviting discussion on topics such as library acquisition, preservation, and methods of management.

Those wishing to attend should book a free ticket via the [IES website](#).

History of Libraries Seminar

Public libraries in the Roman world

5 December 2023, 5:30PM - 7:30PM

Matthew Nicholls (St John's College, Oxford)

At its height the city of Rome had many public libraries, set up by successive emperors. In the provinces, local donors emulated these imperial foundations and added local and personal elements; libraries took their place among the most prominent and splendid public buildings of several Roman towns. This talk will consider the architecture, history, and operation of these Roman public libraries.

Bedford Room, G37, Ground Floor, Senate House,
Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU

Attendance is free but please [book in advance](#).

Reconstructing the libraries of King James VI and I, Britain's most bookish monarch

5 March 2024, 5:30PM - 7:30PM

Alex Plane (Newcastle University)

While much research has been done recently on the writings and printers of King James VI and I, his libraries have largely remained a mystery, forming a major lacuna in renaissance book history. Now that his libraries—Scottish and English—are being reconstructed, this paper will present new findings on the collections of Britain's most bookish monarch.

Room 243, Second Floor, Senate House, Malet
Street, London WC1E 7HU

Attendance is free but please [book in advance](#).

Conference Report

Work in Progress

Growing Libraries, Evolving Libraries

LIHG Online Conference

29-30 June 2023

It seems like a long time ago now, but back in June LIHG held its very successful online conference on the theme of 'Work in Progress', with close to a hundred delegates logging on over two days. The event split eight speakers between two panels, and in recognition of people's different work and caring commitments we experimented with holding the panels at different times of day, one in the evening and one in the morning.

Dr Nadine Kozak, Associate Professor in the School of Information Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and co-editor of *Library & Information History*, spoke on the subject of book lists compiled by the store librarians of Schuster's Department store in Milwaukee. These lists, maintained through the twenties and thirties, provide a picture of the operations of the library, both in terms of the budget made available for acquisitions, and the kind of stock held. This was primarily a training library, providing material for employees to continue their professional development in the retail sector. The paper represented Dr Kozak's ongoing research into the available archival records, in particular with a concern for the shift in workplace libraries from a moral and paternalistic ethos

to the increasingly corporate outlook of the mid-twentieth century.

Isla Macfarlane, a PhD candidate at the University of Stirling, spoke about her ongoing research into the borrowing records and visitors' books of the Library of Innerpeffray. This fascinating work is systematically analysing the nearly ten thousand entries in visitor books dating from the second half of the nineteenth century. She gave an account of how Innerpeffray Library evolved from a working library into a heritage site, and also spoke about the concept of library tourism which may have been an influencing factor in the library's success.

In a similar vein, Maria Franchini, a librarian based in Oxford and a doctoral candidate at the University of Reading, presented her ongoing research into the parochial library of Henley-on-Thames. This collection, originally the personal collection of a clergyman, was turned into a library, curated with varying degrees of attention and neglect. She discussed the three catalogues of the collection, made over three centuries, and spoke about her work to identify the texts from the available bibliographic descriptions, and where possible to match records with the partial collection now held by the University of Reading.

Ted Simonds, a rare books cataloguer of the Sion College Library collection housed at Lambeth Palace, gave a paper presenting the work undertaken with early catalogues and acquisition records of the collection. Founded in the seventeenth century, Sion College Library took acquisitions of material, some of which was confiscated from Roman Catholics. The acquisition records of some of the Sion College collection, together with available provenance from the rare books still held at Lambeth Palace, have allowed for new research into the early owners of these books, enhancing existing catalogue records. Much more details about the Sion College Library collection is available in the article in this newsletter.

Similarly, Simone Monti, at the time of the conference a Graduate Library Trainee at the Warburg Institute, spoke about his research into the seventeenth century catalogue of St Catharine's College in Cambridge. Having lost much of its founding book stock, the catalogue rebuilt its collection over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The 1633 catalogue, in style an account book, presents insights into early modern librarianship and the concepts of subject division that were delineated in the catalogue.

Dr Jill Dye, Library Services Manager at National Museums Scotland and co-editor of Library and Information History, presented a paper regarding the historical collection of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, founded in 1780. She discussed her ongoing work to trace the dispersal of parts of the collection in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and considered how the history of the collection informs both the history of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, as well as

broader ideas of the acquisition and dispersal of book collections of national importance.

Phoebe Cooper, an independent scholar, spoke about the sixteenth century creation of the 'Tounis Colledge', the early incarnation of what would go on to become the University of Edinburgh. She discussed the initial founding bequest of books, as well as the extant sixteenth century records of the library. A significant factor in the development of the library was a donation of volumes by an early seventeenth-century supporter, William Drummond, whose tracts on library curation emphasised the importance of book preservation as repositories of human knowledge.

Anne Watson, a librarian at the British Museum, spoke about the attempt to catalogue the contents of ecclesiastic libraries in the aftermath of the French Revolution. She discussed the Herculean task given to a committee to gather comprehensive catalogues and directories of holdings across France. She also talked about the fascinating use of playing cards as early catalogue cards, and the heavy bureaucracy of these early attempts at creating a national catalogue record.

LHG was incredibly grateful for the support of speakers and delegates in making this such a positive and collegial event, with plentiful discussion of the ongoing research of historic libraries and collections.

Kathryn Peak
Chair, Library and Information History Group

A Stack of Libraries:

Foundation collections of the National Museum of the Royal Navy

The National Museum of the Royal Navy was publicly launched in September 2009, with the intention of creating the world's most respected Naval Museum, capable of promoting the past, present and future of the Royal Navy and its branches. In 2015 the formal work began to bring the libraries together as part of the wider integration. The founding collections were:

- Fleet Air Arm Museum Library
- Royal Marines Museum Library.
- Royal Naval Museum Library
- Royal Navy Submarine Museum Library
- Explosion Museum of Naval Firepower, Priddy's Hard (PH) Library

These were subsequently joined by the John Wells Library (HMS Warrior 1860) in 2018, Coastal Forces Heritage Trust in 2019 and the Collingwood Heritage Collection in 2021. A key element was creating a shared catalogue, migrating the data into one unified database (Adlib, now Axiell). The other was to create a new Collection Centre in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard to bring some collections together.

Fleet Air Arm Museum (FAAM) Library

The Museum at Yeovilton, Somerset was opened on 29th May 1964 by HRH the Duke

of Edinburgh and became permanently recognised as a museum in 1967.



Figure 1: Fleet Air Arm Collections (Courtesy of the Trustees of the National Museum)

The collection covers the earliest stories of naval flight and carrier aviation to the current air-craft carriers HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales. The library comes under the daily care of the Archivists, as there is no librarian on site and uses a basic in-house subject classification as developed by a previous short-term member of staff.

At the time of integration, their main library was catalogued in Paradox and contained over 5000 catalogued items, formed predominantly from generous private donations including the widely published author R.D. Layman. Highlights of this

collection include: In the Royal Naval Air Service: Being the War Letters of Harold Rosher; Airmen or Noah's by Murray Sueter, Flight Magazine and Flight Desk Magazine. In addition, there is a collection of technical manuals, totalling around 10,000 items, which have been transferred from HMS Heron and other establishments.

It also worked with the Airship Heritage Trust Library. Yeovilton was at one time considered a home for this collection before it subsequently moved to Cranfield in 2010.

Royal Marines Museum (RMM) Library

Beginning in the 1880s the Library developed from the original libraries established by the Royal Marine Artillery, in both the Officers' Mess and the Gunner's Mess. It was supplemented by newer additions to what became Eastney Corps Reference Library.

Later additions come from Plymouth Officer's Mess, Deal and Chatham as these establishments closed; other sources were the Corps Weapons Museum at CTCRM Lympstone and the Joint Warfare Establishment Library. They had also had significant private donors to the library, such as Lord Mountbatten.

Unfortunately, there was a flood between 1994 and 1998, which was not well documented but it may have been caused by a burst water pipe. Some material was completely lost and other items were damaged although not all the damage was documented at the time.

Books were catalogued and shelved using an in-house variant of Kalamazoo subject codes. The collection scope is from 1664 (when the Duke of York and Albany's

Maritime Regiment of Foot was first established) to the present day. It has strong elements of army and naval doctrine, regulations and training material, as well as specialist items on amphibious operations and mountain and arctic warfare.



Figure 2: Bookplate of Prince Louis of Battenberg. (Courtesy of the Trustees of the National Museum)

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By 2014 the 1860s building had become increasingly challenging to maintain; it was unsuitable for collections in terms of storage and poor for public access. It became necessary to relocate the whole museum, with removal being completed in early March 2020. This has now been unboxed at the Collection Centre in Portsmouth

Dockyard and completely audited which had not previously been undertaken prior to 2013. Over 3000 traced items from the original catalogue have been retained; joined by more than 1300 previously unrecorded items.

Royal Naval Museum (RNM) Library

In August 1972 the Royal Naval Museum was created from the previously existing HMS Victory Museum (run by the Society for Nautical Research) and a significant donation of Nelsonia from the Lily McCarthy collection. The forerunner of the HMS Victory museum was the Dockyard Museum, established in 1911.

The RNM library had a strong focus on the sailing navy. Much of the earlier material came from private donors, including the artist Colonel Harold Wyllie and Captain Kenneth J. Douglas-Morris. Further items came from the United Services Club (1815-1978) and other naval establishments such as the Royal Naval Signals establishment (HMS Mercury) and the Torpedo and Mine Warfare School (HMS Vernon).

A professional librarian was first appointed in 1996, who conducted a thorough review and cataloguing programme of what was then known as the King Alfred library between 1997 -2007. As a result, it was the first of the libraries to use a dedicated library management system (Sydplus, then Liberty3); it was also the first to use a recognised classification system (Library of Congress), although slightly adapted. Library of Congress classification has been applied to all the material relocated to the collection centre, excluding the John Wells' *HMS Warrior Library*.

Around 2000 items were put through a disposal process as part of the early review, but in 2015 the RNM Library held 10,500 catalogued items.

Royal Navy Submarine Museum (RNSM) Library

This originated as the Submarine Branch Collection in 1963, housed above St Ambrose Church in HMS Dolphin, Gosport. The first full-time curator was appointed in 1968 and in 1978 it moved outside of the military boundary to improve public accessibility. The primary collection is still from HMS Dolphin, but also includes the Gibson collection and items from other private donors.



Reviewing the Royal Navy Submarine Museum Library, March 2019 (Courtesy of the Trustees of the National Museum)

It specialises in all aspects of submarine history and development and held copies of the Submarine Old Comrades Association (SOCA) News and Submarine Review. It also maintained close links with the Diving Museum, and at one time housed their library.

The library was overseen by RNSM Archivist; between 1997-2002 there was also a dedicated volunteer librarian. One of the previous directors hoped to run an international lending library specialising in naval history, resulting in the acquisition of

duplicates of titles in anticipation of future lending services. At the time of integration, there were over 9000 items catalogued (using CALM) many of which were duplicate.

By 2016 the building had begun to subside, posing a risk to staff and collections. Staff and volunteers of the National Museum of the Royal Navy began an audit and rationalisation project to relocate collections to Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, which continued up to February 2020. The significant and core elements of the library collection were boxed and moved to the collection centre in October 2020, while operating under social distancing guidelines. We aim to have this collection accessible to the public by the end of 2024.

Explosion! Museum of Naval Firepower, Priddy's Hard (PH) Library

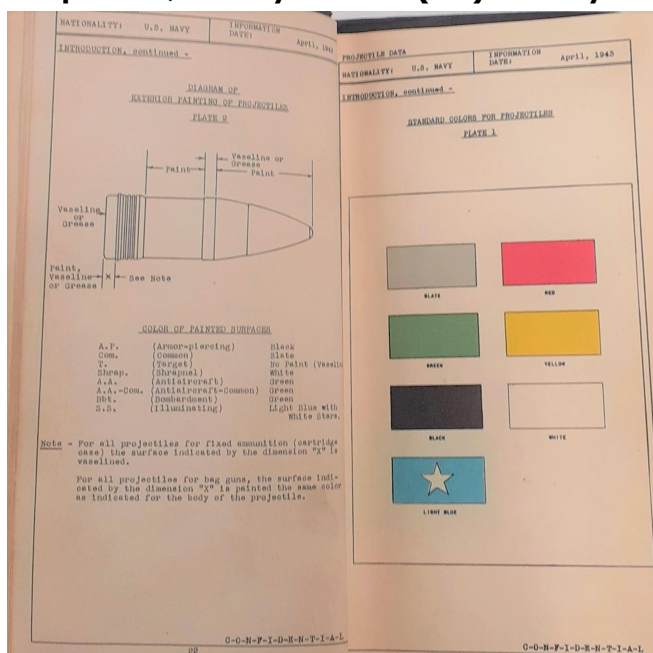


Figure 4: Projectiles and fuzes by the United States Navy. Bomb Disposal School. 1943 (Courtesy of the Trustees of the National Museum)

Established in 1777, the original 25-acre site was a restricted-access military site for over two hundred years. When the depot closed in 1988, *Explosion! Museum of Naval*

Firepower was created to tell the story of naval weapons and ordnance.

Core elements are explosives stores regulations, weapons systems and ordnance manual, the library contains an estimated 1800 items. These were recorded using an old edition of Vernon software and shelved around the curatorial office according to weapon type.

The curatorial office was a leased building. In 2021 the landlord gave the Museum notice, so the library was packed, moved and frozen in the Portsmouth Collection Centre during the spring of that year. It is currently being unboxed, audited and catalogued, with a planned completion date of March 2024.

John Wells Library, HMS Warrior 1860

HMS Warrior (1860) is a restored steam-powered armoured frigate on display in Portsmouth Dockyard. Restored in Hartlepool during the 1980s, the ship arrived in Portsmouth in June 1987. The staff and volunteers subsequently built up a small library on board containing around 400 items on the steam navy, covering 1860–1900.

It was named the John Wells' Library, after the naval historian and first captain following her restoration. The library had been initially cared for by a qualified volunteer librarian, who had catalogued the collection using Dewey Decimal. The collection then passed to a team of dedicated volunteers.

In 2018, the Warrior Trust transferred the ship and the collections to the National Museum of the Royal Navy. After assessing conditions on-board the ship, the decision was taken to relocate the library to the collection centre. This sits on separate shelves, still classified in

Dewey Decimal as recognition of its historic context.

Coastal Forces Heritage Trust Library

The Coastal Forces Heritage Trust was a small independent group dedicated to telling the story of the Royal Navy's Coastal Forces from inception in 1919, and also worked with HMS Medusa (formerly HDML 1387). The Trust held some privately donated items including a small library, stored in the Dockyard. This was transferred to the Museum in 2019, in preparation of a dedicated museum space, The Night Hunters: The Royal Navy's Coastal Forces at War.

The library was initially audited in 2019, with 75 items being selected for retention. Unfortunately, the project was interrupted by Covid-19 lockdowns. Cataloguing was finally completed in May 2023.

Collingwood Heritage Collection Library

This originated at HMS Collingwood (Fareham) in a building near the Base piggeries in 1953, which then moved to two floors in Marlborough Building up until 2021. It held approximately 7500 items of archive and library material; key elements of the collection are signalling and communication dating from the 1880s to 2005.

In March 2021 the Royal Navy required the building for training purposes; they approached the National Museum of the Royal Navy to take on the material, which had been listed in a series of basic excel spreadsheets. The Museum had three months to initially assess and relocate everything. A further six months was spent with a team of interns to match library items to the known catalogue. Over 5000 library items were

identified and saved, with some material transferring to archival storage; the remaining items were returned to the Royal Navy.

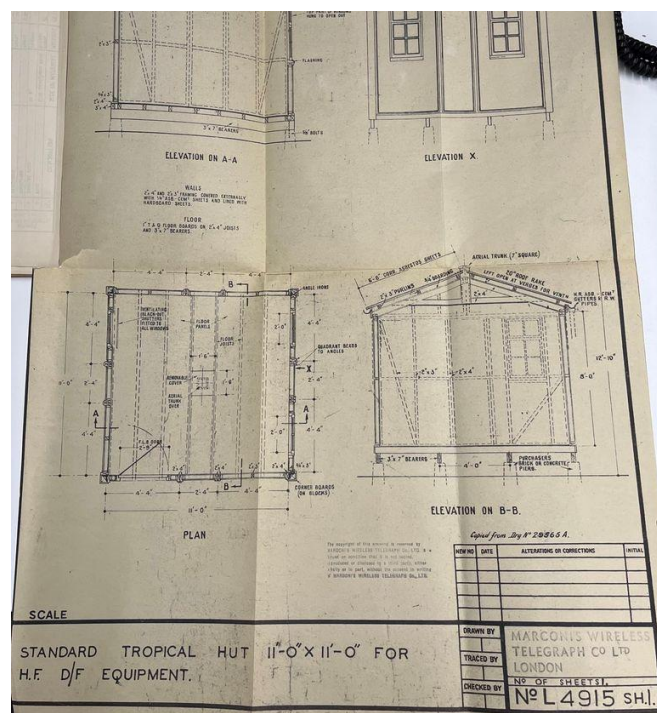


Figure 5: A hut for Direction Finding Equipment, by the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company. 1941

Looking Forward

It has been challenging to bring together so many collections in less than two decades. We developed a robust review policy to tackle the duplicates and the National Museum funded a large project to upgrade an existing store and the research room in the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard to a new Collection Centre to accommodate these collections. It is very exciting to be near completion of this monumental project, and to be reflecting on the challenges and successes. Some parts of our library are available online via JISC, and directly through our [Collections Portal](#).

Heather Johnson,
Special Collections Librarian,
National Museum of the Royal Navy

The Library of Robert Mylne (1643?-1747)

Research report from a recent James Ollé Award recipient

In September 2023 I undertook a research trip to Edinburgh to consult printed books and manuscripts formerly belonging to the Scottish antiquary Robert Mylne (1643?-1747). The intention of this research was to gather information about the breadth and nature of Mylne's private library, and to understand its contemporary significance in early 18th century Edinburgh.

Remarkably little has been recorded of Mylne's life. He was born around 21st December 1643 or 1645, possibly in Balfarg, just outside Glenrothes, Perthshire. He spent most of his life in Edinburgh, and primarily worked as a notary. Mylne referred to himself as a 'writer', as did many of his contemporaries, referring to the Scottish use

of the word to indicate a legal professional. In some instances, Mylne is recorded as 'W.S.', however, records at the Signet Library indicate that Mylne was not a Writer to the Signet. Mylne was also a writer in the traditional sense, having transcribed countless documents of antiquarian and historical significance. Throughout his life, Mylne was known to be "an uncompromising adherent to the House of Stuart". He married Barbara Govean in Edinburgh, 29th August 1678. They had twelve children born between

1679 and 1696, of whom at least five died in infancy. Barbara Govean died "after having

laboured under the palsy for six years" on 11th December 1725. Robert Mylne lived until 1747 and died at the age of 103 or 105 and either died or was buried on his birthday (accounts of his death vary between newspaper reports). He outlived all but one of his children - his daughter, Margaret. Mylne recorded that at least one of his children, William, was buried at Greyfriars Kirkyard in Edinburgh, though there are no graves belonging to the Mylne family in Greyfriars today.

Much of this biographical information survives in a single source - a manuscript history of the family of Barabara Govean written by her eldest son, Robert Mylne. In this manuscript, now held at the National Library of Scotland, the younger Mylne provides some of the basic information about his mother, siblings and father. This manuscript has also been edited by Robert Mylne the elder, with the characteristically compact handwriting he adopted in his later years. Some of the information from this manuscript was reproduced in an appendix to James Maidment's *A book of Scottish pasquils*, which includes satires found among the manuscript collections originally formed by Mylne. Mylne's posthumous reputation survives largely thanks to the survival of these manuscripts which were the primary output of his antiquarian work. Maidment expresses his gratitude to Mylne's work in his introductory remarks, and notes:

"That so little is now known of one who was held in estimation by the learned men of his time, shews the vanity of all sublunary things, and proves - if proof were requisite - that the lapse of a very few years removes all remembrance of persons who figured in their day as eminent in their various vocations"

In the appendix, Maidment continues to express his indebtedness to Mylne by presenting a list of eight verses written in honour of Robert Mylne by his contemporaries. Maidment justifies this appendix in a footnote: "These encomiastic productions possess no other merit than that of shewing the high opinion entertained of Mylne by those who knew him". Based on the evidence Maidment presents, Mylne appears as a figure at the centre of a vibrant social network of like minded individuals in Edinburgh in the early 18th century. Among Mylne's milieu are antiquarians, surgeons, senior legal professionals, ministers, minor nobility and fellow Jacobites, and the focal point of this network surrounds Mylne's books.

The Sales Catalogue

As well as composing and collecting a significant collection of manuscripts on the history of Scotland, Mylne also collected a significant library of printed books and tracts. Mylne's reputation among his contemporaries was, in part, measured by the extent of his impressive library. His contemporary, George Crawford remembered Mylne as, "a well known and indefatigable antiquary and collector of books and manuscripts., [... who] succeeded, by means of long continued and unwearied industry, in amassing an immense collection of materials, illustrative of the history and

antiquities of Scotland." The obscure memory of Robert Mylne is preserved almost entirely thanks to the lasting reputation of this collection, which had a significant impact on Scottish antiquaries, both during Mylne's time and a century thereafter.

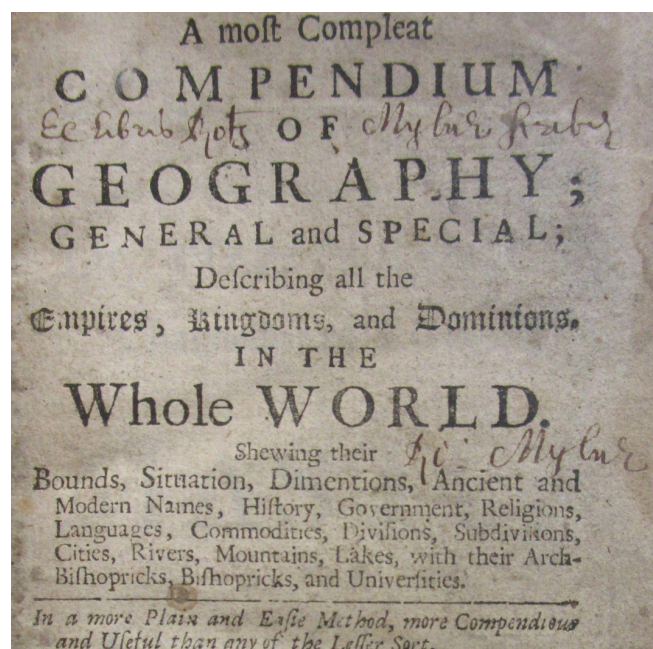


Figure 1: A title page containing typical examples of Mylne ownership inscriptions, "Ex Libris Rob. Mylne scriba" and "Ro: Mylne". (NLS, RB.s.2643)

It is therefore all the more important to note that Robert Mylne's celebrated library was posthumously dispersed at auctions months after his death. The auction took place in the "large fine room" of Mr. Wilson's vintners in Writers-Court over nineteen days between Tuesday 22nd March- Wednesday 13th April 1748. Catalogues were available from the bookseller William Hamilton and Mr. Alexander Murray, the latter of whom acquired several of Mylne's books after his death. At sale, the size of Mylne's collections comprised 2,414 printed books (374 folio, 379 quarto, 1,661 octavo), 3,851 pamphlets and tracts, 89 manuscripts and a significant collection of mid and late 17th century newsbooks. The printed sales catalogue

encouraged prospective buyers with the promise, "The entries will be very low".

Robert Mylne's library has continued to circulate through the market ever since his death, with new Mylne books and tracts still occasionally appearing at auction and in booksellers catalogues. Almost a century after Mylne's death, another Scottish antiquary, Robert Pitcairn, purchased a sizable tranche of Mylne tracts from a single bookseller. Pitcairn had each of these tracts bound in half-bound calf over marbled boards and added his armorial bookplate. In many cases, Pitcairn has inscribed a tribute to Robert Mylne on the first flyleaf recto, and on one occasion (Glasgow, Sp Coll Mu45-h.3) laments, "the greater part of which are now irretrievably lost, owing to their having fallen into ignorant people's hands. The whole remaining tracts were purchased by me from a bookseller.". Despite Pitcairn's attempts to salvage part of Mylne's library from 'ignorant hands', these volumes were dispersed onto the market again when his library was posthumously sold in November 1855. With the library completely dispersed, sales catalogues provide a useful means to estimating the extent of Mylne's collection. However, these are not the only surviving records of Robert Mylne's library.

The Manuscript Catalogue

In 1709 Robert Mylne compiled a manuscript catalogue of his collection with assistance from his eldest son, Robert the younger. The hands of the father and son are unmistakably different, not least in their legibility. Robert Mylne the elder continued adding and correcting entries in the catalogue for decades after its initial creation. The catalogue is in two parts - the first mostly recording typical books, while the latter portion records shorter tracts and pamphlets. Both sections are arranged primarily in alphabetical order - most commonly indexing the last name of the author, though occasionally choosing a word from the title or general subject instead. Entries are then sub-divided by format (folio, octavo, quarto). The layout of each page is designed to provide basic bibliographic information: author, short title, place of publication, year of publication. Additional columns provide location information, including a press letter and shelf number. Each entry is also given a number, which seems to serve no purpose other than being a unique identifier. The earliest entries follow the structure carefully, but later additions by Mylne the elder are less regular (for example, see the entry for "Apocrypha", which is on top of shelf marked letter N; no further information provided). Mylne has also included entries under titles, which are then cross-indexed to another entry later in the catalogue: for example, the entry at folio 2r for "Annals of King Jame's [sic] & K: Charles 1st" includes the note "see King", effectively redirecting the reader to folio 45r where a selection of items have been indexed under "King".

The contents of Mylne's library represents a broad interest in a variety of subjects beyond his own profession. There are many items

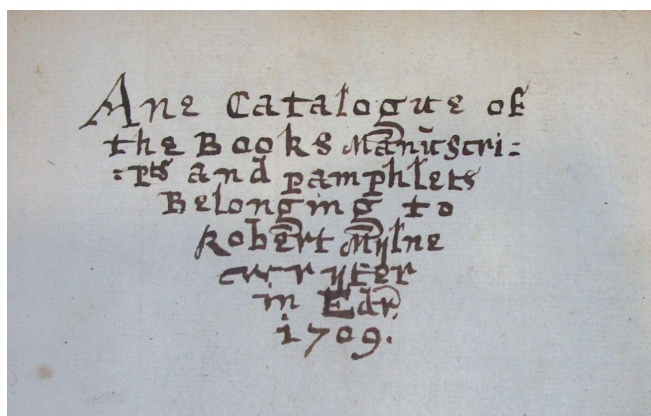


Figure 2: Inscription in the hand of Robert Mylne the younger on folio 1 recto of the manuscript catalogue (NLS, Adv.MS.23.6.17)

regarding Scottish and English genealogy, history and law, including acts, addresses and annals. There are also classical and religious works, treatises and sermons among the collection. However, there are also many subjects covered within the collection that go beyond a basic working library. Notably, there are a significant number of works of travel literature as well as some translations of foreign literature and items of mathematical and scientific interest. Though Mylne's collection holds strengths in some expected areas (particularly among the tracts and pamphlets) the whole of his collection is eclectic and reflects the psychology of a collector whose curiosity extends beyond the parameters of his own immediate occupation.

As well as recording the holdings of his library, Mylne's catalogue also serves another important function. The final flyleaves of the volume have been used to record the lending and gifting of books from Mylne's library to acquaintances. The entries typically record the title of the book, the name of the borrower and the date it was borrowed. Occasionally, the occupation of the borrower is also included. Many of these entries have since been struck through, likely indicating the book was returned. It is hard to know whether each unstruck entry represents a book not returned. Such is the case of Mylne's 1607 copy of *Orlando furioso* (NLS, Ae.5.4a), which Mylne purchased from Mr Fletcher's auction in June 1686, and was recorded in the 1709 manuscript. Yet, by May 30th 1735, John Davidson had written his name on the fore edge of this book and it does not appear in the 1747 sales catalogue. In fact, it appears that Mylne replaced this book with a later 1634 edition. Whether Mylne gifted the book to Davidson, or it was lent and not returned, is hard to know for sure.



Figure 3: John Davison's ownership inscription (dated May 1738) on the lower fore-edge of Mylne's *Orlando Furioso* (1607). (NLS, C.37.g.21)

This record of lending books reflects George Crawford's dedication to Mylne in his *History of Renfrewshire*, wherein he thanks Mylne for providing access to his extensive library. This list of borrowers at the end of the catalogue illustrates the status Robert Mylne and his library held among antiquaries in late 17th and early 18th century Edinburgh. This sociability also challenges the notion of how Mylne curated his books, and whether his cataloguing conventions and inscription within books were created with other users in mind. Aside from including an ownership inscription, Mylne did not overly annotate his books. He did quite often create indexes for works, written on front flyleaves, and would occasionally correct typos or factual errors in the text. He also occasionally marked passages with 'x's, though the function of this seems like it was more for personal reference. He almost never littered his margins with personal observations, with only one notable exception I have seen, which in an account of *The life and death of William Lawd* (Edinburgh, C.37.g.21) he writes, "the author is the most abominable [sic] lying varlet that ever put pen to paper". Evidently, on this occasion, he could not contain himself.

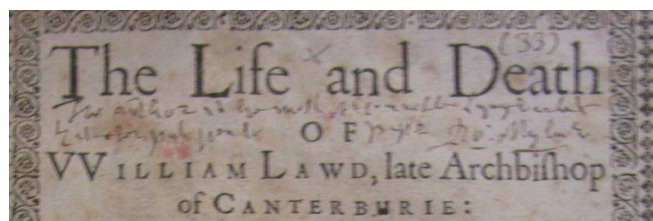


Figure 4: Mylne's ownership inscription on the title page of *The Life and death of William Lawd* (1644), alongside his personal musings (NLS, C.37.g.21)

Conclusion

The study of private libraries provides a useful means of investigating the psychology of the individual collector. Through analysing the breadth of their collections, and how they organised and annotated these collections, one can begin to form a portrait of how an individual used their books. However, this has not been my primary approach in studying the library of Robert Mylne. Rather, Mylne's collection can be contextualised within a broader intellectual community in Scotland during the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Mylne's life spanned a period which Kelsey Jackson Williams has called the 'first Scottish enlightenment' (2020). This first enlightenment is defined as being antiquarian in nature, and was concerned primarily with the study of history, genealogy, geography, politics and law. Mylne, his library and his milieu are situated directly within this 'antiquarian enlightenment', and by studying these books in conjunction with their users we may gather

some insight into intellectual life in early 18th century Scotland.

I intend to fully transcribe Mylne's manuscript catalogue, and compare its contents with the printed auction catalogue and material evidence found within existing Mylne volumes held in research libraries and private collections. From this work, I hope to analyse the nature of Mylne's collection and its users in greater detail. In addition, I have since identified further materials which will require additional research, including Mylne's note books at the NLS and more copies of Mylne's books and tracts in various libraries across England and Scotland. I am grateful to the LIHG for providing me with the means to undertake this initial research trip and hope to follow up this report with a paper in due course.

Alex Kither,
Independent Researcher

James Ollé Awards

James G. Ollé (1916-2001) was an active teacher and distinguished writer in the field of library history; the Library and Information History Group has offered awards in his memory since 2002 with the intention of encouraging a high level of activity in library and information history. Individuals may apply for an award of up to £500 each year for expenses relating to a library history project.

Please note that the award is not intended to support conference attendance.

James Ollé Award recipients will be asked to write a report (maximum 1000 words) of the work undertaken for inclusion in the LIHG's Newsletter, and may be invited to present a short paper at an LIHG conference or meeting, such as the AGM.

To apply for the award, please send a short CV, statement of plans and draft budget to the LIHG's Awards Manager. Applications may be made throughout the year.

Dr Dorothy Clayton, Awards Manager, LIHG

Tel: 0161 826 3883; or 07769658649; Email: dorothy.clayton@manchester.ac.uk

LIHG Committee Vacancies

The CILIP Library and Information History Group is looking to appoint two roles to the committee:

Conference Organiser

The conference organiser is responsible for the Group's annual one-day conference (previously in person, latterly online).

To apply, please send a one-page CV and short paragraph outlining your interest in the role to Kathryn Peak (Chair) at (kathryn.peak@stx.ox.ac.uk).

Back Matter

The LIHG newsletter is produced twice a year. It contains short articles, news items, exhibition and conference announcements, notices of awards and bursaries, and reports on conferences, exhibitions, and site visits. We also highlight a selection of new publications. We are always looking for feature articles in the field of library and information history; descriptions of little-known historic libraries; information about projects with a significant historical component; new resources (print and digital); news items; and calls for papers.

We also welcome reports on conferences on any subject in library and information history and reviews of exhibitions. Recent graduates are invited to submit brief descriptions of their research projects. Please contact the editor, Alex Kither, if you would like to have news, events, exhibitions or calls for papers included in the newsletter: lihgnewsletter@gmail.com

Proposals for feature articles (length of article max. 2000 words) and descriptions of graduate research projects (max. length 750 words) should be accompanied by a short CV. Deadlines for contributions:

10 May 2024 (Summer 2024)
14 October 2024 (Winter 2024)

Information about events, conferences and bursaries is also disseminated via the [CILIP website](#).

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