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On the trail of the Willmott and Braikenridge manuscripts

The partbooks known today as the Willmott and Braikenridge manuscripts (Mss. Mus.c.784 and Tenbury 1486 in the Bodleian Library, Oxford), which contain a variety of Latin-texted motets, were probably owned, and perhaps even produced, by the Norwich merchant John Sadler (d.1592). Sadler is best known for his complete five-volume partbook set (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Mss. Mus.e.1–5): although damaged by the action of acidic ink, this set is important not only because of its complete state, but also for its various inscriptions and illustrations—something encountered only rarely in English music manuscripts of the 16th century. What survives of Sadler’s second partbook set also contains various inscriptions and illustrations; but whereas the decorative material in the first set is generally rather amateur, the embellishments of the second are altogether more sophisticated. Many of its initials and illustrations are of near-professional quality (see illus.1), and were perhaps modelled on the work of the Norwich writing master John Scottowe (d.1607). Only two volumes of this set are known to survive, however: a Contratenor partbook, known as the Willmott manuscript, and a Tenor partbook, known as the Braikenridge manuscript, both of which take their names from previous owners.

Had all five volumes of this second set survived, it would doubtless rank among the most important Elizabethan partbook sets. Yet, while some scholarly attention has been directed towards Sadler’s complete partbook set, work on the Willmott and Braikenridge manuscripts is scant. Edmund Fellowes was apparently the first to realize that the two partbooks originally belonged to a set, reporting on them in the appendix volume to the Tudor Church Music series of editions, published in 1948—recording a few details of their later owners. In 1995, Judith Blezzard published an article on the volumes, but this dealt primarily with their musical and decorative contents, arguing that the books were produced as a statement of allegiance to Roman Catholicism by the scribe; it mentioned only very briefly their custodial history. An investigation into the later owners of these volumes is pressing, however: both partbooks bear annotations which are clearly not contemporary with their production towards the end of the 16th century; one of the volumes has also lost its original bindings, while both have lost some music-bearing leaves. This article examines the ownership history of the Willmott and Braikenridge manuscripts, assesses the impact that their owners have had upon the partbooks’ present state, and seeks to ascertain when the partbooks were first separated.

The Willmott manuscript

The Willmott manuscript retains its (probably original) bindings of dark-brown calf, decorated with blind and gold tooling (illus.2). The volume has met with some accidents, however: four music-bearing leaves and one non-music-bearing leaf are now missing.

The earliest traceable owners of the Willmott manuscript are revealed in a perpendicular annotation on fol.46r, which records that it belonged to a Thomas Chapman in 1709 (‘Thomas Chapman His Book 1709’), and that “This bokke was gave him by Mr Charlis Spisar of Flemish Inn [=in] Norfucked
The Willmott manuscript, fol.[38r]: decorative initial M, and badge bearing the name 'John Sadler' (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Mus.c.784; all images from this manuscript are reproduced under Creative Commons license BY-NC 4.0, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)
nine miles of norwich' (illus.3). ‘Mr Charls Spisar’ probably refers to Charles Spicer (d.1713), priest of several Norfolk parishes from 1662 onwards, and Rector of Foulsham from 1 November 1681. How Spicer came to possess the partbook is uncertain, but it is notable that Foulsham is near to Norwich (actually some 18 miles away by road; not nine, as Chapman suggests). It may be that the partbook remained in the environs of Norwich in the hundred years or so following Sadler’s death there, intestate, in 1592.

Thomas Chapman cannot be definitively identified beyond his name, but he was evidently an inveterate scribbler. As well as his ownership inscription on fol.46r, dated 1709, the partbook bears several other inscriptions by him (illus.4). Two large inscriptions on the front pastedown reassert his ownership (‘Thomas Chapman His Book 1710’ and ‘Thomas Chapman His Book’), and another does so on fol.45v (‘Tho. Chapman his book’). Why Chapman should record two different years in these notes is uncertain, but his acquisition presumably dates from 1709, the earlier of the two years cited.

Another note in Chapman’s hand, written perpendicular to the musical text in the right-hand margin of fol.46r, appears to be in Latin but makes little sense (‘Adhis deno Gamleudamus subter fugetegmone pedis hock upponey trunkeo hickmes-entey Emomeno’). A further inscription on fol.47v gives the name ‘Mr William Jeay’, while another, on fol.48v, contains what appears to be a copy of Chapman’s summons to a local Hundred Court—a sort of early civil claims court (‘Thomas C. you are hereby sumoned to appere att H[undred Co]urt to be held at Kimbolton on Fryday the 5th[?] to answar & serve on a jurey between party & party’). Further scribblings on a flyleaf at the rear of the manuscript, now rather faded, appear to be records of rent paid to Chapman by a Mr Richard Laiden and a Mrs Lewis. Although Chapman evidently used the Willmott manuscript as scrap paper, his scribbles preserve useful information: among other things they tell us that he was given the volume by Spicer, that he was alive in 1709 and 1710, that he was perhaps from Foulsham, but may have eventually been based in or near Kimbolton, Huntingdonshire (almost 100 miles away), and that he was a landlord or rent collector. The way in which Chapman has chosen to spell Norfolk on fol.46r may suggest that he had a sense of humour.

The next piece of custodial evidence is a slip of paper pasted onto the edge of the Willmott manuscript’s front pastedown. It begins ‘Four Volumes of Antient Music The Gift of Dr Peckard, Dean of Peterborough to Elizabeth Becher accompanied with a Harpsichord beautifully inlaid’, dated 20 December 1788 (illus.5). This inscription offers us the first hint that the Willmott manuscript was then in the company of three similar volumes—perhaps the three missing volumes to Sadler’s second part-book set. (As will be seen below, Chapman’s name is not to be found in the Braikenridge manuscript, ...
suggesting that he never owned that volume, which was presumably separated from the Willmott manuscript by 1709.)

Becher’s note tells us that the four volumes were given to her by Peter Peckard (1717–1797) in 1788. When and from whom he obtained them is uncertain, though they may have come to him through the family of his wife, Martha Ferrar (1729–1805), whom he had married on 13 June 1755. Like Sadler’s family, the Ferrars were prosperous merchants. Originally members of the family were based in London, but from 1625 onwards they were located in Little Gidding—only twelve miles from Kimbolton, where, as we have seen, Thomas Chapman had apparently been based. The Ferrars had been involved in a Stamford music club in the 1690s. Martha Ferrar’s father, Edward Ferrar II (1696–1769), a Huntingdon attorney, bequeathed to Peter Peckard a collection known as the Ferrar papers, which included the late 17th-century Magdalene College partbooks of English instrumental music, as well as various other items. Since the Ferrars were based near Kimbolton, they may have come to acquire the Willmott manuscript, and perhaps the three missing partbooks—volumes which ultimately ended up in the hands of Peckard.

Alternatively, the books might have come to Peckard through one of his ecclesiastical appointments. Today he is best known for being Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge (1781–92), and Dean...
of Peterborough (1792–7), but he also spent several stints in or near Huntingdonshire. He was ordained at Buckden in the 1740s, and served his curacy at King’s Ripton; he later served the Huntingdon parishes of Fletton and Yaxley. Thus it is possible that Peckard was given the volumes by persons unknown as a result of his work in Huntingdonshire parishes. (Becher’s note, incidentally, is the only record we have of Peckard’s ownership; he left no marks on the volume by which he might otherwise be identified.)

Peckard’s gift of the four books to Elizabeth Becher (c.1768–1844) was probably the result of his appointment as a Prebendary of Southwell Minster on 8 October 1777. Elizabeth Becher’s father, the Reverend William Becher (c.1741–1821), was appointed a Prebendary there on 3 February 1778—only nine months before Peckard gave the...
partbooks to Elizabeth Becher on 20 December 1788.\(^{22}\) Peckard, who was childless, probably gave the books to Becher because she was musical. She was an amateur composer,\(^{23}\) and a further inscription in her hand, on a slip of paper glued to the rear pastedown of the Willmott manuscript, testifies to her reading of various books on music (illus.6). She refers to Antioch as the ‘first free Church; when Music was first Introduced’ and to Canterbury as the first cathedral ‘in which a regular Choral Service was performed’—observations that probably came directly from William Bingley’s *Musical biography* (1814), which makes the same points in near-identical wording.\(^{24}\) Her claim that Tallis was ‘the first Composer of the Cathedral Service of the Church of England’ probably came from William Boyce’s *Cathedral music* (1760), which begins with Tallis’s short service;\(^{25}\) Becher must have had access to the publication because her father appears listed in it as a subscriber.\(^{26}\) Her mention of Tallis’s ‘Song of forty parts’—a reference to *Spem in alium*—as the ‘most curious, and extraordinary of all Tallys’s Labours’ is essentially a quote from Burney’s *General history of music*, iii (1789), which she then paraphrases;\(^{27}\) her comment that ‘Notes written with red Ink, were diminished a fourth part’ also comes from Bingley’s *Musical biography*.\(^{28}\)

Becher’s inscription at the front of the Willmott manuscript, mentioned already, goes on to record that she gave the books to her niece, Mary Cranfield Becher, daughter of the Reverend John Thomas Becher (1770–1848), Vicar-General of Southwell Minster from 1818 to 1840, on 7 March 1838 (see illus.5). Mary Cranfield Becher (d.1885) married the Reverend Alfred Tatham (c.1813–1878) on 18 July 1848,\(^ {29}\) ten years after she was given the books in 1838. Exactly how the partbook(s) left her possession is uncertain. She died in 1885, a widow; the volume is not mentioned specifically in her will, which left her ‘books not otherwise disposed by me’ to various family members.\(^ {30}\)

The Bechers’ musical library was eventually sold, however, presumably by Mary Cranfield Becher’s executors, for a ‘Catalogue of the Musical Library of the Bechers of Southwell, Notts. (Lord Byron’s friends)’ was advertised in an 1885 edition of *The Athenaeum*.\(^ {31}\) The catalogue for the sale was issued in 1886 by the firm of Frank Murray—Francis Edwin Murray (1854–1932), who had premises in Derby, Leicester and Nottingham. This catalogue specified that it was listing the ‘Greater Portion of the Musical Library of the Rev. W. Becher of Southwell’, Elizabeth Becher’s father, rather than that of Elizabeth or of her niece Mary Cranfield Becher, however. The catalogue itself lists music

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6 Elizabeth Becher’s inscription on the rear pastedown of the Willmott manuscript, rotated left by 90°
mainly of the 18th century; neither the Willmott manuscript nor any of its siblings appear listed for sale. Murray was still listing Becher stock in a catalogue published as late as 1907; this catalogue did include some manuscript material that had belonged to ‘Mr. Becher’ and ‘Eliz. Becher’, but it did not list any Sadler volumes either. It is with Mary Cranfield Becher that the trail goes cold.

The Willmott manuscript surfaces next in the collection of Ellen Willmott (1858–1934), an accomplished botanist and horticulturalist, from whom the partbook takes its present name. Willmott lived at Warley Place, Essex—a large house with a library that had a notable (though not extensive) stock of botanical books and early modern music, both printed and manuscript. Until now Willmott’s source of acquisition for the partbook was unknown, but it was in fact purchased from a catalogue issued by the London bookseller Bernard Quaritch in November 1908, in which it appeared listed as a single volume (illus.7). If the Bechers had indeed been given four volumes of the same partbook set by Peter Peckard, then the Willmott manuscript had either parted company with its three sibling volumes while in the custody of Mary Cranfield Becher, or they were separated after her death, perhaps by family members or booksellers unknown who failed to recognize their significance as volumes of a set.

Ellen Willmott purchased the partbook from Quaritch for the asking price of £52 10s—roughly £4,200 today; an invoice for the purchase is to be found in her personal papers. Although she almost sold the partbook to the British Museum for £10 when she hit financial hardship in the 1920s, the sale of the volume did not proceed. Willmott died in 1934, unmarried. Most of her books and manuscripts were then auctioned by Sotheby’s, in a sale that ran from 1 to 3 April 1935. The Willmott manuscript appeared as lot 537 in that sale: the listing refers to the partbook as ‘a fine and important manuscript’ and also reports on its few missing leaves, as well as on some of its former owners (also

261 ELIZABETHAN MUSIC BOOK. Oblong sm. folio, MS. ON PAPER (48 ll.), in red and black on a five-line stave, with numerous initials and grotesques beautifully interlaced, shaded, or coloured, also a full-page drawing consisting of a triple Tudor rose and the date 1591; in a binding of contemporary calf with panel and line tooling, corner fleurons

1591 52 10 0

The MS. consists of sacred music (Latin words) by Thomas Tallis, Robert Johnson, William Byrd, and John Sadler.

Apart from the beauty of the drawings (an unusual feature in a mere music book) and the excellence of the writing, the prominence given to the figure of the triple Tudor rose renders it almost certain that royal ownership can be claimed for this remarkable volume.

Johnson is described in the Dict. of Nat. Biog. as “possibly chaplain to Ann Boleyn.” One of his compositions was “Anne Boleyn’s Complaint”—Defyed is my Name. This was reprinted by Hawkins.

The following occurs on one of the pages:

Reason doth wonder howe faieth tell can that marie is a virgin and god a man, leave the reason and beleue the wonder for faithe is abouie and reason is under

7 Description of an ‘Elizabethan Music Book’ in Quaritch’s catalogue no.270, November 1908, advertised for a price of £52 10s; the item concerned is the Willmott manuscript (image: Bernard Quaritch Ltd, by kind permission)
mentioned is the red Zaehnsdorf slipcase in which the partbook today sits, implying that this was provided by Willmott, since it was not mentioned in the 1908 sale description for the volume).

The annotated auctioneer’s copy of the Willmott auction catalogue, now in the British Library, London, marked with the names of the winning bidders and the prices they paid, confirms that the partbook was sold for £155 (roughly £7,900 today) to a ‘Capt. Berkeley’—presumably Captain Robert G. W. Berkeley (1898–1969), a nephew of Ellen Willmott (illus.8). The volume remained in the custody of the Berkeley family at Spetchley Park, Worcestershire, for nearly 90 years, but it was acquired by the Bodleian Library, Oxford, on 1 January 2022, following allocation by the government in lieu of inheritance tax.

The Braikenridge manuscript
The Braikenridge manuscript no longer bears its original bindings; today it is clad in modern bindings of buff parchment and red paper over cardboard. The partbook is also missing a few music-bearing leaves—more than the Willmott manuscript. This partbook also fares less well in attempts to identify its former owners. It takes its present name from George Weare Braikenridge (1775–1856), who acquired it at some point in the 19th century, and in whose extended family it remained until the 1940s. Two previous owners are indicated by sets of initials in the partbook, but they remain unidentified. The first set, ‘E. N. N.’, is located on the first leaf of original 16th-century paper; the second set, on the next leaf, may read ‘E. B. M.’ although the inscription is not clear, and some of it has evidently been lost to trimming (illus.9). As will be seen below, Braikenridge’s ownership is the first link in an unbroken chain of custodians that ultimately concludes with the Bodleian Library in 1979; therefore these initials must predate Braikenridge’s ownership.

George Weare Braikenridge (1775–1856), the Braikenridge manuscript’s first known owner after John Sadler, was born in Virginia. A senior partner in the West Indian firm of Braikenridge & Honnywill, he retired to Bristol in the 1820s (he also had homes in Clevedon and Bath). He accrued a large collection of Bristolian historical and topographical material now known as the Braikenridge Collection, and was elected a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1827. The source from which Braikenridge acquired the partbook is unknown, though he was reputedly the ‘darling of the Wardour Street brokers’; he also acquired books at local sales and from local booksellers, and had dealings with the London bookseller Horatio Rodd. Today, the partbook bears no on-page evidence that attests to Braikenridge’s ownership: it does not bear his book-plate; nor does it bear his initials, although, as will be seen below, the volume certainly did so until the 1940s.

George Weare Braikenridge’s estate was left to his son, William Jerdone Braikenridge (1817–1907). His father’s library was evidently considered important enough for a catalogue of its contents to be posthumously published in 1894; this does not list the Braikenridge manuscript, though it does include the odd madrigal publication. When Jerdone Braikenridge died in 1907, a portion of his estate proceeded to his cousin, the artist William M. Hale (1837–1929), to whom Jerdone Braikenridge left ‘all manuscripts, deeds and illuminated clerical books and missals … which were bequeathed to me by my late father’, as well as other items. Some stock from this library was sold off in a series of sales held between 1908 and 1934, but these did not feature the Braikenridge manuscript (despite including some important manuscript breviaries and a book of hours).

William M. Hale’s estate was in turn bequeathed in 1929 to his son, Alfred M. Hale (1876–1960) of East Liss—a composer who had served in the armed forces. In 1942, Alfred Hale initiated correspondence with Edmund Horace Fellowes (1870–1951), who had been involved with the seminal Tudor Church Music series of editions published in the 1920s, and whose Byrd monograph had appeared in 1936. Although Hale’s original letters to Fellowes are assumed lost, Fellowes’s responses survive in the archives of Oriel College, Oxford. In his first reply, dated 16 April 1942, Fellowes refers to Hale as ‘an old acquaintance’ from time spent in Bristol and Kings Weston, and asks Hale to send him the partbook so that he may see it. A second letter from Fellowes, dated 19 April 1942, reports on the condition of the partbook, stating that it had
been re-bound, that the pages had been trimmed, and that a few pages were missing. Fellowes then emphasized the importance of the partbook to scholarship, offering Hale 15 guineas for it, so that it might be acquired for the library of St Michael’s College, Tenbury, in order to attain ‘security in permanent keeping, which is sadly so often lacking, when in private ownership’.

Hale was apparently keen that the volume, should it be sold, be known as the ‘Braikenridge manuscript’: a letter from Fellowes to Hale dated 25 April 1942 confirms that ‘it should become known, both in the catalogue, and in all future references, as the “Braikenridge MS.” Hale also appears to have been unsure as to whether Fellowes’s offer of 15 guineas for the volume was a fair price. Fellowes assured him

that his offer was made ‘after careful consideration of the intrinsic interest of the text & the decorative features, as weighed against the blemishes, including certain missing pages, and certain of the decorative initials being marred through cutting of the margin’. Fellowes went on to say that he had consulted Owen Morehead (1893–1977), Librarian of Windsor Castle, who considered that an offer of 15 guineas ‘was not only a fair but even a generous price’; Fellowes had also ‘consulted another knowing friend, who has regarded 15 guineas as a well-reasoned price to propose’. The identity of this ‘friend’ is not revealed (see illus.10).

Although a letter from Fellowes to Hale dated 30 April 1942 indicated that he remained uncertain as to the ownership history of the partbook, it confirms that the sale was to proceed. The manuscript was purchased from Alfred M. Hale for 15 guineas—roughly £650 today; it was paid for by Canon Geoffrey Ryley (1866–1947), a fellow of St Michael’s College. (A receipt for the partbook, dated 27 April 1942, is kept with Fellowes’s letters.) Soon after it was acquired, the partbook was re-bound. A stamp on the upper-left-hand corner of the inside upper board to the volume gives the words ‘E. Vaughan Binder’, confirming that it was re-bound by Frank Vaughan, binder to the Royal Library, Windsor Castle, where Fellowes was resident as a Petty Canon. Fellowes, in a summary of the volume published in the *Tudor Church Music* appendix (discussed below), confirms that this re-binding happened in 1942. This operation appears to have rid the partbook of some precious evidence as to its provenance, however, since Fellowes, in his letter to Hale dated 4 May 1942, written after he was in receipt of the partbook, mentions that the initials G. W. B.—the initials of George Weare Braikenridge—are present ‘on the first fly-leaf of the MS’. This is no longer the case.63

New flyleaves appear to have been added to the partbook at the 1942 re-binding, the fourth of which bears a handwritten note from Edmund Fellowes, dated Michaelmas 1942, which sets out the bare bones of the manuscript’s ownership history, established as a result of his correspondence with Hale. It also gives information about the Willmott manuscript, which had been sold by Sotheby’s a few years earlier (see illus.11).

In 1948, when the description of the Braikenridge manuscript was published in the appendix volume to the *Tudor Church Music* edition, Fellowes was able to summarize more fully the events which began with Hale’s correspondence in 1942, and also the apparent custodial background to the volume, as told by Hale in his letters now lost. Fellowes explains that, according to a Hale family tradition, some of Braikenridge’s possessions were connected with the poet-fraudster Thomas Chatterton (1752–70), who may himself have been associated with the composer Samuel Arnold (1740–1802):

The Bristol portion of the [Braikenridge] Collection included a portrait of the notorious Thomas Chatterton. There is a tradition in Mr. Hale’s family that certain of the Braikenridge treasures were in some way connected with Chatterton. Quoting Dr. S. R. Maitland, Mr. Hale states that when Chatterton left Bristol for London he became associated with Dr. Samuel Arnold, the well-known musician, who was then one of the proprietors of Marylebone Gardens. This statement suggests no more than an obscure

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9 Initials of unidentified owners on fols.1r (above) and 2r (below) of the Braikenridge manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Tenbury 1486; all images from this manuscript are reproduced under Creative Commons license BY-NC 4.0, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)
hint that this tenor part-book may once have belonged to Chatterton, and perhaps before that to Samuel Arnold. Following this very slender line of conjecture, it becomes alluring to wonder whether Arnold owned the complete set of these Sadler part-books.64

As Fellowes notes, this connection offers ‘no more than an obscure hint that this Tenor partbook may once have belonged to Chatterton, and perhaps before that to Samuel Arnold’—information excluded from his short handwritten introduction at the start of the partbook, perhaps because he considered the possibility too unlikely.65

Since the date of George Weare Braikenridge’s acquisition is uncertain (he presumably acquired the partbook after his retirement to Bristol in the 1820s, and certainly before his death in 1856), Arnold’s and Chatterton’s potential ownership of the volume is possible in terms of chronology, even if hard evidence for their supposed possession is wanting. They are unlikely to have owned the complete set of these part-books, however, given that the Willmott manuscript was in the hands of Thomas Chapman from 1709 onwards. Moreover, if that book was indeed accompanied by three further volumes from the same part-book set now lost, as suggested by Elizabeth Becher’s inscription at the front of the Willmott manuscript, then Arnold and Chatterton cannot have possessed more than a single volume of the set.

Following its re-binding in 1942, the Braikenridge manuscript was then sent to St Michael’s College,
Tenbury. It was allocated a call number of Ms.
Tenbury 1486, and a shelf-mark of D. III. 2, both of
which were entered in pencil at the centre of the
first (newly added) modern flyleaf, and also on
the first leaf of original 16th-century paper, by
Edmund Fellowes. The words ‘St Michael’s College,
Tenbury’ were later added at the upper-right-hand
corner of the first modern flyleaf, in black ink, by
H. Watkins Shaw (1911–96), Fellowes’s successor as
honorary librarian to St Michael’s College, follow-
ing his death in 1951. At the closure of St Michael’s
College, Tenbury in 1979, its manuscript collection
was deposited in the Bodleian Library.

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The owners of the Willmott and Braikenridge
manuscripts, insofar as they may be traced,
emerge as a varied cast of individuals: clerics, anti-
quarians, amateur musicians, and their descend-
ants. The Willmott volume passed through the
hands of Charles Spicer, Thomas Chapman, Peter
Peckard, Elizabeth Becher and Mary Cranfield
Becher, before it was sold by Bernard Quaritch to
Ellen Willmott; it was then purchased by
Captain Berkeley and more recently acquired by
the Bodleian Library. It passed from Norwich to
nearby Foulsham, possibly Kimbolton, Southwell,
and then via London to Warley Place, Essex, before
it spent nearly 90 years in Worcestershire—save
for the few occasions when it travelled to Berkeley
Castle, Gloucestershire (another Berkeley estate),
for viewing. Thanks primarily to Thomas
Chapman and Elizabeth Becher’s annotations,
several directly successive owners of this volume
may be tracked.

In the case of the Braikenridge manuscript, two
of its earlier owners are yet to be identified by their
initials. But we do know that it passed from George
Weare Braikenridge to W. Jerdone Braikenridge,
to William M. Hale, and then Alfred M. Hale,
before making its way to Edmund Fellowes, who
ultimately ensured its preservation. It travelled
from Norwich to Bristol, East Liss, Windsor and
Tenbury before it finally settled in Oxford in 1979,
where it was joined by the Willmott manuscript in
2022. Although the owners of the Braikenridge vol-
ume were apparently less inclined to leave marks by
which they may be identified (though some prove-
nance evidence was evidently lost at the re-binding
of the volume in 1942), the correspondence initi-
atated by Alfred M. Hale with Edmund Fellowes in
the 1940s reveals four directly successive owners of
that volume—information that was later summa-
rized by Fellowes.

11 Edmund Fellowes’s introduction at the start of the Braikenridge manuscript
But what of the missing volumes? The musically literate Elizabeth Becher referred to ‘Four Volumes of Antient Music’, implying that the Willmott manuscript was presented to her in 1788 with three further volumes—perhaps the Superius, Medius and Bassus partbooks of the same partbook set, assuming they were not unrelated volumes. Elizabeth Becher then gave all four books to Mary Cranfield Becher in 1838. She died in 1885, after which we lose sight of them until the Willmott manuscript resurfaces—alone—in 1908. The three missing volumes have not yet been traced to any library, whether public or private; nor have they been identified in any sale catalogue. Illustrated music manuscripts of the 16th century are relatively few, however: perhaps a trawl through later 19th- and early 20th-century sale catalogues will eventually result in the positive identification of the three missing volumes from Sadler’s second partbook set, which may in turn lead to their recovery.

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1 The musical contents of the partbooks are listed at [https://www.diamm.ac.uk/sources/4078/#/inventory](https://www.diamm.ac.uk/sources/4078/#/inventory) (accessed 12 May 2023).
3 On Scottowe’s work, see J. Backhouse, John Scottowe’s alphabet books (Menston, 1974).
4 Most of the music in the Willmott and Braikenridge manuscripts is for five voice-parts, suggesting that the partbook set originally had five volumes. The few works for six voices may have presented two parts in a single volume, on facing pages, as in Sadler’s complete partbook set (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Mss. Mus.e.1–5).
9 The bindings feature a stamp at the centre that is similar in style to those found on partbooks once owned by the Paston family; see P. Brett, ‘Edward Paston: A Norfolk gentleman and his musical collection’, in William Byrd and his contemporaries: essays and a monograph, ed. J. Kerman and D. Moroney (Oakland, CA, 2006), pp.31–59, at pp.38–9.
10 The Willmott manuscript is currently unfoliated; all foliations given hereafter for this manuscript are therefore editorial. Nevertheless, leaves appear to be missing between fols.10 and 11 (the end of Byrd’s Tribulationes civitatum and the start of White’s Miserere mei), 13 and 14 (the start of Taverner’s Gaude plurimum), and 15 and 16 (the end of Taverner’s Gaude plurimum). A non-music-bearing leaf appears to have been removed from the end of the volume, where only a stub remains.
11 A Charles Spicer was educated at Market Harborough, and then Peterhouse, Cambridge; see The Cambridge Alumni Database, [https://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/](https://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/). The Charles Spicer, priest, who was perhaps the same person, was ordained in 1664 and served several Norfolk parishes including Thetford (1664), Crostwick (1668), Alderford (1670), Melton Constable (1671) and Foulsham (1681); see The Clergy Database, [http://db.theclergydatabase.org.uk/](http://db.theclergydatabase.org.uk/). The will of Charles Spicer, senior clerk of Foulsham, was proved in 1713; see Norfolk Record Office, will register Dawson 301 (this makes no mention of music). He may have been related to the engraver and miniaturist Henry Chapman (c.1742–1804); see N. Jeffares, Dictionary of pastellists before 1800 (London, 2006). Spicer is referred to along with an alias of ‘Helder’ in Thomas Quarles, History and antiquities of Foulsham in Norfolk (London: Joseph Cundall, 1842), p.75.
12 On Sadler’s death, intestate, see Range and McFeely, ‘Forty years in the wilderness’, p.12.
13 The words ‘deno’, ‘subter’ and ‘pedis’ are Latin; ‘emomeno’ looks like a Latin participle form but is not; the phrase ‘Adhis deno Gamleudamus subter fugetegmone’ is vaguely reminiscent of the opening of the first eclogue in Virgil’s Bucolics (‘Tityre tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi’), although Chapman’s version makes little sense—perhaps because it was mistranscribed. I am grateful to Leofranc Holford-Strevens for these observations.
14 A William Jeay was Mayor of Huntingdon and Master of Huntingdon’s Hospital of St John and of its grammar school; see Edward Griffith, A collection of ancient records relating to the Borough of Huntingdon (London: printed for Henry Butterworth and G. B. Whittaker, 1827), pp.130, 131 and Huntingdonshire Archives.
No record of his university education has yet been found; the infelicities in his Latin inscription on fol.46r, discussed above, may suggest he was then a schoolboy. The Spicer and Chapman families, based in Foulsham, were known to each other: a number of documents in the National Archives attest to their various financial dealings and disputes, although none appears to assist in identifying the Thomas Chapman named in the Willmott manuscript; nor do they seem to shed any light on how Charles Spicer came to acquire it, or on where it went following Thomas Chapman’s stint of ownership. A Thomas Chapman was appointed church warden at Brampton, some twelve miles from Foulsham, in 1748 (Huntingdonshire Archives, AH39/3/263/66), and a removal order for a Thomas Chapman from St Andrew’s, Kimbolton, to Saffron Walden, Essex, was made on 15 December 1750 (Huntingdonshire Archives, HP32/13/3/12); but whether these pertain to the Thomas Chapman in question is uncertain. (A removal order could be made in respect of a person dwelling in a parish that was not legally their own—usually in response to their application for poor relief; see J. Hill, Hertfordshire Poor Law removal orders: an alphabetical index of the names of those who were subject to a removal order (St Albans, 2003), p.iii.) A Thomas Chapman was Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, from 1746 to 1760, but this cannot be the Chapman who owned the Willmott manuscript as he was born in 1717 (see W. Marshall, ‘Chapman, Thomas (1717–1760)’, in ODNB Online, www.oxforddnb.com).

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of the original editions in full score ... and including works from the famous musical library of the late Rev. W. Becher of Southwell (Derby, 1907), included on p.28 ‘An Unique Collection or old MS, Music copied for the main part by Mr. Becher (friend of Lord Byron) and by Eliz. Becher’. It lists none of the relevant partbooks.


35 Also included in the catalogue, following the listing of the Willmott manuscript, was a full-page reproduction of fol.34r, in black and white.

36 Currency equivalents are based on figures provided by the National Archives Currency Converter, http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/.

37 See Bernard Quatrich’s invoice to Ellen Willmott, dated 2 January 1909, now at the Berkeley Castle archives.

38 The details of this abortive sale, and the events surrounding other early modern music items in Willmott’s collection, will receive fuller discussion in J. Burke, ‘Early modern music in the collection of Ellen Ann Willmott (1858–1934)’, forthcoming.

39 Sotheby & Co., Catalogue of valuable books and manuscripts on botany, music and general subjects, selected from the library at Warley Place, the property of Miss E. A. Willmott (London, 1935).

40 This annotated catalogue is British Library, London, S.C. Sotheby 1531.

41 Peter Holman has suggested that the dispersal of Ellen Willmott’s estate was left to her brother-in-law, Robert Valentine Berkeley (1833–1940), who had married her sister Rose Willmott (1862–1922) in 1891; see P. Holman, ‘A Purcell manuscript lost and found’, Early Music, xl (2012), pp.469–87, at p.470. Probate for Ellen Willmott’s estate was granted on 4 December 1934 to ‘Robert George Willmot Berkeley, underwriter’, however—a reference to Captain Robert G. Berkeley, the son of Robert Valentine Berkeley and Rose Willmott; see England & Wales, National probate calendar (index of wills and administrations), 1858–1995, available online at ancestry.com. Fellowes, in one of his two handwritten notes at the front of the Braikenridge manuscript, which mentions both partbooks, records that, after Ellen Willmott’s death, ‘[the Willmott manuscript] passed into the possession of Captain Robert G. Berkeley, of Spetchley Park, who now owns it’, but does not say that it was he who won it at Willmott’s 1935 auction (see illus.11). Exactly why Captain Robert G. Berkeley should be named as the winning bidder at Ellen Willmott’s posthumous auction when he was responsible for the probate of her estate is uncertain.

42 Edmund Fellowes transcribed most of the music in the Willmott manuscript so that it would be more easily accessible; see Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Tenbury 1474. His handwritten introduction to that volume is dated 10 March 1940. Presumably Fellowes had correspondence with Captain Berkeley, following the sale, in order to access the volume. Further correspondence may have allowed fol.47v of the partbook to be reproduced in the second edition of Fellowes’s Byrd, published in 1948.

43 The modern bindings to the partbook are described at https://www.diamm.ac.uk/sources/2338/#/.

44 Leaves appear to be missing between folios 2 and 3 (the end of Tallis’s Salve intermerata), 3 and 4 (the start of Johnson’s Ave Dei patris), 20 and 21 (the end of Byrd’s Infelix ego) and after 45 (the end of Byrd’s Laetentur coeli), after which foliation ceases. The last few bars’ worth of music are absent from the bottom of fol.14v (Taverner’s Gaude plurimum), but these were probably supposed to be entered on the (empty) staff at the top of fol.15r.


46 I. Gray, Antiquaries of Gloucestershire and Bristol (Bristol, 1984), p.91.

47 S. Stoddard, Bristol before the camera: the city in 1820–30 (Bristol, 2001), pp.5–12.


50 For instance, he acquired a miscellany of verse and prose in English and Latin from the 1834 sale of Dr Nathaniel Bridges. Now Harvard Ms. Eng 1490, it was inscribed by Braikenridge ‘The Book belonged to the late Dr. Nathl. Bridges Lecturer of St Mary Radcliffe & St Nicholas in the City of Bristol & purchased out of a private sale of his library at his disease’ in November 1834; the item also bears his bookplate.

51 See The Athenaeum (4 April 1891), p.447, which records Braikenridge’s dealings with the bookseller W. Sheppard of Bristol.

52 Correspondence from Rodd to Braikenridge survives in the Bristol Archives, as part of the Hale Bequest; see Bristol Archives, 14182[118]/C.

53 His bookplate bore a shield depicting beehives, thistles, hogs, fleur-de-lis and griffins, sometimes with the motto ‘Bello ac pace paratus’ (Prepared in peace and in war), surmounted by ‘Bello ac pace paratus’ (Prepared in peace and in war), surmounted by a beehive between two roses. For a description, see Heraldic bookplates collected by David H Graham, https://natlib.govt.nz/records/23247382 (accessed 12 May 2023).


55 See W. Jerdone Braikenridge’s will, dated 8 August 1905, pp.3–4, in the Bristol Archives, 14182[118]/ws/15a-b. A substantial portion of the estate was left to the City of Bristol, and now forms part of the Braikenridge Collection.

Hale’s compositions are in the Bodleian Library (Mss. Mus.c.142–296); some were published by Stainer & Bell. On his military service, see A. M. Hale, *The ordeal of Alfred M. Hale: the memoirs of a soldier servant* (London, 1975).


The Fellowes papers were donated to Oriel in 1986 by Watkins Shaw, who had been sent them by the Fellowes family in 1958 (I thank Rob Petre, Oriel College archivist, for this information). Presumably Fellowes’s letters to Hale had at some point been sent to Shaw also.


The same information is reported in the brief summary of the manuscript in Fellowes, *The catalogue of manuscripts in the library of St. Michael’s College, Tenbury*, p.334. Presumably this was based on old information obtained by Fellowes in his correspondence with Hale, rather than a fresh assessment of the partbook following Vaughan’s re-binding, at which the leaf bearing Braikenridge’s initials was apparently lost.


The partbook does not appear in Arnold’s auction of 1803; see White, *A catalogue of the extensive and entire musical library of the late Dr. Arnold…* (London: n.p., 1803).

As well as his introductory note to this partbook, entered on an unfoliated modern flyleaf at the front of the manuscript, dated Michaelmas 1942, Fellowes also added the words ‘This is a tenor part-book in the hand of John Sadler dated 1591 (see fo 44’). The alto book of this same set is owned by Capt R V Berkeley of Spetchley Park, Worcester’ in blue ink on the first leaf of original 16th-century paper, undated. This should read ‘Capt R G Berkeley’ (see note 41).

Scholars granted access to the Willmott manuscript in the last few decades typically viewed the partbook at Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire—a property belonging to the same family, to which the partbook was taken from Spetchley when required because it had better facilities for readers.
Abstract

James Burke

On the trail of the Willmott and Braikenridge manuscripts

The Willmott and Braikenridge manuscripts, once owned by the Norwich merchant John Sadler (d.1592), are all that is known to survive from his second partbook set, dated 1591. This article explores the custodial history of those volumes, tracing their various later owners and the marks they left. It finds that the two surviving volumes may have been apart since 1709—a separation that persisted until they were reunited in 2022—and also that the set’s three missing partbooks may have been lost only since 1885, raising hopes that they may one day be found.

Keywords: manuscript partbooks; John Sadler; provenance; Tudor; ownership; inscriptions